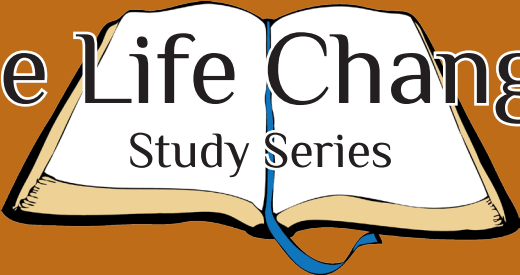


The Life Changer

Study Series



Growing in Christ: Prayer and Bible Study

Spiritual power, love and joy are ours to be had. This is the good news of the gospel. We obtain them by being connected to Jesus. Jesus illustrated this by saying that He is the Vine and we are the branches. When we repent and are baptized we receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the "Comforter" that Jesus said would come to live in us. The Holy Spirit provides the spiritual union. The new life comes from the Vine who is Jesus and goes to us who are the branches by way of the Holy Spirit. We cannot provide the power, but we can do things that help us stay connected to the Vine. We call these things spiritual disciplines. They are things like: continuing in the apostle's doctrine, that is reading



the Bible, prayer, sharing our faith with others, fellowship with other believers, corporate worship including the Lord's supper, and sharing our lives and possessions. To these we could add fasting and spiritually uplifting music. In this lesson we will focus on the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible study as a means to help us stay connected to the Vine.

Lesson 8



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



Afife sat on the balcony of her apartment with a cup of Linden tea in her right hand and her pocket New Testament in her left. Her thumb was pressed solidly into the little book to hold it open easily with one hand as she read. Her eyes were fastened on Acts 2:38-47, a passage that the group had been studying a lot lately:

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Afife felt a yearning in her heart for a genuine religious experience. She felt, well, jealous as she read the Bible texts. How did they have that kind of experience? She wanted it!

Her mind went back to the time she was a child in the village. Her father had told her that if she squished a piece of bread under her foot that God would strike her down. She remembered the nervous tension she felt later that night when she was alone in the room she slept in. She sat on the couch and stared at the piece of bread she had

put on the floor in front of her. She reached her foot out slowly and placed her toe on top of the piece of bread. Then with heart racing she pressed down on that piece of bread and ground it under her toe. Then she waited anxiously. Nothing happened. God did not strike her down.

Afife waited three more days. Still no lightning from heaven fell. Finally, she confronted her father.

"You lied to me! You told me God would strike me down for trampling on a piece of bread. It didn't happen. You are telling me fables!" she shouted.

Her father looked at her rebellious daughter in shock. There was nothing he could say. God didn't strike her dead.

Since that time Afife had a desire in her heart for a true religious experience, a true encounter with God. Now, 35 years old and a housewife, she was reading the Bible for herself. She left behind her preconceived ideas about God and religion and sought truth for herself.

Suddenly the phone rang and as she fumbled to put the tea cup down and grab the phone, she dropped the New Testament into her lap. She thought of her father and wondered if he would scold her for dropping it and threaten that God would strike her dead for that too. She quickly put the book on the table. When she finished the call she picked up the New Testament again and the first place she opened to was no longer in the book of Acts. Her fingers were in John 15:5-12 and she read:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

Ajife gazed off into the far distance of blocks and blocks of apartment buildings. How superficial were all the works of man compared to what she had just read. She said to herself, "We bear fruit unto God by abiding in Christ and by Him abiding in us. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.¹ We also need His words to abide in us. We should abide in Christ's love and we do that by keeping His commandments. And His commandments are love. Wow! That was so different than the religion of her father. But just how do we let Christ's words abide in us? How does Jesus abide in us?" (To be Continued)

② Q1. What promise did Jesus make about prayer? Read Matthew 7:7-11; John 14:13-14; and Mark 11:24.

A. _____

Jesus said if we ask, we would receive.

② Q2. But sometimes it seems we don't get what we ask for Why?.
Read James 4:3.

A. _____

The Bible says we can ask for things that ultimately are not good for us. There are conditions for God's promises.

¹ Galatians 5:22-23.

③ Q3. What conditions are there for God to answer our prayer?

Psalm 66:18. _____

James 1:5-8. _____

1 Peter 3:7. _____

1 John 5:14, 15. _____

If you are continuing in a known sin and refuse to give it up, the Lord will not hear your prayer. We must also ask God believing that He will answer us. Here is what Ellen White, author, educator and mother wrote on this subject in *Testimonies for the Church* volume 1 page 121:

When the servants of God pray for His Spirit and blessing, it sometimes comes immediately; but it is not always then bestowed. At such times, faint not. Let your faith hold fast the promise that it will come. Let your trust be fully in God, and often that blessing will come when you need it most, and you will unexpectedly receive help from God when you are presenting the truth to unbelievers, and will be enabled to speak the word with clearness and power.

