

Introduction Prayer Biography

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In 1955, Francis and Edith Schaeffer founded L'Abri in Switzerland to demonstrate the reality of God through prayer. God so blessed their work that they began writing their many books in the 1960's. Because of the wide circulation of Dr. Francis Schaeffer's books in several foreign languages, many people associate their work only with logical arguments for God's existence, with honest answers to honest questions, and with good reasons to be a Christian. However, time and again Dr. Schaeffer said that his books did not stand alone: they stood with those of his wife's.

Edith Schaeffer's books show the existence of God through answers to prayer and transformed lives. She wrote about the founding of L'Abri and told how they based their work on prayer. They prayed for God to send the people of His choice to them; they prayed for God to send the money they needed without soliciting for funds; they prayed for God to give them His direct leading and plan; and they prayed for God to send the co-workers of His choice. Through daily prayer and God's provision in answer to prayer, they intended to manifest the presence of God to those around them, especially to unbelievers.

With their combined methods of arguing for God's existence and then living everyday on the basis of God's really being there in daily communication with them, they strived to maintain a careful balance between the intellectual and the devotional life. When we study their books and lives together, we find good and sufficient reasons to bow before Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. By the grace of God, their total work demonstrates substantially the transforming power of the Word of Truth and the Holy Spirit in leading sinners to the Savior and establishing Christians in faith and obedience.

Time magazine labeled Francis Schaeffer "the missionary to intellectuals." Because of this stature, his philosophy and theology have often been analyzed or criticized in academic books and journal articles. However, no book has looked closely at the Schaeffers' prayer principles in the light of their answers to prayer. In some of her books, Edith Schaeffer illustrated their concern to be people of prayer in the normal course of daily living, but their answers to prayer and combined teachings on prayer are scattered in the midst of their discussions on other topics in both their books and tapes. *How God Teaches Us To Pray* takes thirty-one examples of different types of answered prayer from their lives and works, and shows how God teaches us to pray. Rather than just analyze or criticize their prayer principles, I hope to inspire you to pray daily with greater fervency. I have written with sincere appreciation for their life of prayer, and have not tried to write a critical biography. I have, however, shown many of the difficulties they faced as they prayed for a greater reality of God in their lives.

Francis Schaeffer never wrote a book on prayer, but he did preach on prayer. When we read the letters of Francis Schaeffer beginning in the 1950's, we see the great importance he placed on prayer and reading devotional books (especially in the young Christian's life) for spiritual growth and renewal. From Edith Schaeffer's "letters home from Europe" and later from her "L'Abri Family Letters," from her books *L'Abri* and *The Tapestry*, from her books on various subjects, and through her and Fran's personal ministry, we have a record of many answers to their prayers and a wealth of information from which to select some of the best examples and applications for this devotional book on prayer. I encourage you to read about their many other answers to prayers in their books.

Hudson Taylor with his China Inland Mission, George Muller with his orphanages, Charles Finney with his revivals, C.H. Spurgeon with his sermons, and Andrew Murray with his devotional books have inspired those of their own and succeeding generations to pray fervently for God to meet the needs of others. Likewise, the Schaeffers inspire our generation and will inspire succeeding generations to be ministers of intercession. A. W. Tozer wrote: "Next to the Holy Scriptures the greatest aid to the life of faith may be Christian biography. It is indeed notable that a large part of the Bible itself is given over to the life and labors of prophets, patriarchs and kings--who they were, what they did and said, how they prayed and toiled and suffered and triumphed at last!" *How God Teaches Us To Pray* demonstrates that the Schaeffers' lives may be their most important argument for God's existence. Through God's marvelous and gracious intervention in their lives, we see clearly that God exists, and we discover some principles upon which He acts in people's lives.

