

The Science of Prayer

Its ABC's

By Glenn and Ethel Coon

Name: _____

Date: _____

LESSON 7:

How to Strengthen Faith

Introduction

One of the most common excuses Satan presents to a praying heart is, "Your faith is too weak to expect God to answer." This lie is often accepted as truth. Yet Jesus has exposed the Devil's lie. He said that if we have a tiny mustard seed of faith, mountains can be removed.

In our own "Gethsemane" experience God helped us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in strengthening faith. We share these faith-strengthening principles with you. These principles are all Biblical. They can be used by you, our student. You can also experience wonderful answers in exercising the faith God has given you.

1. We remembered God's past answers to prayer.

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee." Deuteronomy 8:2.

We started this "remembering" process by making a big chart on a piece of cardboard, perhaps 18 x 24 inches. First we made columns. Then we supplied headings at the top of each column such as: "cars," "churches," "healings," and "studies." Below each heading we placed in outline form various answers to prayer. Thus we could easily read down any column and quickly recall the miraculous power of the Lord in our past lives.

This idea developed gradually through using the principle of remembering God's mercies. And for years we had been impressed with the way God's professed people of old "forgot" God. The Scriptures declare that the reason for their many backslidings was:

"They forgot God their saviour." Psalm 106:21.

"They soon forgot his works." Psalm 106:13.

"Thou ... hast forgotten God." Deuteronomy 32:18.

We concluded that since forgetfulness of God leads to a weak, backslidden faith, remembering will lead to increased faith and confidence. This is in harmony with the principle, "we . . . beholding .., are changed into the same image." 2 Corinthians 3:18. If we look at failure, our hearts will be filled with fear and our faith will weaken.

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As we reviewed past miracles from our God of love, we could cry out, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Psalm 56:3.

"I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings." Psalm 77:11, 12.

"Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth." Psalm 105:5.

"He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered." Psalm 111: 4.

When we were sick almost unto death, we determined to drill ourselves on God's wonderful works to others as well as to ourselves. We thought of His word that made the worlds. (See Psalm 33:6, 9.) We cried out to God, "Your word was powerful enough to speak the worlds into existence." We remembered "the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . , for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." Exodus 20:8-11.

We went through God's dealing in various ages. He opened the Red Sea and let His people go through on dry land. He caused the walls of Jericho to fall down without human aid. We traced God and His dealings through the Old Testament and into the New Testament. We followed our Lord Jesus. We visualized the leper coming to him (Matthew 8:2), and Jesus healing him by His word. We saw the woman with the issue of blood healed according to her faith. On and on we went. We found that this remembering gave us peace and strengthened our faith almost beyond description. We actually realized the fulfillment of the promise in Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." To stay our minds on our Lord is to increase our faith, our trust, our confidence.

We observed that whenever we found our faith weakening and we talked about what God had done for us in the past, our faith became much stronger. Try it out, dear student. It works for anyone. It is a principle of strengthening faith.

2. We looked away from circumstances.

At one time we seemed almost to lose our minds. We could see nothing but failure ahead. There seemed no ray of light whatever. As we glared at the dismal future, God's Spirit flashed the following text into our minds:

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18.

We knew that God was speaking directly to our hearts. As we now recall, we had not read this Scripture in a long time. God was saying to us, "Stop looking at the problems. You have already recognized them. You have fully identified them. Problem-centeredness will not solve problems. But there is power in looking to Me." We had great difficulty in turning our minds from the problems. They were so close, so stupendous. But as we cried out to God, He helped us to look toward Him.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22.

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." Isaiah 46:9.

3. We learned to talk faith even when we seemed void of it.

We scanned the Holy Scriptures. There we learned that men of faith talked faith. They talked and sang faith when all was dark. Gideon's army of 300 shouted faith when surrounded by an enemy army, numberless as the sands of the sea. (See Judges, chapter 7.)

Joshua's men shouted victory against walls absolutely impregnable. (See Joshua, chapter 6.)

Paul and Silas, held fast in the prison, sang faith at the midnight hour, and were immediately delivered. (See Acts, chapter 16.)

So it has been through the ages. The ten spies who talked doubt perished. (See Numbers 14:28-32.) The two who talked faith realized the fulfillment of God's promise. We learned that God rewards those using the "faith muscle" rather than the "doubt muscle."

4. We prayed often before an open Bible.

We learned the Bible is full of activity in prayer. One might say the majority of prayers in Bible times were accompanied by gestures. These did not change God, but these gestures in prayer helped man's faith. When men offered a sin offering, they laid their hands on in prayer. When a wave offering was presented to the Lord there was another gesture. When George Muller prayed before an open Bible, that did something to his faith. It is said that he received \$7,500,000 when money was real money, without soliciting a penny. He cared for thousands of orphans, sent hundreds of missionaries overseas, and gave away thousands of pieces of literature. He prayed often before an open Bible. We took the Bible right in our hands and claimed its promises. The gesture was good for our faith. (See Romans 10:17.)