It was represented to me like children asking a blessing of their earthly parents who love them. They ask something that the parent knows will hurt them; the parent gives them the things that will be good and healthful for them, in the place of that which they desired. I saw that every prayer which is sent up in faith from an honest heart will be heard of God and answered, and the one that sent up the petition will have the blessing when he needs it most, and it will often exceed his expectations. Not a prayer of a true saint is lost if sent up in faith from an honest heart.

When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed. God may give us something other than we ask. Sometimes

when Jesus healed people, he did not immediately heal them. But in the case of leprosy we observe the healing was always immediate. Why? Leprosy, in the Old Testament Sanctuary system, was a symbol of sin. It is always God's will to cleanse us from sin and make us His children and enable us to live a holy life. Therefore when we ask for forgiveness with a sincere heart, that prayer is always immediately answered. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

② Q4. What special blessing attends the prayer of faith? Read Philippians 4:6-7.

A. _____

② Q5. Can prayers be made any time in any place? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

A. _____

This text suggests a constant spirit of prayer that would take place wherever we are. The Bible gives examples of men who prayed standing right in the position they were in and their prayers were heard and answered by God in remarkable ways. (Genesis 24:12-15; Nehemiah 2:1-5; Acts 16:13).

② Q6. What is the proper posture in prayer? Read Psalm 95:6.

A. _____

We saw that prayer can be made anytime, anywhere. The Bible gives many examples of individuals kneeling in both private and corporate prayer. (Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40, 21:5; Romans 14:11; Ephesians 3:14). There were some occasions where people prayed while standing. (Samuel 1:26 and Mark 11:25, 26).

② Q7. Did Jesus ritually wash Himself before praying? Read Luke 22:39-41.

A. _____

The Bible gives no example of Jesus or any other of God's people doing a ritual washing for prayer. We do see that the Israelites were to wash their clothes when they would meet with God for the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:10, 11). There were also many laws of health and cleanliness given to Israel. From this we can see that cleanliness is important to God. When we come together for corporate worship we should be neat and clean. Our homes and persons should be neat and clean to represent the God we serve.

⑧ Q8. How many times a day did the prophet Daniel pray? Read Daniel 6:10.

A. _____

We see the example of holy men like Daniel and the Psalmist who prayed three times a day (Psalm 55:17). But the Bible doesn't specify a certain number of daily prayers. We see that the nation of Israel prayed at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice being made at the temple (Luke 1:10; Psalm 141:2). The purpose of prayer is not to satisfy some numerical requirement of God. Ellen White wrote the following in the book *Steps to Christ* page 93:

Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual intercourse with our heavenly Father. Our minds may be drawn out toward Him; we may meditate upon His works, His mercies, His blessings; but this is not, in the fullest sense, communing with Him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in

order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.

⑨ Q9. What did Jesus consider hypocritical on the subject of prayer? Read Matthew 6:5-6.

A. _____

⑩ Q10. What about repetitious prayers? Are they effectual with God? Read Matthew 6:7-8.

A. _____

⑪ Q11. Does the Bible have certain prayers that should be prayed for specific situations?

A. No. Jesus did tell his disciples how to pray in what is commonly known as the "Lord's prayer." However it is not a prescribed prayer that all must pray. It is simply an example of what is good in prayer. Jesus' prayer is worthy of study. See Matthew 6:9-13.

⑫ Q12. What example did Jesus leave us regarding prayer? Read Mark 1:35 and Luke 5:16, 6:12.

A. _____

Jesus prayed when it was early and distracting noises and other demands of the day would not disturb Him. Sometimes Jesus prayed all night. It is obvious that Jesus was not making prayers as a ritual requirement of God but rather He was communicating with God in prayer. Jesus said, "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel" (John 5:20). God was revealing things to Jesus in answer to earnest prayer.

⑬ Q13. What kind of things should we pray for? Read Acts 4:29; Luke 22:40, 21:36 and 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

A. _____

The disciples prayed for boldness to speak the truth to unbelievers; they were to pray to withstand temptation, to be counted worthy to suffer for the truth's sake. We are to pray for the leaders of our government and for all men. But this is not all. The list would be too long to write here. In short, whatever your soul desires you can ask for in prayer. As you draw closer to God in prayer, your desires will grow more and more like His desires.

- ① Q14. What connection do we see between prayer and Bible study?
Read Daniel 9:1-3.

