

Starting Point For Effective Prayer:

Understanding prayer is not the issue ...
Knowing God is the issue!

1. Knowing God begins with our humanity encountering His divinity.

*“God bless those who are poor and realize
their need for him,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”*

Jesus – Matthew 5

The Point: Spiritual poverty is where prayer begins, because spiritual poverty is where knowing God begins.



Starting Point For Effective Prayer:

Understanding prayer is not the issue ...
Knowing God is the issue!

2. Knowing God also requires that His divinity encounters our humanity.

⁸ *The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.*
⁹ *The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.*
Psalm 145

The Point: We approach God morally bankrupt and stained with sin ... *BUT God approaches us* resplendent in love & affection, forgiveness & compassion, grace & truth.



Prayer will always remain a vague, safe exercise until we are impacted by God - exposed to His character, which comes up against our own sinfulness and the culture in which we live which deeply infects us as people ...

At this point we discover that we are loved by God, and known by him – a true friend who knows everything about me and accepts me because he loves me.

When this occurs, we also realize that we are imprinted with His image and likeness, having the divine ability to relate to and communicate with God in prayer.

James Houston



Assumptions:

1. Prayer is instinctual.

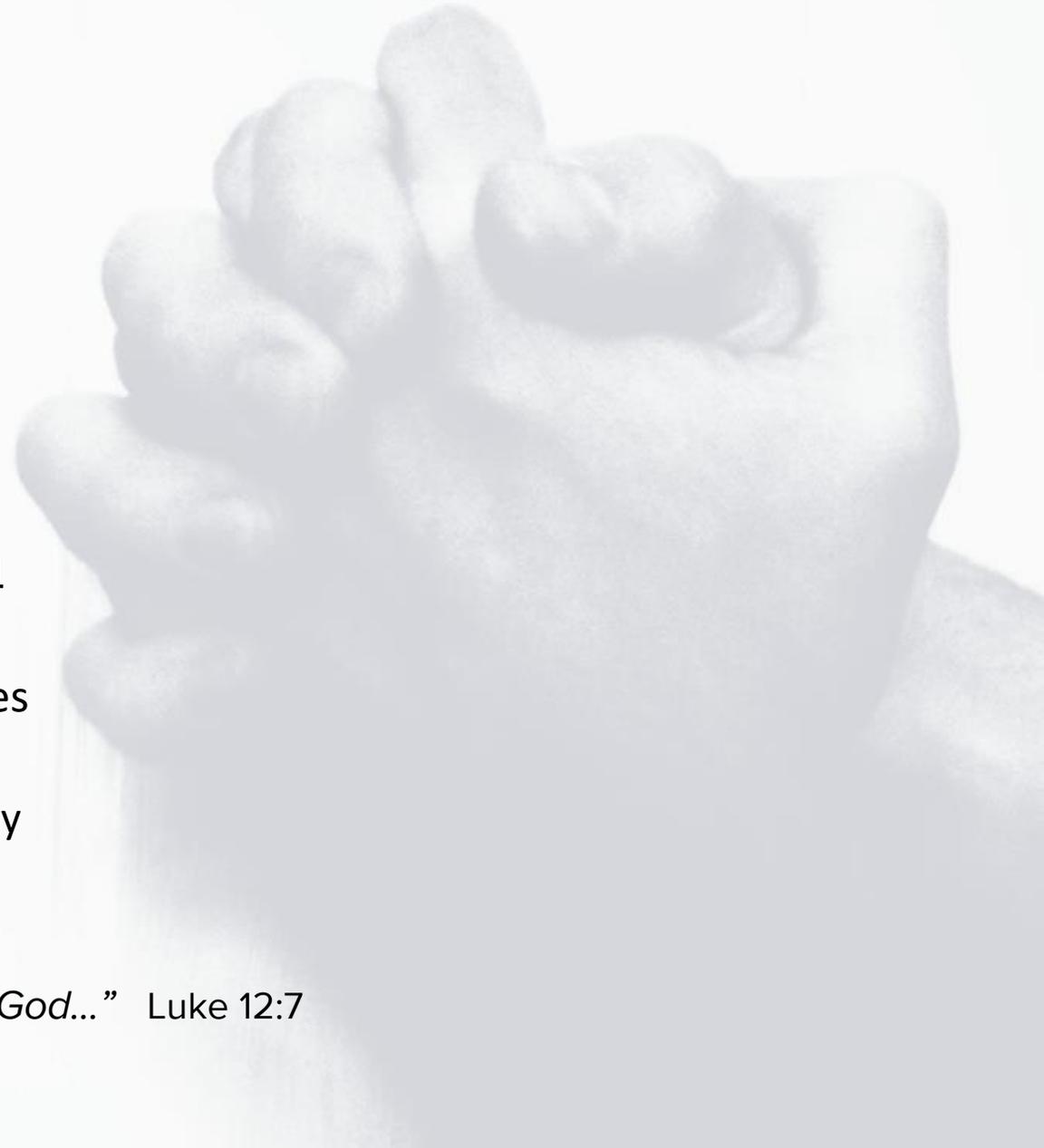
- God has “wired” us to seek Him in prayer.

2. Prayer originates with God.

- He initiates a conversation with us.
 - ✓ this is the Bible’s great story: God creating a world to share in His glory and goodness with.

3. Prayer is relational in its purpose, and individual in its content.

- God knows every person He has created, and invites us into prayer personally & individually.
 - ✓ this, too, is the Bible’s great story, and especially the New Testament’s.
 - “Ask ... Seek ... Knock ...” Matthew 7:7-8
 - “The hairs on your head are numbered by God...” Luke 12:7



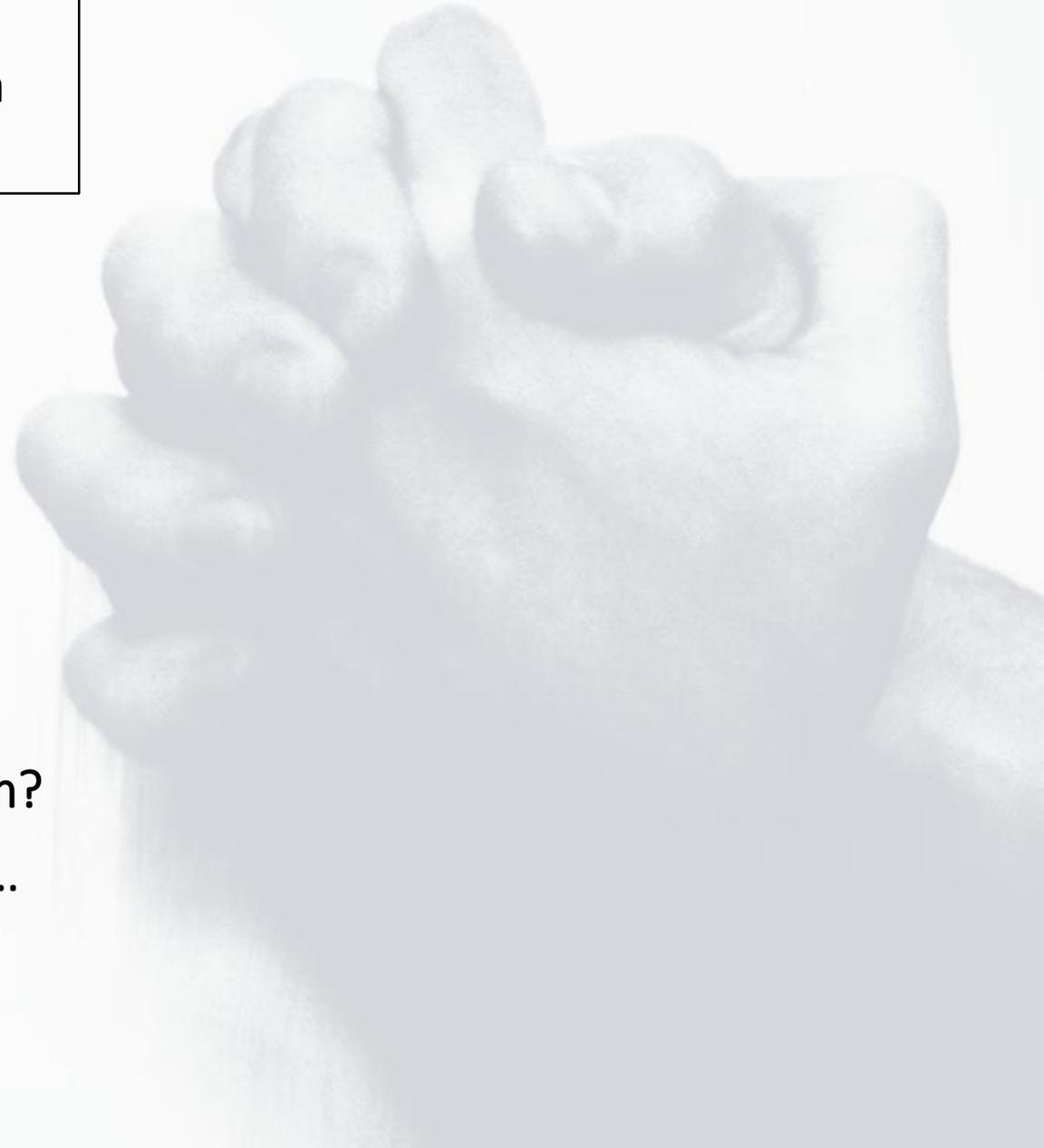
The Point: Prayer is *our* reply to God ... as *He* seeks to develop an individual, personal connection with us.

