



The Necessity of Prayer

E.M. Bounds

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Christians know they should pray. But how many Christians know why? E. M. Bounds provides inspiration and insight that will challenge any believer to a greater depth of personal prayer. If you want to understand the power of a life of prayer, read this book. You may never pray the same again!

The Necessity of Prayer Details

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Chuck Shorter says

Six down and two to go. As I am working my way through "The Complete Works ..." I have been finding that some of Bounds' book do tend to get a little repetitive. One would suppose that if they were not read back to back that it really would not be noticed. But if something is worth mentioning about prayer, it would be worth mentioning again. This particular book has some interesting observations concerning the distinction of Faith and Trust as they relate to prayer. Also the chapters on "Importunity" are extremely encouraging.

Rose on aish says

E.M.Bounds directs the readers to discover the answer to the question: If God knows what we need, then why do we need to pray? Bound tells that if we desire a closer walk with God, we must be in constant communication with Him through earnest, sincere prayer. He highlights that only God can move mountains, but prayer and faith move God. He also speaks about faith: genuine and authentic faith must be free of doubt and faith is believing God, resting in Him, and trusting in His word. Trust sees God doing things here and now. Then he says that obedience is more important to God than sacrifice. The Christian soldier must always have his/her spiritual guard up. Without prayer, the Christian experience and influence will be dry and arid. Then Bounds also recounts many great Bible characters, who were people of fervent prayer.

Edward Ortiz says

What a delight is to read from godly men from the past. It just a different way of writing, one that fill you spiritually.

Two quotes that struck me out the reading:

- It is not the intellectually great that the church needs; nor is it man of wealth that the times demand. It is not people of great social influence that this day requires. Above everybody and everything else, it is men of faith, men of mighty prayer, men and women after the fashion of the saints and heroes enumerated in Hebrews, who "obtained a good report through faith", that the church and the whole wide world of humanity needs.

- The absence of an obedient life makes prayer an empty performance, a mere misnomer.

With everything that is happening around us, we need to learn and practice more the discipline of prayer.

Diane Morgan says

Any reader looking for explanations, reasons, or inspiration to actually pray will find all that and more in this classic. And I make that assertion while also recognizing that I have a disagreement with at least one of the

ideas of the author, and also found the chapters which attempted to delineate between faith and trust to be rather murky. The remainder (majority) of this slim volume is a goldmine. Writing over 100 years ago, Rev. Bounds provides so many examples from both the Old and New Testaments relating to prayer, the reader is more than convinced of its importance to God - and convicted/inspired to a life infused with prayer.

First, I will get my chief qualm out to allow us to move on with the many merits of the book. Bounds states the case for prayer sometimes in terms which puts the onus for the outcome on the efforts of the one who is praying - rather than on the One to Whom the praying is directed. For example, "God stands pledged to give us the desire of our hearts in proportion to the fervency of spirit we exhibit, when seeking His face in prayer." At this point I had to stop and write in the margin of my book noting my disagreement. However, two paragraphs later he states, "It is not in our power, perhaps, to create fervency of spirit at will, but we can pray God to implant it. It is ours, then, to nourish and cherish it, to guard it against extinction, to prevent its abatement or decline." Now there we can agree. So while there is not a wide gulf between my admittedly personal interpretation, and the author's widely-regarded status as an expert, I am simply noting I would prefer it to be perfectly clear that God is not obligated to do anything simply because I have really worked myself up over a situation.

Having said that, the two chapters devoted to Prayer and Obedience should be read by every Christian. Here's a sampling: "Everywhere in Holy Scripture God is represented as disapproving of disobedience and condemning sin, and this is as true in the lives of His elect as it is in the lives of sinners. Nowhere does He countenance sin, or excuse disobedience. Always, God puts the emphasis upon obedience to His commands. Obedience to them brings blessing, disobedience meets with disaster. This is true, in the Word of God, from its beginning to its close. It is because of this, that the men of prayer, in Holy Writ, had such influence with God. Obedient men, always, have been the closest to God. These are they who have prayed well and have received great things from God, who have brought great things to pass." "To plead for a religious faith which tolerates sinning, is to cut the ground from under the feet of effectual praying. To excuse sinning by the plea that obedience to God is not possible to unregenerate men, is to discount the character of the new birth, and to place men where effective praying is not possible. At one time Jesus broke out with a very pertinent and personal question, striking right to the core of disobedience, when He said: 'Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?'" And, "John gives the reason for answered prayer....'And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight.' "Obedience can ask with boldness at the Throne of grace, and those who exercise it are the only ones who can ask, after that fashion." I suppose I should state here that just as genuine fervency is not possible apart from the Holy Spirit, neither is obedience. And yes, the author does make this point, as well. I am, however, struck by the importance of obedience in the life of one who will pray, and I am drawing attention to it in this review because it has almost become a distasteful trait in today's society, rather than the virtue it has long been considered.