A. _____

Daniel studied and prayed. He prayed for wisdom concerning the Scriptures. Whenever we open the Bible we should begin by asking God to give us light upon His word.

- ① Q15. What advice is given to all believers regarding the study of the Scriptures? Read 2 Timothy 2:15.

A. _____

So we see that the disciplines of prayer and Bible study are not an end unto themselves. They are a means of staying connected by faith through the Holy Spirit to Jesus the Vine. It is in Him that we find our purpose, our hope, our joy, our strength in suffering, our consolation in loss and disappointment, and power for witnessing to the truth.



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



Two year old Orhan and four year old Gökhan began to compete with the New Testament for their mother's attention. As the noise picked up Afife turned to her children and told them to settle down but they continued

to run around the coffee table in front of the couch and shout. Afife was about to give them a good scolding when a better idea came into her mind.

"Come children, come to the couch," she said.

The kids were expecting some kind of punishment and were slow to move to the couch side of the coffee table. They stood silently and were more than a little surprised when their mother knelt down on the floor and placed her elbows on the couch. Afife put her head in her hands and breathed a big sigh. Then she looked up and beckoned her bewildered children to her side.

"Orhan, you kneel down here," Afife pointed, "and Gökhan, I want you on this side." The boys obeyed, but slowly. Then their mother looked up to the ceiling and spread her hands out and began to speak. The boys continued to watch without speaking.

Afife wanted to pray but she stayed silent for a moment not knowing what to say. Finally she prayed out loud, "Lord, I want to know You better, whatever that means. I want to have a religious experience like I read about in the New Testament. I want You to hear my prayer and I want You to forgive me and make me a better mother to my children and a better wife for my husband. Please bless my children and teach me how to raise them. Amen."

Orhan and Gökhan didn't know what to say so they just looked at each other. They hadn't seen anything like that before. They looked at their mother and she looked at them. Then she prayed again, "In Jesus name."

"Children," she said, "prayer is talking to God. When we kneel down and pray, God hears us and answers according to His will. From now on you will see your mother praying and I want you to join me, okay?"

Gökhan said, "Okay mom, but how do you know what to say?"

Afife responded, "Just say what is in your heart son. Just say what is in your heart."

Call to commitment through prayer.



EN ZENGİN MAĞARA ADAMI

Milyoner bir baba ile gösteri dünyasında çalışan bir annenin oğulları olan genç Doug Batchelor, paranın satın alabileceği her şeye sahipti. Mutluluk hariç her şeye. Uyuşturucu kullandı, okulda kavgalar çıkardı ve intihar düşüncesiyle hayaller kurdu. Kendinden tiksinen ve hayatın hiçbir amacı olmadığına inanan Doug, yaşayabileceği tüm eğlence ve heyecanları yaşamayı kafasına koydu.

Arayışı sona ermeden önce dağlarda bulunan bir mağara, evi oldu. Babasının sahip olduğu yata, jete ve havayolu firmasına rağmen, Doug kendini çöp tenekelerinde yiyecek ararken buldu.

Doug'un aradığı mutluluk sürekli kendisinden kaçıyor, ta ki bir "arayışçı" dostun mağarasında bıraktığı tozlu bir kitabı bulup okuyana dek. Bundan sonra olanlar ancak mucize olarak açıklanabilir.

BİNLERCESİ KIRILACAK

Franz Hasel, 40 yaşındaki bir pasifist, ön cephelerde köprüler kuran Hitler'in seçkin birliği 699. İstihkâm Bölüğüne atanmıştı. Dinî inancı üstleri tarafından pek hoş karşılanmamıştı. Kendisiyle "havuç yiyen" ve "İncil okuyan" diye alay edilmesine rağmen sonunda birliğinin saygısını kazanmıştı.

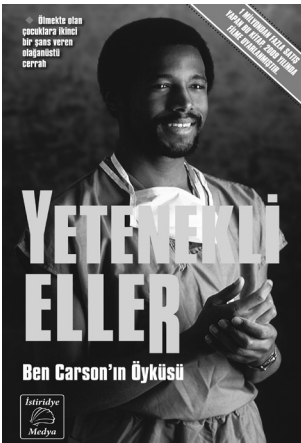
Çevrelerindeki binlerce insan savaşın dehşetine kurban giderken onlar meleklerin kanatları altındaydılar, hatta bazen gerçek anlamda. Bu, ne pahasına olursa olsun imanlı kalmayı seçen ve yüce Tanrı'nın gölgesinde sığınmak bulan çaresiz bir ailenin yürek parçalayan gerçek öyküsüdür.