Christian prayer is the continuation of a conversation that God has started ... and seeks a real, personal connection with our Creator – not simply to get information about Him, but to actually meet Him and hear what He has to say to us.

Tim Keller

So then ... How has God provided for us to know Him?

- what are the preferred ways He speaks ...



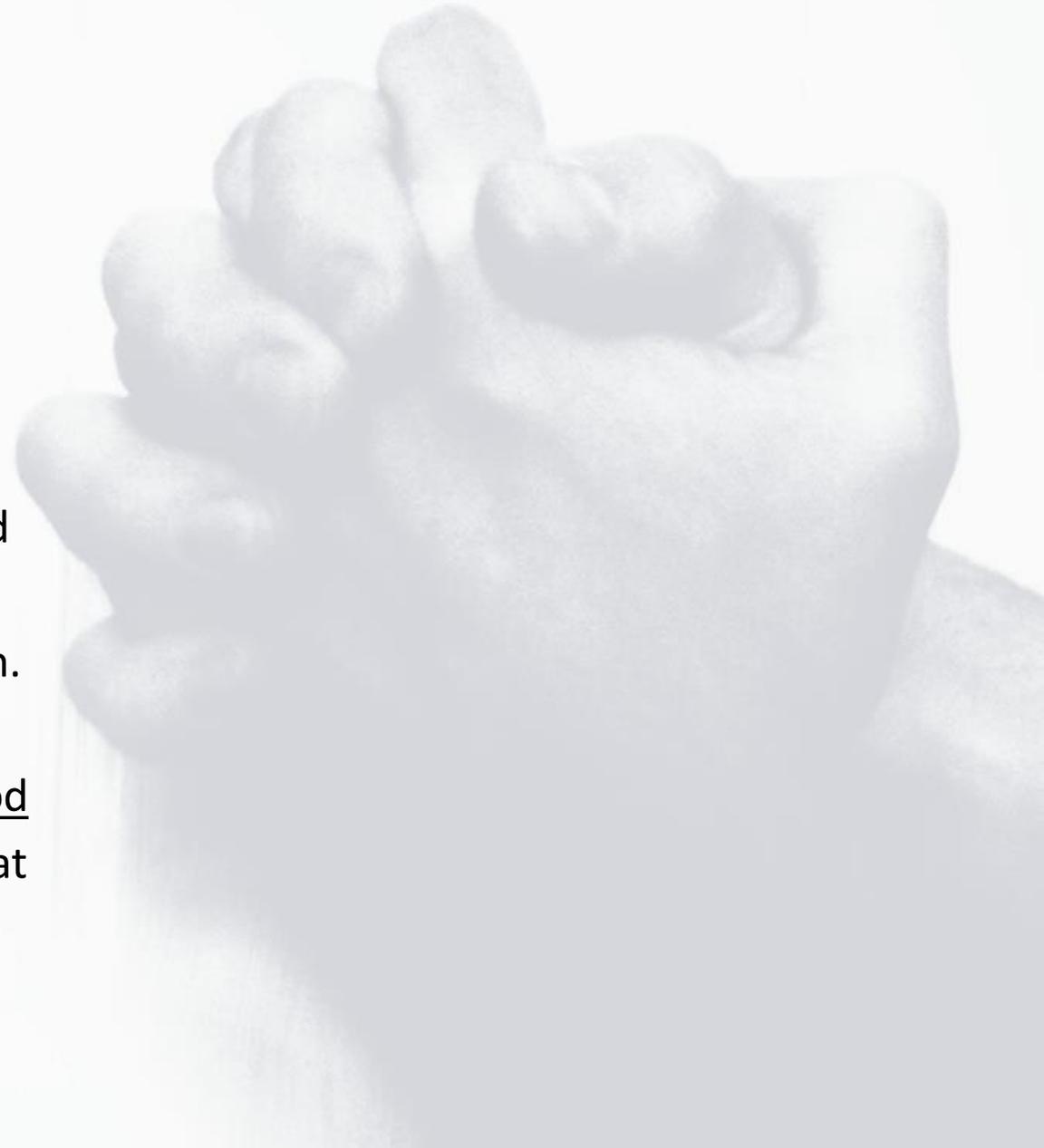
4. The Holy Spirit.

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Ephesians 6

It is impossible for the *natural* person to understand God simply by using their natural faculties, because God can only be understood when we are alive *spiritually* – surrendered to Him, forgiven by Him and filled with Him. ... When this happens we begin to experience spiritual realities in the way that God intended ... the Spirit of God speaks to us in our inmost being, revealing the plans that God has for us, (and) all this gives us the confidence to pray to God knowing that He hears us.