There is so much good, it is hard to resist offering several more quotes. I cannot begin to adequately summarize the concepts; only quotes would suffice to give an adequate taste. However, I will end with this one: "Here, let it be said, that no two things are more essential to a spirit-filled life than Bible-reading and secret prayer; no two things more helpful to growth in grace; to getting the largest joy out of a Christian life; toward establishing one in the ways of eternal peace. The neglect of these all-important duties, presages leanness of soul, loss of joy, absence of peace, dryness of spirit, decay in all that pertains to spiritual life. Neglecting these things paves the way for apostasy, and gives the Evil One an advantage such as he is not likely to ignore. Reading God's Word regularly, and praying habitually in the secret place of the Most High puts one where he is absolutely safe...and guarantees him salvation and final victory, through the overcoming power of the Lamb."

Matt Hancock says

I love reading books on prayer that stir me up to continue growing in this important discipline. I was hoping Bounds would encourage to pray but found it lacking for several reasons. 1. He mostly uses Scripture to support the topic he is discussing rather than working from a text. 2. He wanders round theme, but does not instruct simply or very logically. 3. I understand how the church needs modern day "prophets" who expose our failures, and certainly prayer is a major area of neglect in the western church. But Bounds talks so much about what's wrong and rarely offers practical steps to prayer or much encouragement to the prayer. I have found many other books on prayer much more helpful in this regard (i.e. works by Andrew Murray or Samuel Chadwick's The Path of Prayer).

Brian Creely says

Chapter 2. Wow! One of the best I've read regarding prayer and faith.

Ron says

More than a century old, this small volume draws on fifty preceding years of ministry by Bound, starting shortly before the Civil War. Yet his thoughts on the state of Christian prayer, preaching and worship still ring true. Bounds addresses attitudes as well as approaches to satisfying prayer.

A good book for individual or group study.

A good read for Christians

Robert Dallmann says

Well worth reading!

Ryan Hawkins says

As always, EM Bounds is a joy to read on prayer. It isn't necessarily my favorite book of his, but I give it 5 stars instead of 4 simply because of chapters 4 and 5, about praying with desire and enthusiasm, and secondarily chapters 6, 7, and 11. The whole book was a joy to read, but these chapters in particular stirred me to really pray from the heart--with desire, with enthusiasm, with fervency, with fire, as Bounds calls it. It was a call to me not to just be routine or give into tiredness, but to be earnest. I haven't figured this out by any means, but he really stirred me to do so.

I could write more, but again, this was classic Bounds. I enjoyed it, as always. Some chapters were far better than others, but I can't think of another author who is so consistent at stirring up prayer. This book did that, as is normal for Bounds.

Steven Veach says

This book was not as good as the previous one I read, *The Essentials of Prayer* by Bounds. But it did make some good points, and there definitely were a few places that I took issue with.

The idea that we should pray today for today's needs cannot be lost on anyone, yet it is. A main thrust of Bounds is the idea that prayer is superior in priority to most other Christian work, and, in fact, is absolutely prerequisite to most - if not all - Christian work. Habitual, diligent prayer is what he calls it.

Again, prayer is to be thoughtful, an engagement of the intellect - not a mindless, emotional ranting as is so often seen today. Not simply a mosh posh of quips and interjections as is so often the case. It is serious, somber, methodical work. Bounds says, "A lack of ardour in prayer, is the sure sign of a lack of depth and of intensity of desire; and the absences of intense desire is a sure sign of God's absence from the heart!"

I think Bounds hits the nail right on the head: "two things are intolerable to Him [God] - insincerity and lukewarmness." We are truly the Laodicean church.

Another great quote: "Beautiful theories are marred by ugly lives."

Now, in chapter 9, it talks at length about the law and keeping the law. Apparently, Bounds is under the impression that God would not ask us to do something that was impossible for us to do - have redemption through the law. But, because we choose not to be redeemed by the law, God does so out of grace, through Christ.

I also found in this book a perfect description of me: "God is neither tyrannical or severe." Maybe God is not, but most certainly am.

In Chapter 13 we dip into an area that I find in complete accord with, sort of. Bounds asserts that praying people are bible-reading people. That God speaks to us through the bible, and we speak to God through prayer. With this I would agree. But I am a man of little prayers - both quantitatively and qualitatively.

But, in no way does prayer or bible reading cause me to visit the house of God. At least, not the house of God we have today - or, the house of gods. More amply, the houses of men. For churches are no more a divine place of worship than the grave, and they are full of wickedness within and without.

