

Classic Christian Writings:

God's Word has an essential role in all aspects of your prayer life. Your communion with God will be based on and include much communion through the Word. Your praise must of necessity make much use of Scripture as you praise the Lord. Whatever time you spend on your devotional life, surely about half will be spent reading and feeding on God's Word.

Devotional books are good, as long as they do not take the place of God's Word. If you spend most of the reading portion of your daily devotional period reading from a devotional book rather than from God's Word, yours will be a very superficial spiritual life. Most devotional writings are skim milk as compared with the milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2). A major reason for weak prayer lives is a neglect of God's Word.

1. God's Word is basic to a militant life of prayer. The God who hears prayer is the God of the Bible. Prayer and the Word are interrelated. Praying people love God's Word, and those who love God's Word long to pray and love to pray. When you feed on God's Word, you will repeatedly find that your reading becomes prayer. You will be so blessed by the Word that as you read you begin to love the Lord, to thank and praise Him, to ask the Lord to apply the Word to your heart and fulfill it in your life, or to ask Him to fulfill a particular promise for you. The Word flows into prayer again and again almost before you realize it.

The more constantly you feed on the Word, the richer and deeper your life of prayer becomes. The Word of God is the food that makes you strong to pray. Jesus, quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, defeated Satan by pointing to the essential role of the Word. "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

God's Word nourishes your prayer, strengthens your prayer, and warms your heart and fires your spirit as you pray. You cannot have a strong spiritual life apart from constant feeding upon and assimilating God's Word. Spiritual growth depends upon daily spiritual food. Earnest, even forceful praying, if not nourished on God's Word, may be weak and flabby.

Andrew Murray taught, "Little of the Word with little prayer is death to the spiritual life. Much of the Word with little prayer gives a sickly life. Much prayer with little of the Word gives more life, but without steadfastness. A full measure of the Word and prayer each day gives a healthy and powerful life."

Power in the use of the Word depends on the prayer life. Power in prayer depends on the use of the Word. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Word and the Spirit of prayer. Both prayer and the Word thus are centered in God. God reveals His heart in the Word. You reveal your heart to Him in prayer. He gives Himself to you in His Word. You give yourself to Him in prayer. In the Word He comes to your side and lives with you. In prayer you ascend to His throne and sit with Christ.

Prayer depends on the Word of God. It is built upon the message, truth, and power of the whole of Scripture. Prayer absorbs the power of the Word and incorporates all its vision, urgency, and force into its prevailing. Jesus promised, "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples" (John 15:7-8).

Four truths are very evident from this passage: (1) prayer answers are closely related to "remaining," that is, really living in the Word; (2) this abiding in the Word is the secret of having much fruit for God; (3) this prayer fruit is what really brings glory to God; and (4) prayer fruit is what proves your genuine discipleship.

While this teaching applies to all prayer, it is especially true for militant prayer warfare. Spiritual power for prayer warfare is inseparable from constant feeding on the Word, on massive incorporation of the Word into your spiritual life. Samuel Chadwick wrote, "I never take any book but the Bible into the secret place. It is my prayer book." J. Oswald Sanders testifies how his Christian life and prayer were transformed. "A change came when I learned to use the Scriptures as a prayer book, and to turn what I read, especially in the Psalms, into prayer."

Jonathan Goforth, so mightily used in missionary revival and in his prayer life, constantly saturated his soul with God's Word. He stated, "It is appalling how God and souls are defrauded because we know so little of His saving Word." Every morning Goforth, within a half hour of rising, began intensive Bible study with pencil and notebook. Whether preaching or doing personal evangelism, Goforth always had an open Bible in his hand.

At one point in his life he had read the entire Bible thirty-five times in Chinese alone. He had read his Chinese New Testament sixty times, and by the time of his death he had read the entire Bible consecutively seventy-three times. He said, "I am ever wishing I could spend several hundred years at the Bible."

2. God's Word initiates prayer time. It is normally best to begin regular prayer time with reading God's Word, especially so when entering into a time of militant praying. There are emergencies when we must resort instantly to prayer. But when at all possible, begin with the Word.

Devotional reading of Scripture brings a sense of God's nearness. The more you are aware of God's presence, the more joyfully, believingly, and powerfully you can pray. The Bible can set your heart aflame.

Devotional reading of Scripture helps you shut out distractions. Jesus taught the necessity of closing the door on the thoughts, worries, and concerns that tend to throng into your mind when you quiet your soul for prayer. "Go into your room, close the door and pray," Jesus instructed (Matt. 6:6). You may not be able to go into a literal room and shut the door, but somehow you must really get alone with God. Reading the Word--perhaps for a longer period of time--is one of the most effective ways to close out the world and its distractions.

Devotional reading prepares your heart attitude for prayer. In the Word you sense God calling you to prayer, drawing you near, and then your heart can respond to God's voice and initiative (Ps. 27:8). Sometimes you may feel spiritually dry and comparatively lifeless. The Word reinvigorates you, fires your soul, and makes you ready to meet the Lord. This preparation is very important when prayer warfare is needed. The Word can help fuel and renew the spirit of spiritual militancy so essential in prayer warfare. George Mueller testified that often he could not pray as he desired until he focused his heart on a Scripture verse or passage.

3. God's Word will guide your militant prayer. God's Word not only feeds your prayer and arms you for militant prayer, it guides your prayer. The Word tells you the kind of God He is, and thus it guides you in what to pray for and what to pray against. Militant prayer is the means to advance God's kingdom and to oppose Satan's deceptions, obstructions, plans, and strategies. God's Word guides you in all the basics of God's holy and sovereign purposes.