James Houston

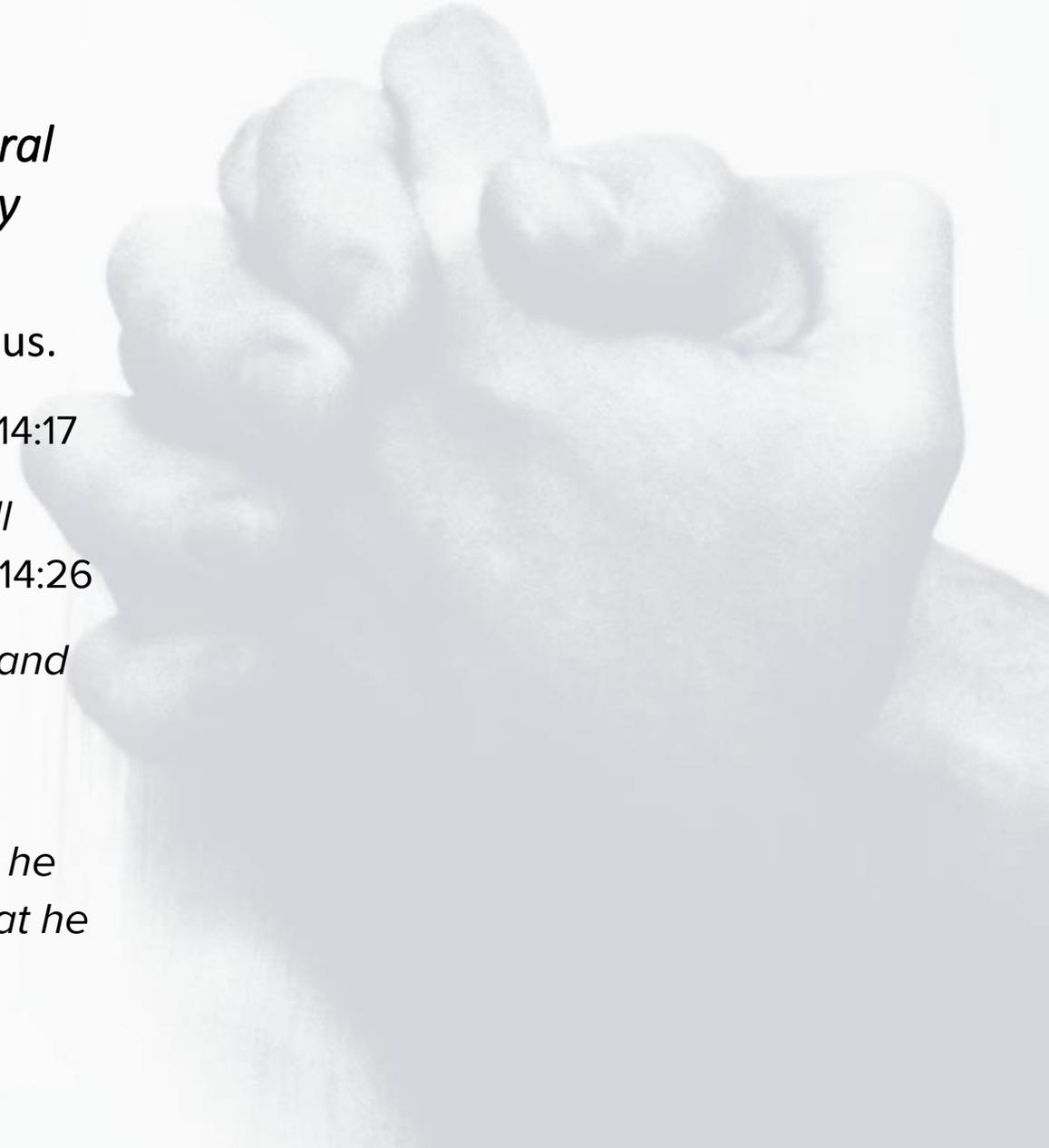


So ... What does it mean to “*Pray in the Spirit*”?

1. It does ***not*** mean that the Holy Spirit is a *supernatural power* that we wield ... but a *supernatural Authority* that we are under.

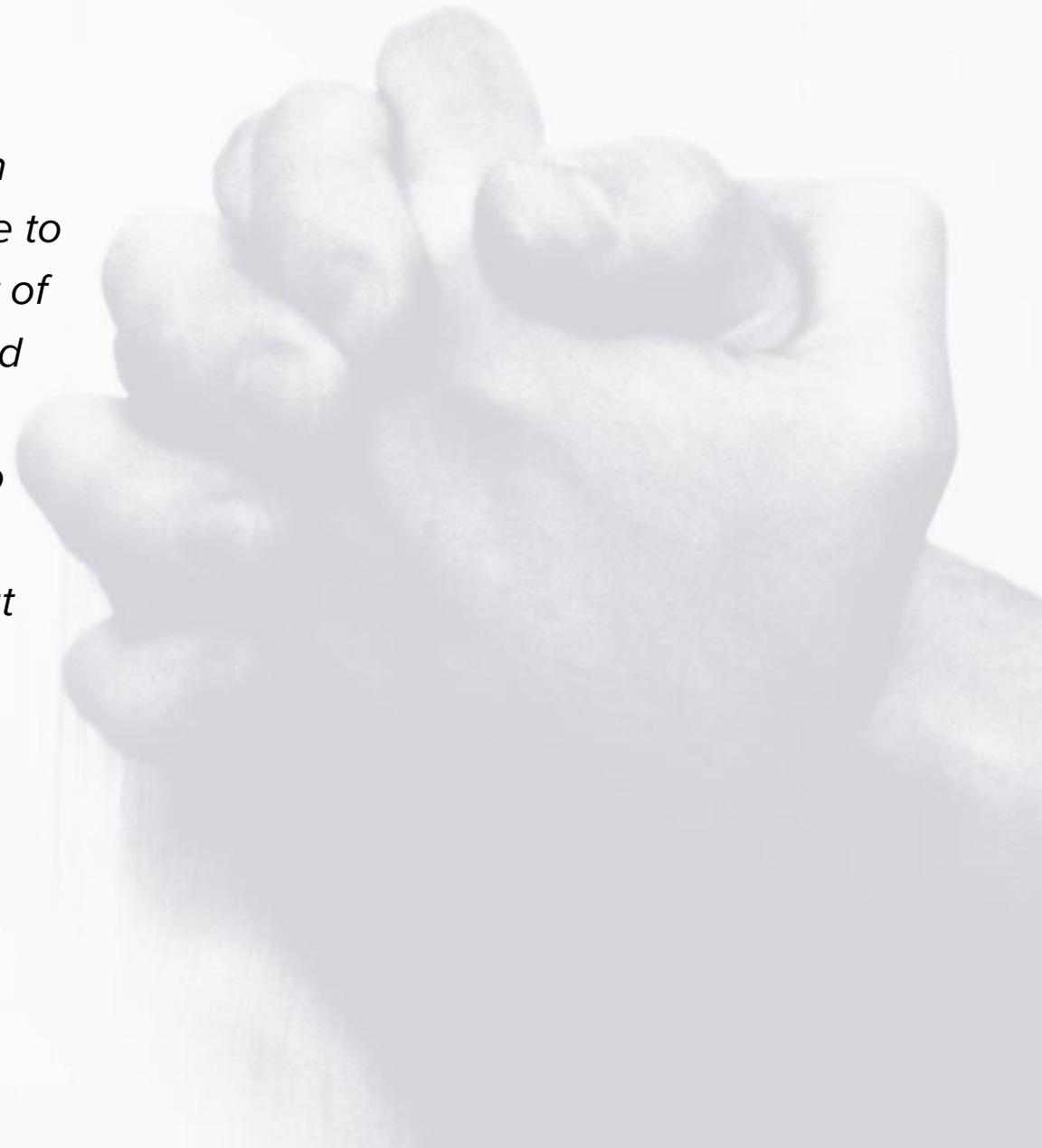
Caution: we do not direct the Spirit, the Spirit directs us.

