

## *Getting Into High Gear*

I have a very close friend, Phil, who is a very gifted, highly intelligent individual. However, being mechanically-minded isn't one of his gifts. He purchased a small Toyota with a standard gear shift. He'd had the car for about five years. Then one day as he went to shift from 2nd gear to 3rd gear he missed 3rd gear and accidentally put it into 5th gear. He was surprised to discover that his car had a 5th gear! For the last five years he had assumed that his little Toyota was only a 4-speed. He'd taken lengthy trips, all the while driving in 4th gear. No wonder his gas mileage wasn't as good as he had expected.

How many of us go through life, spiritually speaking, in 2nd, 3rd, or 4th gears, all the while never realizing that there is a 5th gear, spiritual speaking, that we are missing? We could be cruising down God's highway in 5th gear, but instead we're poking along in 3rd or 4th gear getting nowhere fast.

If perchance you are feeling spiritually flat, that the Christian life isn't all that it is cracked up to be, then possibly the problem is that you are driving in the wrong gear. In James 5:17 it says that "Elijah was a man just like us," and that "he prayed . . ." The Bible promises so many wonderful things to those who faithfully, earnestly pray. You know the rest of the story. God did incredible things in and through the life of Elijah. What was his secret? What made him different than most of us? He simply took, or should I say made, the time to earnestly pray.

My life took a dramatic change a few years ago as I began to spend more time in prayer. There is a direct correlation between how much I pray and spend time in God's Word, and how God seems to use me. It seems so simple, and yet for years I never really took prayer that seriously. God does! I don't understand it, but I see God using some of the most unlikely people who, nonetheless, are faithful in prayer. I think of a couple of very close friends who seem like your average Christians, and yet God is using them incredibly, far more than most other Christians I know. The one thing both men have in common is that they take prayer seriously. My one friend is on his face before God every morning at 5:30 A.M. for at least an hour. God has now opened doors where this man will now be touching millions of people via books and TV. He is truly humbled.

As an experiment, may I challenge you to earnestly, faithfully spend extended times in pray for just one month and see if you don't notice a difference. If you need some practical help on how to begin, may I highly recommend Bill Hybel's book, "Too Busy Not To Pray." My favorite quote from his book is, "When we work, we work, but when we pray, God works!"

One way to start is to make a list of people and things you wish to pray for, and then use that list as a prayer guide to keep your mind from wandering. Try it.

There is one other matter that can slow us down spiritually and kill our prayer life, and that is harboring private pet sins. Another friend of mine, Fred, unlike Phil, is very mechanical. He loves to tinker on stuff. Once, years ago when he was in high school, he decided to take the top off the carburetor on his old Chevy to make some adjustments. (This was prior to fuel injected engines in case you were wondering!) Unbeknownst to him, just as he put the lid on the carburetor, a fly flew inside the carburetor and of course died. Of all things, the fly's head got sucked into one of the tiny carburetor intake fuel jets. It was a perfect fit. Fred, was driving down the highway when all of a sudden his car began to sputter and jerk. He barely made it home where he checked everything he could think of and still it sputtered. Finally he took it to a professional mechanic who discovered the fly's head stuck in one of the tiny fuel jets. It was such a small thing, and yet it stopped the flow of gas to half the carburetor, rendering this huge car, by comparison, undrivable. Unconfessed sin, no matter how small, can, spiritually speaking, hinder the flow of God's Spirit and stall our progress. I recently had a man tell me, with deep regret, that God used to clearly speak to him and he would never obey. Eventually, he said, God quit speaking. Even though this man is a deacon in his church, the spiritual joy he once knew has been gone for over 30 years.

While it may not be rocket science, cleaning out our spiritual fuel jets and humbly, earnestly learning to pray can have miraculous results. We only get one shot at life. What a waste to go through life in 3rd or 4th gear, or using only half a carburetor, when God created us to power down the road in 5th gear with fuel jets wide open.



