

RESOLVE!

Prayer Is Essential

by Pastor Dale O'Shields

1. PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL TO OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

One of the ways the devil seeks access into our lives is through temptation.

Temptation is an enticement to commit evil—in heart, mind or body. It is an enticement to disregard God's Word and to disobey God's will. This disobedience draws us into an alliance with the forces of darkness, which opens us to a variety of destructive consequences.

Note two passages that link prayer with overcoming temptation:

Matthew 6:13 (NIV) "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Matthew 26:41 (NLT) "Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak!"

According to these verses, prayer:

- *Sensitizes us to temptation.*

We gain spiritual perception and discernment through prayer. In prayer we are connected to the wisdom and counsel of God, and are filled with the Holy Spirit who sensitizes us to the presence of sin and the potential of falling prey to sin.

- *Shields us from temptation.*

Prayer can keep temptation away from us. Jesus taught us to ask Father God to "...lead us not into temptation..."

- *Strengthens us against temptation.*

The devil knows what temptations we are more susceptible to. When these come, we need supernatural strength to overcome them. Prayer is one of the resources that gives us strength to withstand temptation's appeals.

- *Saves us from temptation.*

Jesus taught us to ask Father God to "...deliver us from evil..." There are times when evil gets a grip on us, and is about to pull us under. At these times we can confidently pray that the Lord would save us from evil, and the evil one.

Prayer is essential to overcoming temptation.

2. PRAYER IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The phrase "*spiritual warfare*" has been popularized in recent years in Christian circles. For many years the term was never heard. While it is marvelous that the concept has now re-surfaced, it is unfortunate that so many believers do not understand what it means, and fewer still actually engage in it.

"*Spiritual warfare*" commonly refers to the spiritual activities believers engage in to actively resist the works of hell that would seek to invade avenues and areas of their lives.

"*Spiritual warfare*" is not a spooky thing to do, nor is it something reserved for the "*Super Saints*"—the mighty men and women of God. It is something every believer should learn to do. It is a part of growing up in our faith.

"*Spiritual warfare*" is best understood through the Old Testament story of the occupation of Canaan by Israel. God gave the Israelites a promise—to have Canaan as their land—but they had to go in, drive out the enemies, occupy the land, establish the boundaries and defend those boundaries. Canaan was given, but it had to be possessed through conflict.

God has promises for us to possess and defend, and this will involve spiritual conflict. We have to pray our way into possession of God's promises, and prayer becomes one of the way we set up a defense against the invasions and

encroachments of our spiritual enemies that seek to rob us of the fulfillment and fruition of God's promises and blessings.

In prayer the Lord enables us to:

- *Mark boundaries.*
- *Patrol boundaries.*
- *Protect boundaries.*
- *Extend boundaries.*

Note the words of the Lord Jesus that describe this process of spiritual warfare:

Matthew 16:18-19 (NLT) "Now I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you lock on earth will be locked in heaven, and whatever you open on earth will be opened in heaven."

What kind of prayer sets and protects boundaries:

- *Assertive prayer.*
- *Aggressive prayer.*
- *Authoritative prayer.*
- *Audible prayer.*
- *Attentive prayer.*

3. PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOLY HABITS

One of the best ways to overcome evil in our lives is through the establishment of holy habits. We can never come to spiritual maturity without developing a lifestyle of prayer. Holy habits that overcome evil are developed in us as we pray.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this:

Romans 12:21 (NIV) "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Prayer is like a potter's wheel and kiln. In prayer we are fashioned and formed by the Spirit of God. In prayer, the nature and character of God is fired into our spirit. Godly character, righteous habits, and good works are conceived and birthed in us as we pray.

When these things become a part of who we are, we truly are overcoming evil with good, by the grace of God at work in us.

"Prayer is, above all, fellowship with God and being brought under the power of His holiness...until He...stamps our entire nature with the lowliness of Christ." —Andrew Murray

I encourage you to join me in fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our churches, our beloved nation, and throughout the world.