- ✓ *The Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth ... John 14:17*
- ✓ *The Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and will remind you of everything I have told you ... John 14:26*
- ✓ *The Holy Spirit will come to you from the Father and will testify about me ... John 15:26*
- ✓ *The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth – not speaking to you on his own, but telling you what he has heard ... bringing me glory by telling you what he receives from me ... John 16:14*



⁶ Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16

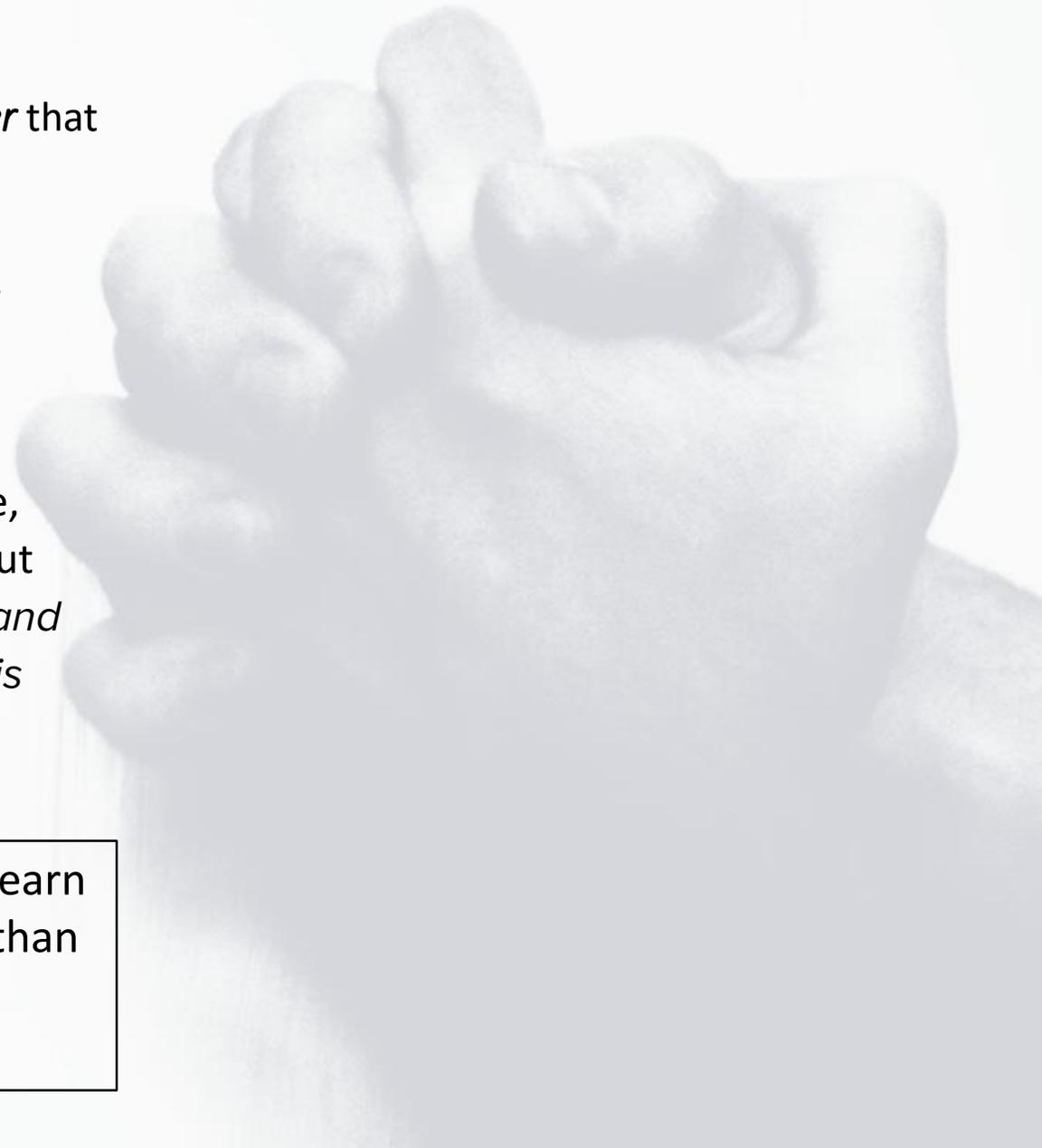


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1. It does ***not*** mean that the Holy Spirit is a *supernatural power* that we wield ... but a *supernatural authority* that we are under.
2. It does ***not*** mean that the Holy Spirit is a *supernatural performance* that we exhibit ... but an intimate and prayerful *relationship* we experience.
 - Praying in the Spirit is not about a heavenly language, a prophetic word, or a miraculous healing ... but about “*knowing Christ, and the power of his resurrection and the sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death ...*” (Philippians. 3:10)

As we enjoy the presence of God in the Holy Spirit, we learn to see him more for the relationship we have with him than for any particular phenomena he brings.

Houston



Performances of power are no substitute for a personal and prayerful knowledge of God. As Jesus said, *“Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are registered in heaven.”* (Luke 10:20).

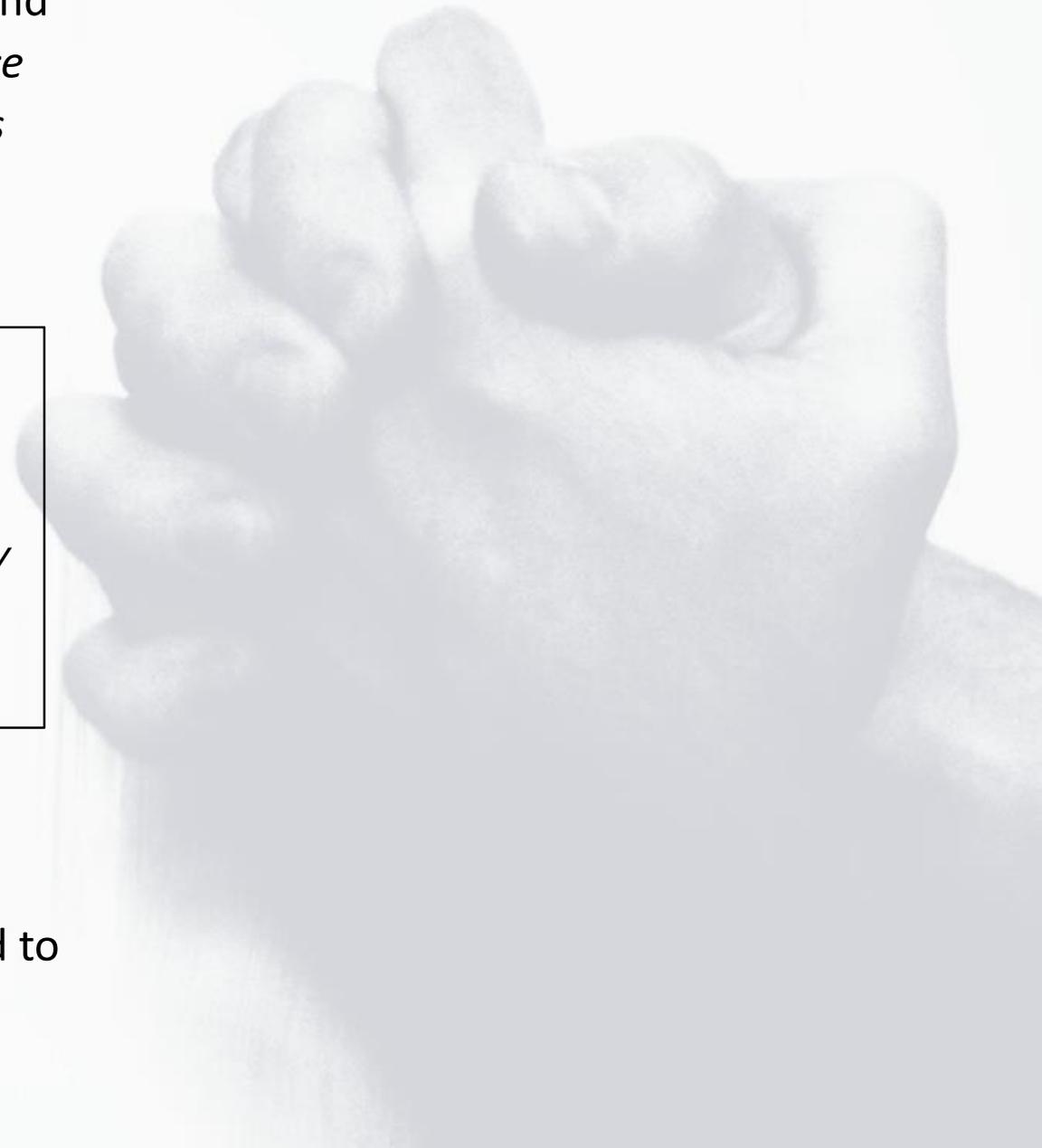
Houston

*²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and drive out demons in your name and in your name perform many miracles?’
²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

Jesus - Matthew 7

Divine power does not travel in *words*, but in a *personal relationship*. We cannot simply say the right words and shout the right commands and expect results. Jesus had to be led by his Father, and so do we.

