



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING
WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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THE BLACKSMITH'S SECRET

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. Luke 6:12, NIV

It happened frequently. The door of my office would be closed, and I would be quietly working or engaged in conversation with someone when suddenly the door would open, and a lean, dignified, rather tall American of German descent—then in his 90's— would come marching in, having done an “end run” around the receptionist and my assistant, much as a defensive tackle would do in breaking through the line of scrimmage in a football game. In his hand would be a magazine article or something encouraging which he wanted me to have. He stayed for only a few brief moments. Then he was gone, often reminding me of Elijah who appeared unannounced in the court of King Ahab.

“Who was that?” people would ask.

“*That*,” I explained, “was Armin Gesswein,” and he had executive privilege. He was a dad in the Lord to me for a long time, and he was a very special person. This saint—a real man of God if ever there was one—for more than 70 years bore a name which was synonymous with prayer, having conducted prayer rallies for Billy Graham’s crusades and establishing an organization known as Revival Prayer Fellowship, which brought pastors and Christian leaders together for prayer.

How did Armin learn the importance of prayer?

Armin was a young Lutheran pastor, age 24, striving to plant a church on Long Island, New York, and things were not going terribly well. In his church fellowship was a retired blacksmith, about 50 years his senior. Armin had noticed that when this man prayed, things happened. He said, “The prayer and the answer were not far apart—in fact, they were moving along together.” Armin explained, “His ‘prayer muscles’ were extremely strong because of much exercise.” Wanting to learn his spiritual secrets, Armin asked if he might join the old blacksmith in prayer.

Going to the blacksmith’s home, they crossed the driveway and went to the old barn where they climbed up into the hay loft. Armin prayed. Then Ambrose Whaley, the old blacksmith, prayed. Finally Armin turned to the old man and said, “You have some kind of a secret in praying. Would you mind sharing it with me?”

“Young man,” said the old blacksmith, “learn to plead the promises of God.” The old man had knelt between two bales of hay, and on each bale of hay was an open Bible. His two large hands, gnarled and toughened by years of hard labor, were open, covering the pages of each Bible.

Armin learned his lesson well. “I learned more about prayer in that haymow” says Armin, “than in all my years of schooling for the ministry.” Until his home-going at age 93, Armin Gesswein was still actively speaking, encouraging, and exhorting. The only heritage which Jesus left the Church, he believed, was a prayer meeting.

With him, prayer was not an appendage tacked onto a planning session or a business meeting. It was the main thing, the frontal assault. He’s convinced that one of the reasons both churches and individuals are powerless and overwhelmed with spiritual impotence is that they have not learned the secret of praying, pleading the promises of God.

Understanding the relationship between the promises of God’s Word and what we ask our heavenly Father to do has helped me immensely in my personal life. God honors His word.



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Learn a lesson from a man who constantly would say, "Let's pray!" and he never meant some other time. He meant "now!" And then don't just pray, but pray and stand upon the authority of God's word. Some spiritual secrets are too good to keep to yourself.

Resource reading: Matthew 17