

## **1. Major Strengths of Murray text.**

Through the reading of Andrew Murray's Living a Prayerful Life one would be hard pressed not to feel lead into the very attitude and act of prayer that is the topic of this text. The book is setup through a series of short insightful chapters that each reflect what this writer sees as the authors prayer to lead others to prayer. This in fact is one of the major strengths of this text. While there have been many books written on prayer, few seem to reflect the style and substance of a prayer themselves. The short and topical nature of each chapter make this text ideal as a devotional to proceed a time of prayer. This text seems exhaustive and there may not be another avenue from which to approach the subject of prayer. The context that Murray writes from suggests that this book itself is a product of a deep and meaningful journey of prayer.

The flow of this text seems to bring the reader first to confront hindrances in his/her own prayer life and then begin to work past these initial barriers and to move into a deeper level of prayer which Murray categorizes in his second section of this book as *The Inner Room*. The heart of the minister and Godly men/women are found in these chapters. Then finally in the concluding section of this text companionship with Christ at the cross is emphasized. The overall flow of Murray's work seems so significantly connected to prayer in that as one reads this work he/she is led slowly and methodically to a place where one wants to be, from the solitary loneliness of the empty life in the flesh to the rich and familial spiritual life of the trinity. The gentle urging of the prayerful life is not merely suggested through the topics covered, but also in how they are covered.

The reader is never scolded or lectured through this book, but rather joins in and is encouraged to embark on this journey of prayer with Murray.

## **2. Major weaknesses of Murray text.**

As stated earlier this text reads as if it itself was conceived through a journey of prayer. This being the genesis of such a work could explain why some topics are repeated in later chapters. For instance, in chapter 2, page 27 living in the flesh verses living in the spirit is discussed. Then in chapter 22, page 119 there is a chapter titled, *Are we Carnal or Spiritual?* This perspective of the flesh and the spirit is mentioned several times throughout the reading and while the author seems to be gently coaxing the reader to a slightly different perspective each time it is revisited. From a developmental standpoint this works, however this writer found himself wanting to move the discussion of similar topics together so that the reader could fully examine all that Murray has to say on specific topics in one long view.

Turning back in the text to reread earlier comment on the importance of obedience to Christ (Murray, 77) while reading a chapter titled *Follow Me* (Murray, 111) and then eventually reading a chapter named *We are Crucified with Christ* (Murray, 141) is the type of recurring comment on a specific topic that perhaps could be more readily consumed if found grouped together. Other topics such as the Trinity, the Holy Spirit and the victory and blessings of prayer were spread out through this text and seemed to be either developed or approached in differing ways at different times.

Due to the recurrence of topical matter this text could seem repetitive at times. The author was arriving at similar conclusions through bringing the reader to prayer

through new avenues and perspectives. This writer felt that Murray had certainly exhausted all possible approaches by the conclusion of his book.

### **3. Three chapters that proved most beneficial to my understanding and practice of prayer.**

Three chapters that stood out to this reader are each from each section of the book and highlighted an area of my life that I struggle with. The first is found in chapter 2 *The Cause of Prayerlessness*. Page 27 contains a list of things that show we are still worldly. This list includes a rising anger, lack of love, how your conscience can be chided by the Holy Spirit when you engage in too much eating and drinking, and the reliance on our own wisdom and power. These have and are sins that I wrestle with daily, viewing them as blockers of my spiritual life as well as reasons to spend time in prayer serves as an encouragement to me.

The next chapter that caused me to stop and spend some time in prayer and reflection was chapter 19 which is titled *Follow Me*. On my desk I have a little wooden plaque that my mother bought for me when I was seven or eight. I can remember pulling it from my Christmas stocking and looking at it, it reads: Chris Follower of Christ. Then on the plaque there is a verse PS 86:11 “Teach me your way O Lord; I will walk in your truth”. My prayer many times in my life has been that the inscription on that plaque is true, that people see me as a follower of Christ and not of men. Leaving the old life behind and spending time with our savior as the disciples did, to be trained by Him has always been my deepest desire. I can be so hot headed and carnal, many times I have been encouraged that Jesus called the ‘sons of thunder’, because I know if he could handle them, he can handle me. The prayer that concludes this chapter was one of the

high points of this text for me. “Lord, draw me, help me, hold me fast. Day by day teach me how to live by faith in your sweet fellowship.”

The concluding chapter of Murray’s text paints the picture of how prayer can truly transform us. “Our Head, Christ, took the lowest place on the cross, and so He has marked out for us, His members the lowest place.” (Murray, 155) With Christ as our example should any Christian think that prayer will cause us worldly gain? Jesus gained favor with His father through finding humility among man. How can I carry the cross today as I follow Christ? How can I turn away from the draw of the flesh to a spirit filled life of following Christ? This chapter reminds me that the very act of prayer is a call to the cross, a call to total humility, forgiveness of sin and a renewal that we cannot provide for ourselves. This charge is a fitting way to complete this text.

#### **4. List several reasons I would encourage a friend to read and study this book.**

When I graduated from college in 1991 from a Christian college I went to work for a Christian company where I was providing teacher training workshops for Sunday school teachers, Pastors and Christian Education directors. To this day I am shocked at the lack of prayer in the church by those in leadership positions. My young naivety consistently caused me to be astounded by those that I thought would have strong prayer lives overlook the importance of prayer in Christian education. Today as I read this text I know there is a need for this book in every church. More than this text, there is a need for pastors and teachers to take the time to experience prayer with others. Not through canned or short prayers prior to church meetings, but the real heart to heart prayers that this text urges people to make.

The surface matter of life can be handled by any organization, but in order to humbly and confidently handle the deep spiritual matters that change lives people must utilize the power of prayer. Thus I would utilize this book with a pastoral team and the deacons of the church to continually encourage prayer, so that others in the church will be called upon in times of crisis or need.

Sunday school teachers also need to lead a deepened prayer life. The creativity that flows from the Holy Spirit and the love for others that is crucial to meeting needs can only be found through a teacher who is free, as Murray writes to try prayer again (Murray, 34).

The crucial focus of this book cannot be overlooked among believers today. Those who spend time in prayer are known as the humble, creative, loving and patient people in our churches they know scripture and are faithful stewards. Shouldn't this be the kind of life changing transformation that we want for ourselves and the entire body of the church? If prayer brings these side effects shouldn't everyone in God's family be encouraged to grow their lives into lives of prayer.