Jack Deere



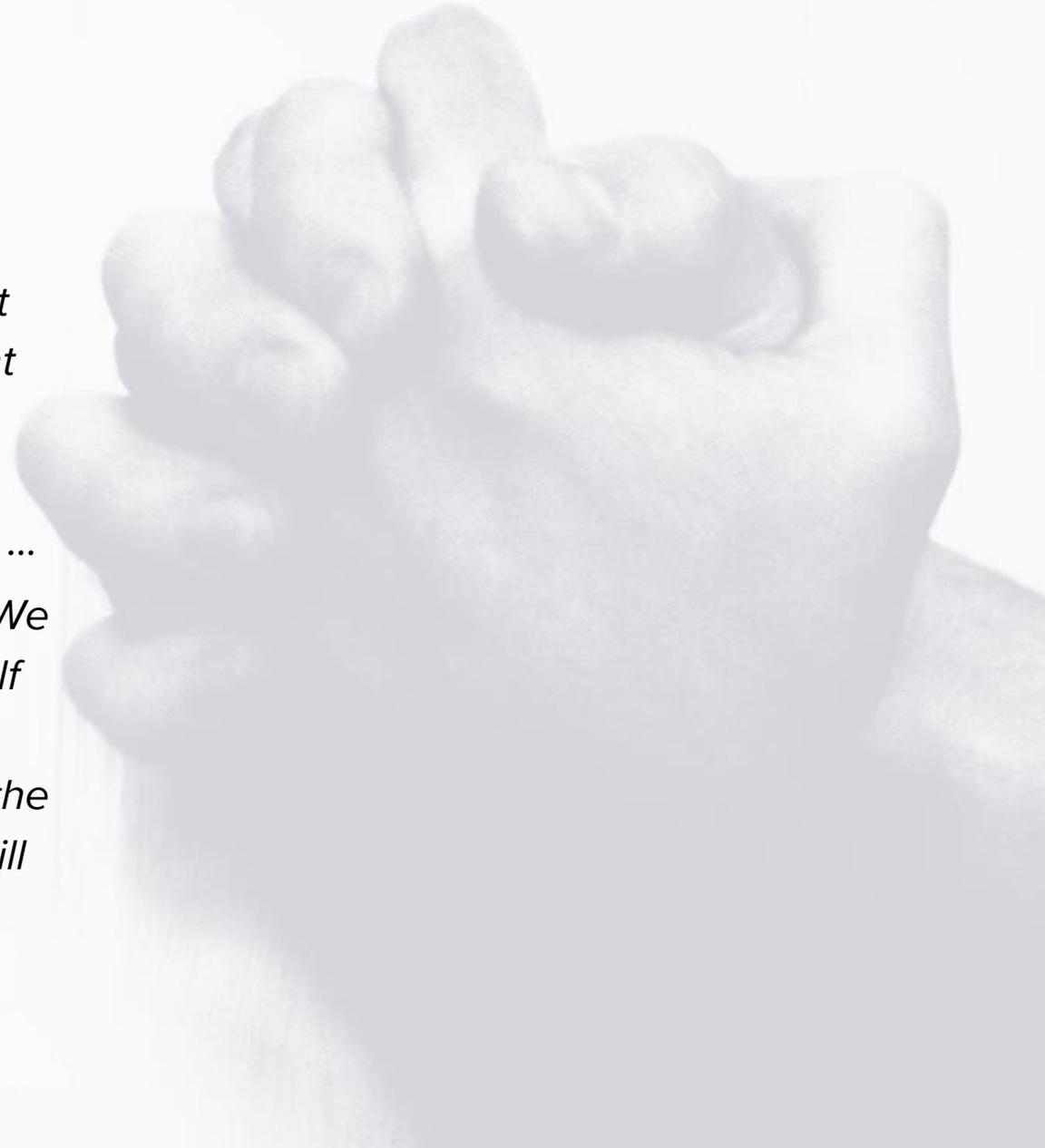
So ... What does it mean to “Pray in the Spirit”?

3. It **does** mean the Spirit overcomes for us our human inadequacies.

¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children – ¹⁷ heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ ...

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 8



So ... What does it mean to “*Pray in the Spirit*”?

3. It ***does*** mean the Spirit overcomes for us our human inadequacies.

a. when our prayers are inexpressible.

²⁶ ...We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

b. when our prayers lack insight.

²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

c. when our prayers are self-focused.

²⁶ ...We do not know what we ought to pray for ...



So ... What does it mean to “*Pray in the Spirit*”?

4. It does mean the Spirit reveals to us the mysteries of God.
... not the *answers* ... but the *mysteries*.

a. mystery of being filled with the presence of God.

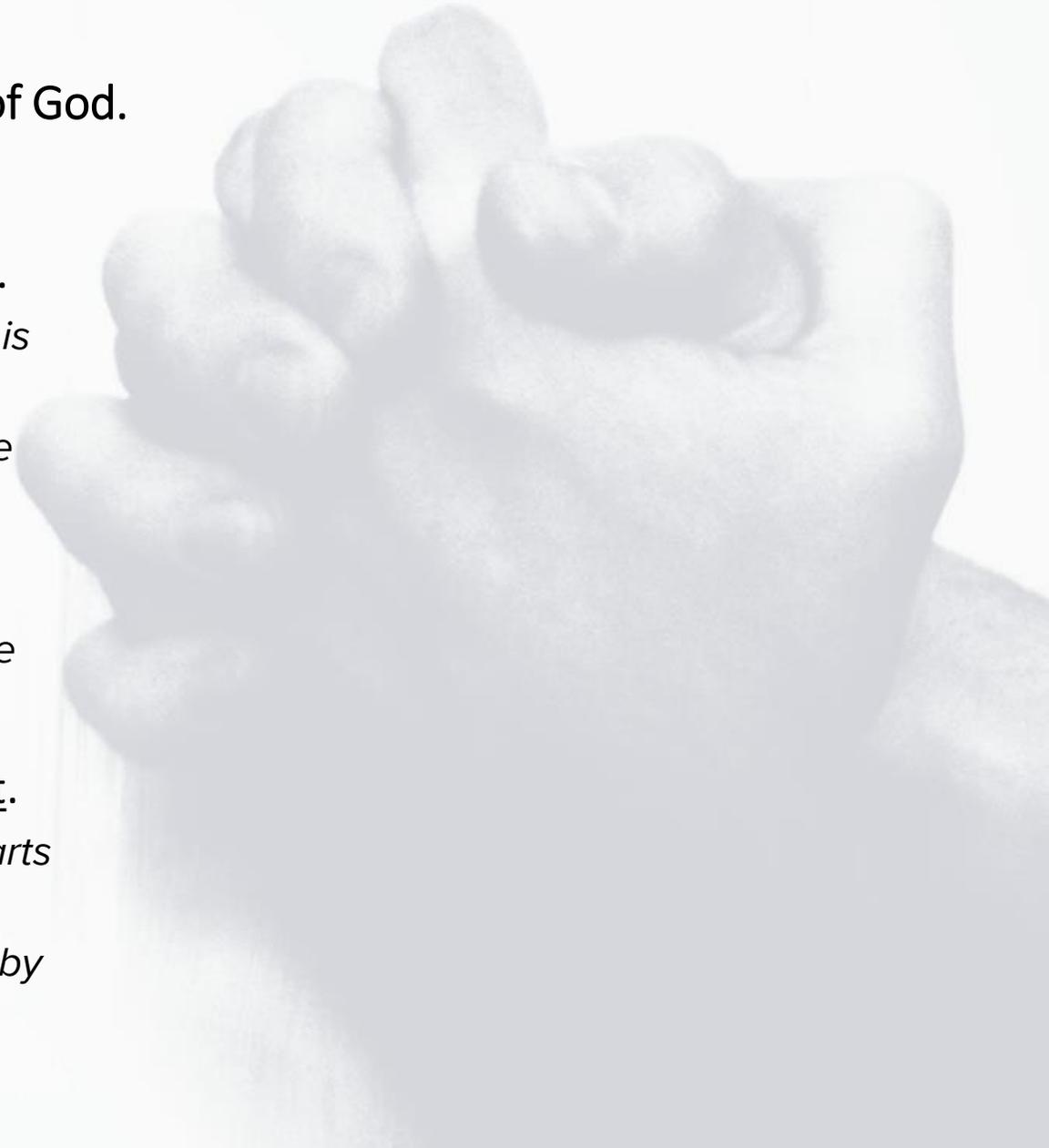
¹¹... the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, and the one who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. (Romans 8)