5. We even placed our finger right on a Bible promise.

Have you ever heard of a man who promised in writing that he would pay another man a certain sum at a certain time? And when that date arrived he forgot to pay? Then the man whom he owed went to visit him. He opened his letter. He showed the man where he had promised to pay. He placed his finger right on the promise. It gave him assurance in asking and expecting an answer. So we placed our fingers right on God's promise.

And "faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God." Romans 10:17.

6. We used supporting promises of God's Word.

Let us clarify what we mean by "supporting" promises. Supporting promises, as we identify them, are statements of Scripture which say God will keep His word. They say God cannot lie. They declare God will never break His word. We call these statements of Scripture "supporting" promises. They are, to us, in a different category from "specific" promises.

Specific promises, as we categorize them, are promises for specific things like: wisdom, James 1:5; guidance, Psalm 25:9; healing, Jeremiah 33:6; the Holy Spirit, Luke 11:13.

When we claimed a specific promise, like the one for wisdom, we would also refer to the "supporting" promises. We would tell God why we believed He was giving the wisdom promised. It was because (and here we quoted the supporting promise), "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent [change his mind]: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he [Page 82] spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numbers 23:19.

Other supporting promises that we referred to were:

Matthew 24:35 Titus 1:2

Hebrews 6:18 1 Samuel 15:29

Joshua 23:14 Isaiah 54:10

2 Corinthians 1:20 Psalms 119:90

Psalms 89:34 Hebrews 10:23

Isaiah 46:11 Mark 9:24

2 Peter 3:9 John 11:41 Psalms 119:89

7. We lifted up our hands to Jesus our Intercessor and Provider.

For years we had studied the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the "lifting up of holy hands." 1 Timothy 2:8 and Psalm 141:2.

We had learned that when Aaron was consecrated by Moses, his hands were waved before the Lord, containing things that represented Jesus. (See Leviticus 8:27-29.)

We read the Psalmist's statement, "Let ... the lifting up of my hands [be] as the evening sacrifice." Psalm 141:2.

We knew the evening sacrifice was a lamb. Numbers 28:4.

We knew this was a type of Jesus, "the Lamb of God." John 1:29.

So as we lifted up our hands, we knew that this was a symbolic way of saying to the Lord, "We have no merits in our life. We have no worthiness of our own. But there is Jesus, the Lamb of God, standing between God's justice and our guilt. We are coming through His name, in His merits." The Father in heaven throws open the whole treasure house of the universe to Jesus, His Son, who has made our prayer His own. We discovered that this gesture in prayer, though not often engaged in, yet in times of trouble brings great assurance. It destroys Satan's insinuation that because of our unworthiness we cannot expect answers to prayer.

8. We tried to let our eyes of faith meet our Lord's eager eyes.

We do not profess to have attained in this method of increasing faith. But God's eyes are looking for someone to look skyward. (See 2 Chronicles 16:9.)

We cry out, "... our eyes are upon thee." 2 Chronicles 20:12.

Thus as we look to Jesus "the author and finisher [perfecter] of our faith," something wonderful takes place. Hebrews 12:2.

A PERSONAL MESSAGE:

Dear Student:

Experience has taught us that one of the finest methods of helping John Doe is to tell how God has helped us, and how He has helped others. This builds his faith. This is Christ's way. He commanded the healed demoniac, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Mark 5:19.

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This is the Lord's chosen way of communicating with those who feel their need. This is objective learning. When one looks at the life of another, it is so much easier to learn than when we point a finger at John Doe and preach at him.

For many years we have found that one of the best ways to answer John Doe's questions is to tell a story of someone's experience. Jesus' ministry was made up of telling stories and helping people.

There is one caution, however. We must analyze ourselves to discover whether we do too much talking. If so, it is well to ask God to give us wisdom to "pipe down." One of the most common errors in deeply sincere individuals is that they talk too much. Too much talk about the best Friend in the world can hurt. It is like too much cake or pie.

The wise man has instruction for this ill. He advised: "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee." Proverbs 25:17.

If you do not know whether you are in this category, ask some friend to be perfectly frank in analyzing you. And then do not be offended if he does. It is important not to over-talk even about good things and the best Person; Jesus.

May the scriptures become our common bond.

Cordially yours,

Glenn Coon, Sr.

Glenn Coon, Jr.

QUIZ ON LESSON 7:

1. We are to _____ all the way God has led us. Deuteronomy 8:2.
2. We are not to look at things that are _____ 2 Corinthians 4:18.
3. Paul and Silas _____ at midnight. Acts 16:25.
4. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. Romans 10:_____.
5. God is not a man that He should _____ Numbers 23:19.
6. We are to _____ up holy hands in prayer 1 Timothy 2:8.
7. We are to look to _____ the Author of our faith. Hebrews 12:2.

Correct Answers on Answer Sheet.