God's Word exposes many of Satan's timeworn methods. It guides you concerning the areas where you should seek to bind his power and his demons.

God's Word guides you in many ways in which the Holy Spirit has led God's people to victory over the centuries. The Bible is God's Word to you for many great purposes, but among them are His purposes for your spiritual warfare. It contains highly specific exhortations and commands concerning prayer strategies. It has been called your manual of prayer warfare.

4. God's Word arms with faith for prayer warfare. Faith is your shield in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:16). But it is also a weapon of offensive warfare. Faith feeds upon God's Word and especially upon God's promises until you are strengthened and full of zeal to advance for God. Faith is the essential and inseparable spirit and power of prevailing prayer.

Faith arms militant prayer by grasping hold of the purpose of God. God's purpose and your praying are interdependent. He depends on your militant praying to achieve His holy purpose. In militant prayer you arm your intercession with the power of His sovereign purpose. All God's purposes are divinely possible. Faith "amens" the purpose of God.

Faith arms militant prayer by focusing on God's power. Faith refuses to be depressed by your past weakness, inefficiency, and unfruitfulness. Faith believes God in spite of the past because it is focused on God's almighty power. Faith knows God is able to defeat any combination of forces that Satan can gather to block your way, fortify his strongholds, or make assault upon you. Faith glories that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us" (Eph. 3:20).

Faith arms militant prayer with specific promises of God. Whatever your need or urgent request, God has a promise in His Word that is exactly appropriate to your use in prayer. It may be a specific promise or a general one that covers many needs, including the one for which you are praying. It may be the general trend of Scripture, or how the Bible reveals God has worked in the past. Now the Spirit applies it specifically to your heart.

Every promise of God in His unchangeable Word was written for you. Go to God, quoting His Word to Him, asking Him to do exactly what He has said. God will not deceive you. He will not violate His promise to you. His whole character is bound in His promise. His power makes possible everything needed to advance His cause. His love assures everything needed. His wisdom knows how to supply everything needed to defeat Satan and accomplish His divine purpose. His unchangeableness assures that He will carry out His plan.

5. God's Word is your powerful prayer weapon. In the Spirit-inspired description of spiritual armor in Ephesians 6, the Word of God is the one offensive weapon. It is the Sword of the Spirit. He uses it directly in convicting people of sin. He may guide and empower you to use it in militant prevailing. It is, of course, a strong weapon in defense, but the Spirit intends us to use it often in attack.

What does it mean to use Scripture militantly? It means to use it in holy boldness, whether with God in praying or with Satan in rebuking him. Using Scripture militantly means taking the spiritual initiative, daring to claim promises for spiritual conquest and for setting free the souls and lives of those in bondage to Satan. Using it militantly means to quote it and use it with determined insistence and with believing perseverance.

Such use includes quoting or reading Scripture praises to drive back doubts, fears and spiritual darkness. It includes standing on God's Word when every visible indication seems to prove that Satan is succeeding and that your prayer warfare is hopeless. It means to say with Paul when he stood on the deck of a storm-tossed sailing ship as death seemed ready to engulf all on board, "I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me" (Acts 27:25).

Alas, so much Christian use of the Word is merely for spiritual food, for light and comfort, and for defense. When will we learn to use it continually in militant attack? When will we make major use of it in driving Satan from his strongholds? When will we use it mightily in setting Satan's captives free?

Use the Word to remind God. It is not irreverent to hold God to His Word. When Israel had sinned so grievously that God was ready to strike them down, Moses quoted God's own Word back to Him in a mighty plea for forgiveness for the people (Num. 14:19). The Lord did not rebuke Moses. He honored and loved him all the more. He answered Moses, "I have forgiven them, as you asked" (v. 20).

Alexander Maclaren wrote: "Our prayers are to remind God. The truest prayer is that which bases itself on God's uttered Word. The prayer that prevails is a reflected promise." Humbly, reverently, but boldly hold God to His promise.

Use the Word to silence Satan. Sometimes Jesus commanded interfering demons to be silent. Remind Satan that he was defeated at Calvary. Quote to him Philippians 2:9-11, and then in the name of Jesus command him to be silent or to leave a demon-oppressed person alone or to take his hands off the life you are claiming for God. Remind him, "You shed the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You are guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Your authority is broken. Your doom is sure."

Quote Scripture phrases to strengthen your prayer. I know no mightier brief militant prayer than Jesus' words given to us for our use when praying-- "Your will be done" (Matt. 6:10). Repeat this over and over as you stand on the promises of God. Fill your prayers with phrases and verses of Scripture. Also fill your words to Satan with Scripture when you are rebuking him. Verses of hymns and choruses that paraphrase Scripture statements are very useful to intersperse between your prayer time, such as: "There's nothing too hard for you, dear Lord"; "Faith is the victory"; "In the name of Jesus, we have the victory"; and "There is power in the blood."

God's Word will refresh and renew during battle. There come times of weariness during prayer warfare. Militant praying can be physically and emotionally exhausting. As you persevere in the face of Satan's opposition, you do not always feel like shouting, "Hallelujah!" Paul tells us that in the evil day we should stand our ground. "After you have done everything," keep on standing (Eph. 6:13). It is only human to become battle weary. You are not spiritually defeated when you are battle fatigued. You just need rest and refreshment. Oh, how great is the strength we find in God's Word in such times! Take a longer time to saturate your soul in the Word. Sing or read Scripture-saturated hymns. You will find renewed refreshment, courage, and zeal.