b. mystery of knowing Christ, and being known.

¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. (Romans 8)

c. mystery of being a member of the Body of Christ.

¹² The human body has many parts, and the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³ ... we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.



So ... What does it mean to “*Pray in the Spirit*”?

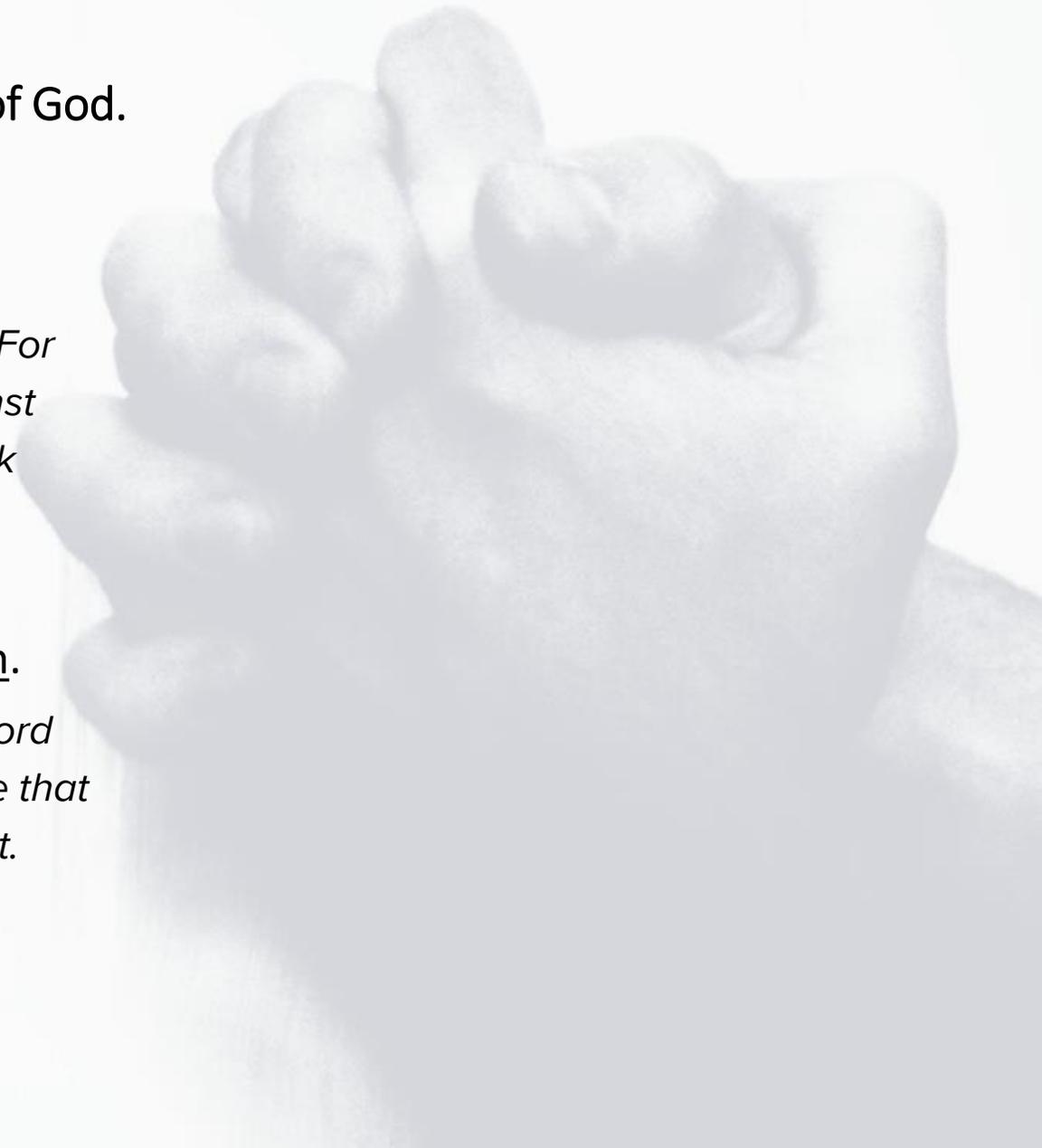
4. It does mean the Spirit reveals to us the mysteries of God.
... not the *answers* ... but the *mysteries*.

d. mystery of fighting against supernatural forces.

¹⁰ Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power... ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, and the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
(Ephesians 6)

e. mystery of living in heavenly, not human wisdom.

¹⁷ Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸ Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.
(Ephesians 5)