As we contemplate how God prepared the Schaeffers for a ministry of prayer, we must marvel at two things God placed on Edith's heart that made their work spread beyond Switzerland and still speak to us today. First, God inspired her to write carefully detailed letters home to her mother and family in America. These letters described God's work in their lives, their work, some ways God answered prayers, and some ways God bestowed grace in their afflictions and overcame Satan's attacks. Second, Edith wrote these letters in ways that would enable her mother to see things through her eyes and experience her emotions. She filled her letters with life and vitality, and carried this God-given talent and

technique into her books. By inspiring her to write these long letters in the way she did, God taught her to write books in a way that would interest and involve thousands of readers for many years. God's guiding Edith to write her mother preserved for us a record of answers to prayer that glorify God. Even though *How God Teaches Us To Pray* is a devotional book with more than thirty-one brief answers to their prayers, I suggest you read *L'Abri* to see how these fit into the context of many other events in their lives and ministry. Her book *The Tapestry* is currently out of print in America.

Dr. Schaeffer believed that a changed life was one of the most important arguments for God's existence, and he prayed that he would be able to show others both the love of God and the truth of God at the same time in the power of the Holy Spirit. Because I have known the Schaeffers since 1978, and saw how they handled Dr. Schaeffer's terminal cancer for more than five years; because I personally know how Edith has continued their ministry for many years since his death, I can testify that they have been and are consistent, honest witnesses to the transforming truth, power, and love of God in the best, worst, and most difficult of times.

I have written *How God Teaches Us To Pray* to glorify God, and show how any believer can pray, live, and have as close a walk with God as the Schaeffers. They were called to a specific type of ministry, but each of us can know God as deeply, as personally, and as powerfully as they did. I hope that as you read the daily devotions in this book that you will praise the God who called them, empowered them, and inspired them to pray as they did so He could answer their prayers. I hope the Holy Spirit will move you to be a more dedicated person of prayer and student of the Word, and I pray you will always know God and His presence as intimately as the Schaeffers.

These devotions do not give little daily formulas for placing God under some kind of an obligation to bless you because you have prayed in a certain way. Teaching about prayer in the context of the Schaeffers' answers to prayer should remind all of us that God is not mechanical, but personal.

The answers to prayer in this book magnify God, because they were given to specific people absolutely devoted to glorifying God at every moment and witnessing for Christ at every opportunity in the power of the Holy Spirit (even though they were the first to say that they never did this perfectly--this remained their intention). I have never heard Francis or Edith Schaeffer pray a selfish prayer, and you will never find a selfish prayer request in their books or letters. If you will make a similar whole-hearted commitment to God before beginning this book, if you will resolve to love, serve, and glorify God unreservedly and unselfishly before you read the first chapter, then by the grace of Christ and through the indwelling Holy Spirit, you will gain far more than I could ever hope or imagine.

Since the Bible must be our primary authority for what constitutes acceptable prayer to God, in each chapter I have compared what they taught and experienced with the Bible's clear teachings about prayer. My goal in this devotional book is to encourage you, as a person of prayer, to pray daily and fervently according to the Scriptures and on the basis of God's steadfast love and faithfulness (which He demonstrated in the lives and teachings of the Schaeffers).

I have included three appendices to help you in the study of this book. Appendix I lists some principles of prayer and where to find them in the various chapters. I encourage you to look for more and write them in the margins of the appendix in their proper place. This appendix acts as a brief summary of each chapter regarding how to pray. Appendix II is a 10-week group study guide on prayer based on this book. It can be used individually and personally to help you apply the teachings in each chapter. If people who are practicing prayer as they study will discuss the ideas in each chapter as a group, then God will teach them many new things beyond the scope of this book as they talk to one another. If the book is to be used by a prayer group, then I would suggest you study only one chapter at each meeting to give you the most time for actually praying. "Notes to the Text" and an "Index to the Scriptures" follow the appendices at the end of the book.

I do wish to acknowledge the help of two of Edith Schaeffer's former secretaries, who listened to and read portions of this book: my wife, Pat Parkhurst, and Ann Wells. My son and daughter, Jonathan and Kathryn, also made helpful comments as we read the manuscript together as a family. Any errors that remain are my own.

May this daily devotional encourage you to pray as ardently as the Schaeffers and expect that God will answer and guide you as faithfully as He did them. May the Lord bless this book, as I seek to glorify Him by pointing out His work in their lives and what He can do in our lives through fervent prayer. I have included my own prayers at the close of each devotional as an expression of my thankfulness to God for teaching us how to pray.

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