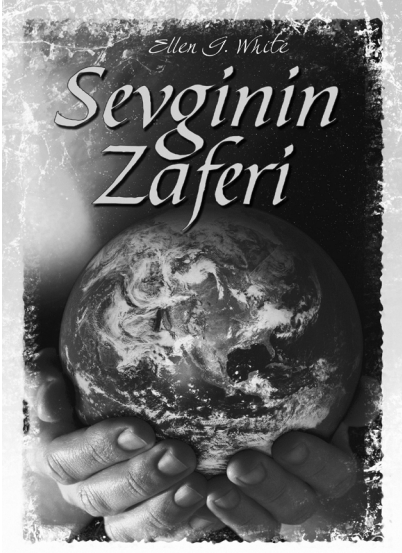
YETENEKLİ ELLER

Dr. Ben Carson, beyin cerrahisindeki umut olmayan yere umut getiren yeniliklerle tüm dünyada tanınmaktadır. Yetenekli Eller'de, Detroit'in kenar mahallelerindeki çocukluğundan başlayarak, otuz üç yaşında Johns Hopkins Sağlık Kurumları'nda pediatrik beyin cerrahisi şefliğine uzanan ilham verici macerası anlatılıyor. Sizi, sayısız hayat kurtardığı ameliyathaneye götüren Ben Carson, görünürde imkânsız olanı başarmaya çalışan herkese örnek oluyor.

Etkileyici vaka tarihçeleriyle dolu olan bu çoksatır kitap, Ben Carson'un zorlukların üstesinden gelme çabasının ve onu günümüzün en büyük hayat kurtarıcılarının biri yapan iman ile dehanın dramatik ve ayrıntılı öyküsünü anlatıyor.



SEVGİNİN ZAFERİ



Kötülüğün kaynağı, henüz çözülememiş bir sırdır. Neden kötülük var? Nereden geliyor? Kötülüğün bir sonu olacak mı? Bunlar yanıtlanması gereken çok önemli sorulardır.

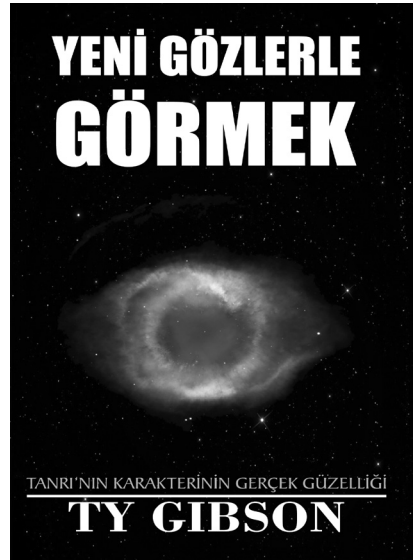
Büyük mücadele, görünen dünyayı, görünmeyen dünyadan ayıran perdeyi aralamakta ve bu dünyanın tüm sakinlerinin dahil olduğu doğüstü savaşı gözler önüne ermektedir.

Kitap, uğrunda savaştıkları şey için çok önemli olan iki tarafın, iyinin ve kötünün arasında geçen evrensel savaşın nasıl başladığından ve nasıl sonlandırılacağından bahsetmektedir. Geçmişten, şimdiki zamandan ve gelecekte söz etmekte, çok dokunaklı bir ricayla ve ciddi bir uyarıyla sona ermektedir. Bu kitabı okurken, sanki Tanrı ile röportaj yapıyormuş hissine kapılacaksınız.

Güzel olduğu kadar şok edici bir yolculuğa çıkmaya hazırlanın. Okuduktan sonra artık aynı kişi olmayacaksınız.

YENİ GÖZLERLE GÖRMEK

Pek çok şeyi görebilmek için, kişinin gözleri açık olmalıdır. Fakat Allah ile öyle değil. Gözlerinizi çok fazla açarsanız ya da çok fazla yakından bakarsanız, O'nu gördüğünüzü düşünürken aslında O'nu gözden kaçırabilirsiniz. Pek çoğumuz tam da bu hatayı yaparız. Allah'ı görmeyi umarak insanlara bakarız. Dinlere bakarız. Hatta aynaya bakarız. Kaçınılmaz olarak da hayal kırıklığına uğrarız, zira İlahî Kişi'nin daha güzel bir resmini ummuştuk. Sayısız insan Allah'tan dönmüştür, çünkü O'nu bir kişide ya da bir toplulukta gördüklerini sanmışlardır... ve açıkçası gördüklerinden hoşlanmamışlardır. Elinizde tuttuğunuz kitap Allah hakkındadır.





Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-5)



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This study series is a continuation of the Fate Changer series
and a product of Istiridye Medya.