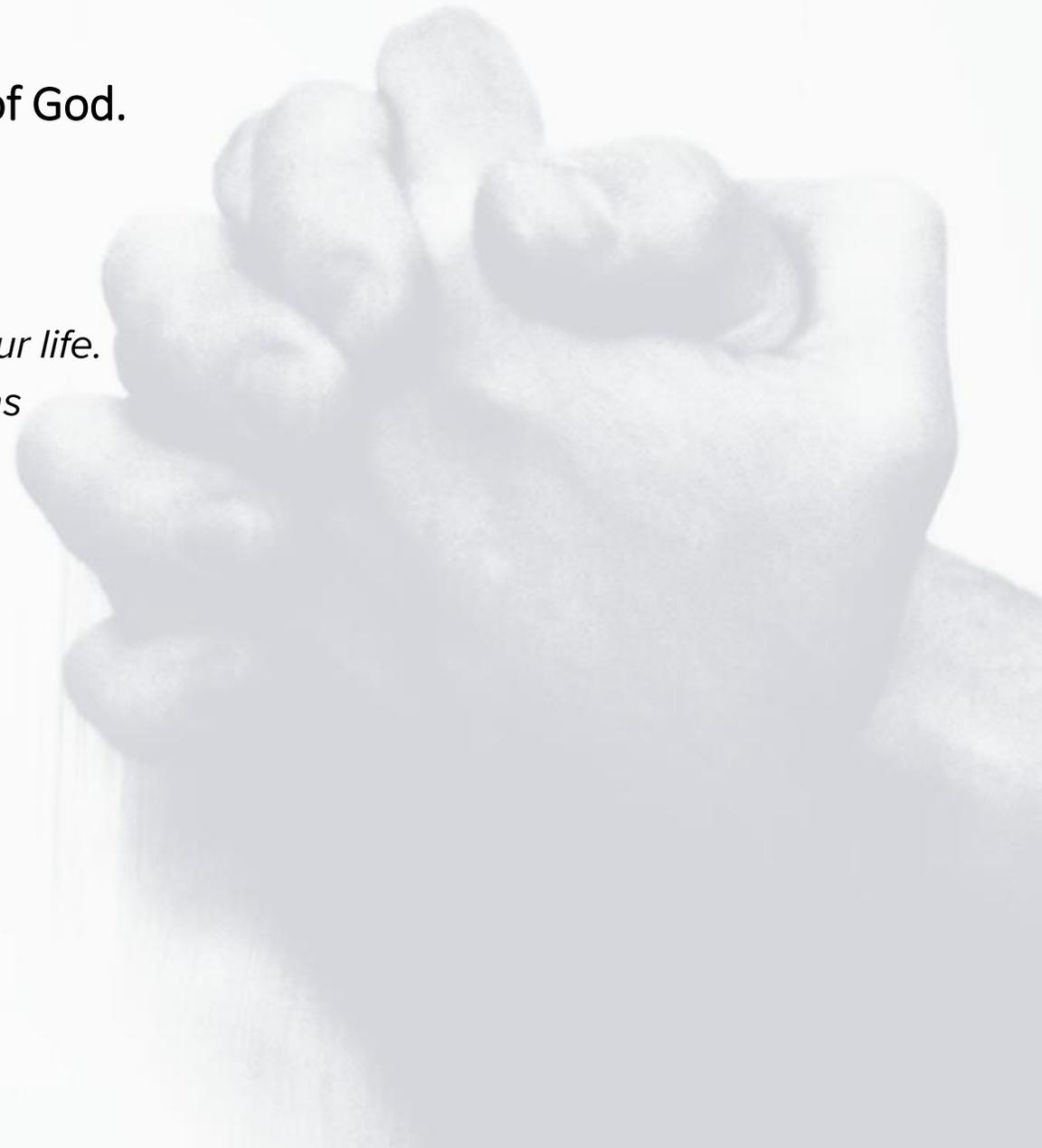
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... not the *answers* ... but the *mysteries*.

f. mystery of worshipping in the Spirit.

¹⁸ Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰ and giving thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..

(Ephesians 5)



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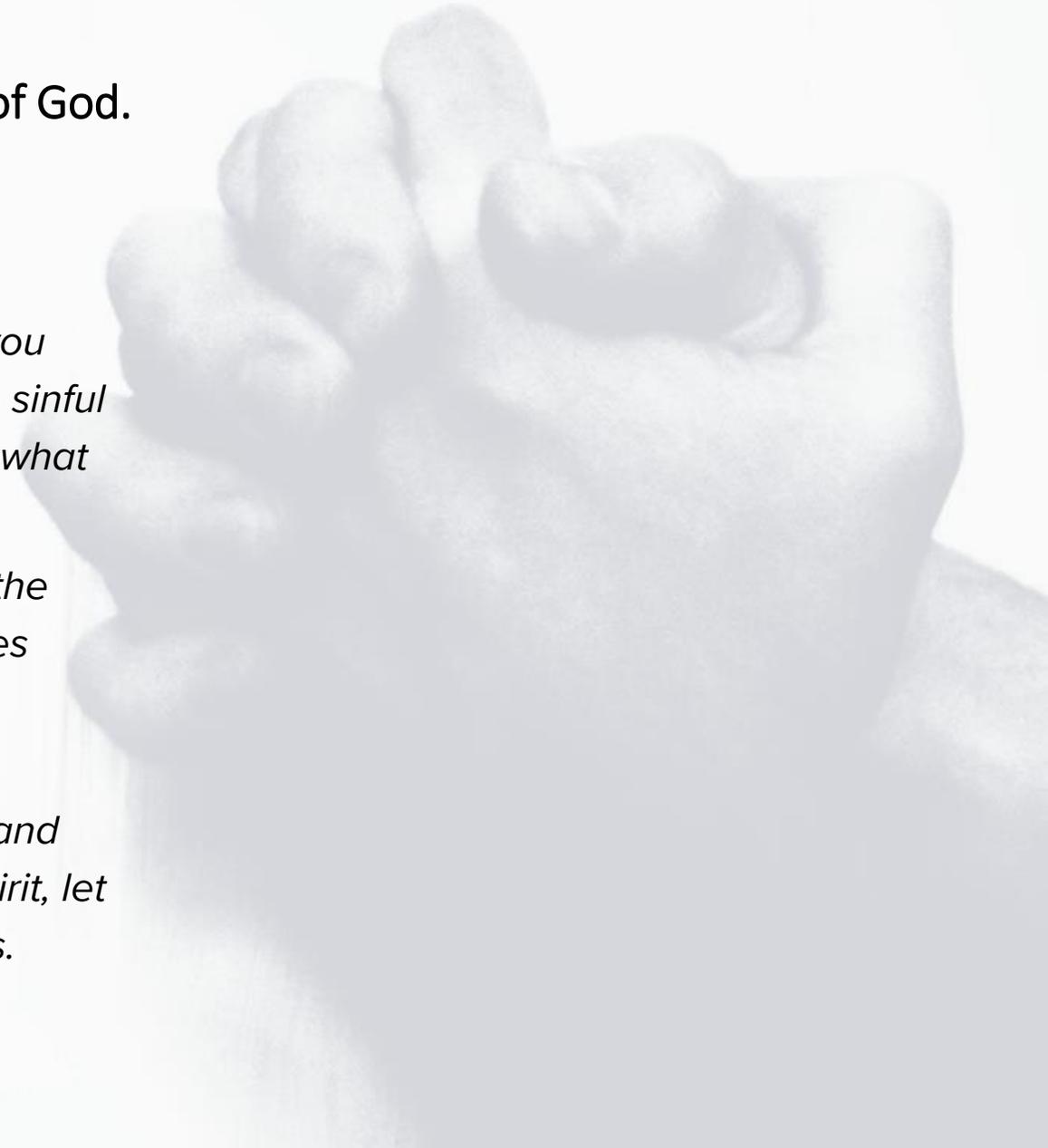
g. mystery of being transformed to be like Jesus.

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants ...

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear ... ²² But the Holy Spirit produces another kind of fruit in our lives ...

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions & desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

(Galatians 5)



So ... What does it mean to “*Pray in the Spirit*”?