Bounds claims that, "no man loves the Bible who does not love to pray." But I contend this is not true. I love the bible. I love studying the bible. I love researching the bible and discovering what the authors were trying to say. Yet, for the most part, I remain prayer-less. I have no propensity for long oration in prayer, nor do I [and more importantly] have the desire to devote time to intercession on behalf of others. I have no love for the saints of God, and this is, to me, most disturbing. But, I will say, I do like the hope that Bounds inspires. He says, "no two things are more essential to a spirit-filled life than bible-reading and secret prayer."

This is the kind of vocation I seek to develop, to occupy my time on earth with: bible-reading/studying and

secret prayer. I don't want a job in the clergy. I don't want to build a church. In fact, I don't want to involve myself at all with the people of the church or the people of the world. I want to be isolated, live in solitude, and therefore, how fitting is it that my obligation would be prayer. How more fitting is it for me to be drawn to the theology of the desert fathers, to heed the words, "Go into your cell and close the door; your cell will teach you everything." This is what I am hopeful for in my retirement, to have a 4' x 7' cell in the middle of the woods. To live a life of solitude and contemplation. To live with my stories and be creative and alive in bliss. To commune with my God. To read and study his word.

Chapter 14, I believe, is incorrect. Bounds seems to think that a church building is somehow "set apart", that it is "no common place" and is "where God meets with his people." I can't disagree more. A church building is utterly a design of man, for his purposes, and is no less secular than the warehouse or the night club. It is only by the infilling of a building by the CHURCH [the individual members that make up the body of Christ] that sets it apart, and only for the time that it is infilled. It is actually the people who are infilled, not the place, for it does not change.

Bounds makes the statement, "as God has made special promise to meet his people there, it is their duty to go there, and for that specific end." My concern here is, where in the bible does God give us a special promise to meet his people in a church building?

I do, though, agree with Bound's assessment that prayer should come before preaching in the Church, it should be the main focus of the church meeting. Unfortunately, it is the most absent portion of our expression as Christians in this day and age. We are, in this respect, a prayer-less people.

Glen says

Bounds book is not only classic in its historical significance but it follows the patterns of previous spiritual giants who wrote about intimacy with God in such personal terms. This particular book was the first in a series of eight written in the early 20th century.

The preface speaks of Bounds forming the habit of 4am prayer times and the contents of this book exude that reality.

The Necessity of Prayer is essentially a polemic on prayer and its role in both the believer's life and in corporate worship. It delves into matters of: trusting God, persevering (importunity), obeying, vigilance and the interaction between Scriptures and prayer. The writer continually comes back to the premise that godly lives and godly gatherings are first and foremost marked by intentional and lengthy prayer.

I particularly found the chapters on faith (1&2), trust (3), desire (4) and the Word (12&13) to be very helpful for me in my present journey. The style of the book is descriptive and void of anecdotal references. He is not attempting to present himself or other contemporaries as models to follow, rather he points the reader to a vision of prayer that has ample Scriptural support and takes the form of an exhortation.

To give a flavor for the book, I've selected a quote from the last chapter: "When prayer becomes an unfamiliar exercise, then God himself is a stranger there." This motif continually reverberates in the reader's mind and makes the foundation of Bound's appeal center more on the principle of prayer itself than on the desire to follow a man of prayer. I highly recommend reading the book as part of your devotional times or as a stand alone exploration of the depths of intercession.

John says

This is a short, and solid work on prayer. He emphasizes the importance of faith, and prayer as an outworking of faith, as well as the way our faith grows. When we pray, we are assuming our position as petitioner, rather than relying on self, or worldly powers.

There are a lot of great quotes in the book, this one might be the best summary of the book:

"Prayer produces cleanliness of heart and purity of life. It can produce nothing else. Unrighteous conduct is born of prayerlessness; the two go hand-in-hand. Prayer and sinning cannot keep company with each other. One, or the other, must, of necessity, stop. Get men to pray, and they will quit sinning, because prayer creates a distaste for sinning, and so works upon the heart, that evil-doing becomes repugnant, and the entire nature lifted to a reverent contemplation of high and holy things."

Lundy says

I was going to give this book two stars except the content was very good. It gives great tips on prayer, and would be very useful if it wasn't so boring. I account this partly to its repetition and archaic language. Normally a book of this size would take me a little over a week to finish. Instead, it took almost two months to drudge through. Hopefully in the future I can gain enough endurance to actually dig dipper into the great points E.M. Bounds make concerning prayer. He regards it as the upmost Christian duty. Overall, a good book with great biblical content and instruction in prayer, but heavily lacking in the ability to capture your attention.

Stacy Carruthers says

This book is awesome, it is very powerful.

Rodney Tripp says

A Classic surely to be read over and over. This book on prayer is one for the generations to come. Publishers should always have prayer books in print or in an ebook format.