5. It does mean that the Spirit possesses us in unity together.

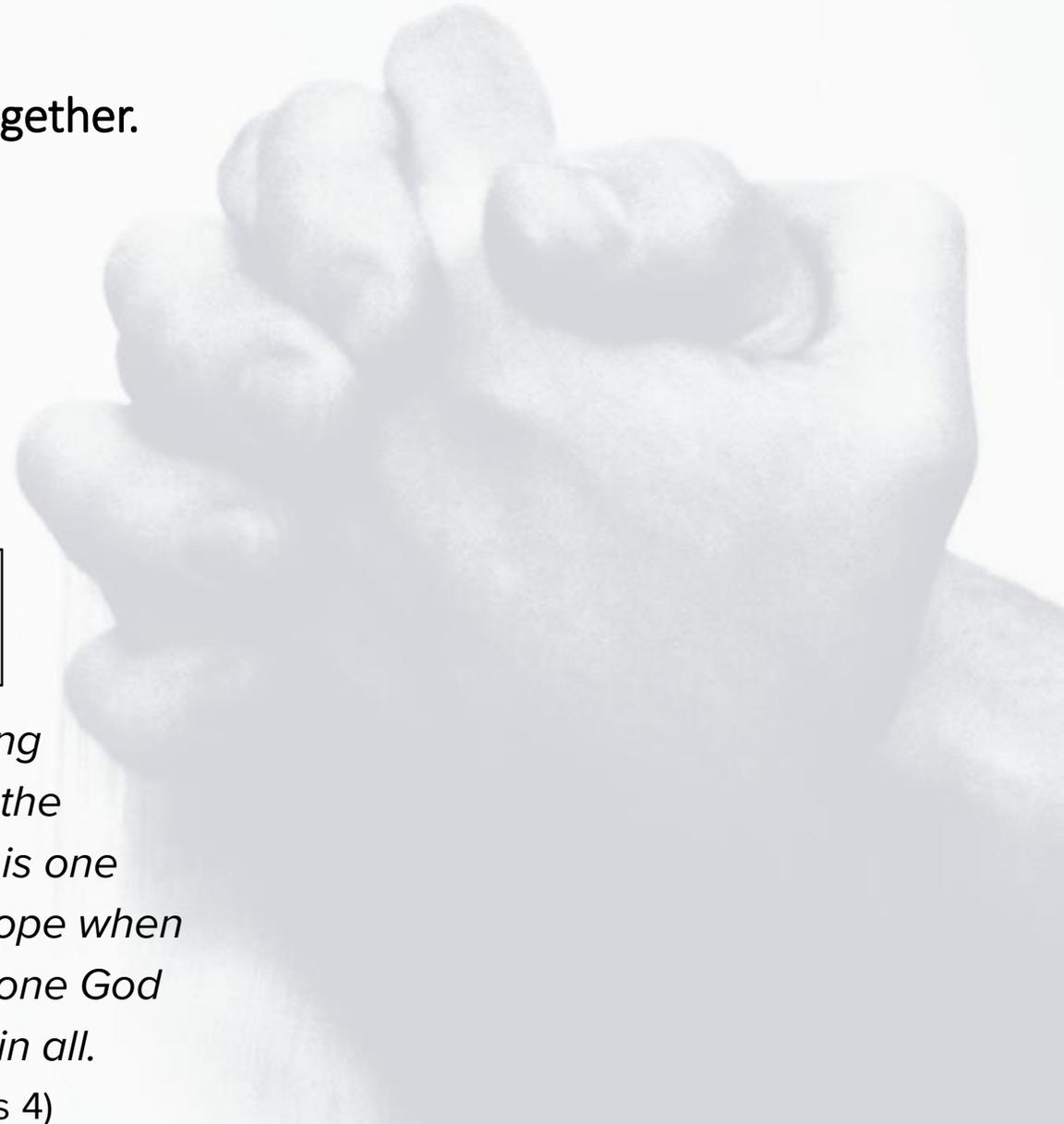
¹⁸ *Pray in the Spirit:* (Ephesians 6)

- *at all times.*
- *on every occasion.*
- *alert & persistent in your prayers.*
- *for all believers everywhere.*

Possessed by the Spirit, we live together in the unity of God’s loving authority:

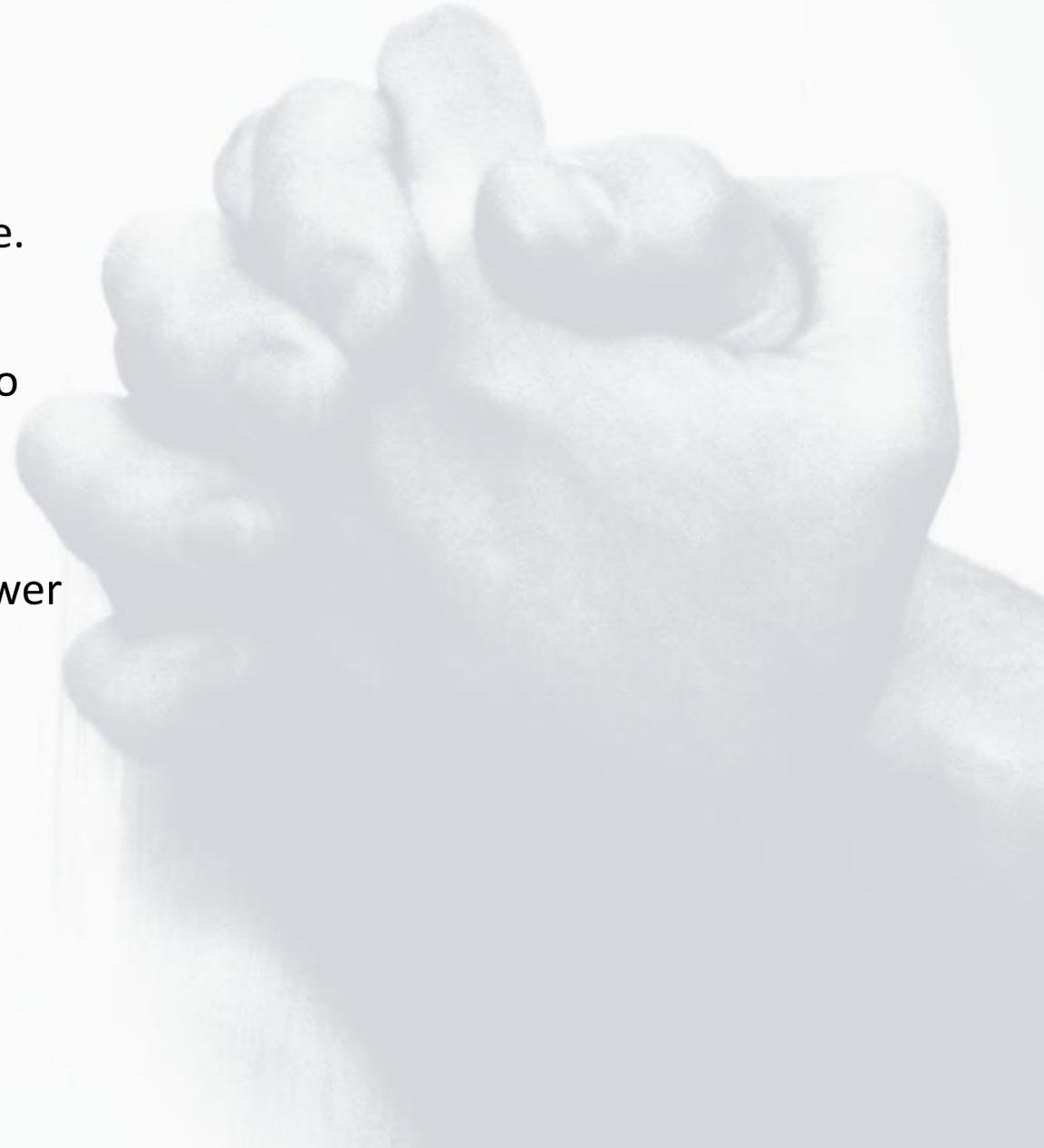
² *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* ³ *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;* ⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism;* ⁶ *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

(Ephesians 4)



Summary: *“Praying in the Spirit”* requires:

1. The Spirit’s authority.
 - I don’t direct the Spirit ... the Spirit directs me.
2. The Spirit’s intimacy.
 - I seek the Spirit in genuine friendship, with no hidden agenda.
3. The Spirit’s intervention.
 - I trust the Spirit’s supernatural wisdom & power everyday for every circumstance.
4. The Spirit’s unity.
 - I never leave a relationship unattended.



To pray in the Spirit is the inward principle of prayer ... it comprehends both the spirit of the person praying, and the Spirit of God by which our spirits are fitted for and acted in.

William Gurnell – 1616-1679

