



Lord,
Teach Us To Pray

Part 1

Brian Caughley

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“Lord, Teach Us to Pray!”

INTRODUCTION

To many people, prayer is little more than bringing a “shopping list” of requests to God, hoping that He will hear and answer.

I trust that after you have read this book, you will realize that there is *far* more to true prayer than you have ever thought of before. Prayer is not just talking **to** God; it is talking **with** God – a two-way conversation and fellowship with God – getting to know God so that we can pray more effectively, and so that we can make Him known better to other people.

Many Christians do not really know how to pray. Like the early disciples we all need to say “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1)

This book is designed to show you some of the types of prayer: praise, thanksgiving, intercession, confession, supplication, and so on. Then, in the latter part of this book, we deal with some specific topics for intercession, ways in which we can pray, and specific topics for which we should intercede.

Intercession is a major part of the ministry of *Pray for the Nation* (Intercessors for New Zealand), and these prayer suggestions are designed to both encourage and help individuals and prayer groups in praying for the Church and Nation. (There is a description of the work of *Pray for the Nation*, and how you may join, at the end of this book).

The whole subject of Prayer can be considered to be made up of four main parts, conveniently arranged under the letters **A – C – T – S**

- A** – Adoration
- C** – Confession
- T** – Thanksgiving
- S** – Supplication

These four parts can be defined as follows:

Adoration is *worshipping* God for Who He is: His greatness, goodness, love, etc. (John 4:23-24). Adoration is *acknowledging* all He has done in creation, redemption, His daily

acts, etc. (Proverbs 3:6). It is *praising* and loving God with all our being. See Psalms 148 and 150, for example.

Confession is *acknowledging* and *repenting* of our sins, and asking God's forgiveness. See Psalm 51, for example.

Thanksgiving is expressing *gratitude* for all God has done for you and others, and for answered prayer. See Psalm 136, for example.

Supplication is *asking* God to supply your needs and for His help; and asking God to meet the needs in other people's lives (*intercession*). See John 17, for example.

In a good diet there is always a balance between those things which we need to live healthy lives. Likewise, in our prayer life there should be a balance between the things listed above. We should not always be asking for things for ourselves, for example. Notice in the Lord's Prayer that there is a balance between Adoration, Confession and Supplication (Matt. 6:9-13).

The following pages contain principles (not hard-and-fast, legalistic rules) which, if followed, will greatly increase the effectiveness of our prayer lives (James 5:16b). Do not come into bondage to a system or set of rules or formulas, but rather let the Spirit of God take these thoughts and suggestions, and apply them to your prayer life as He wills.

May the Lord bless you as you draw near to Him; may He bless our nation as you intercede for it; and may His Name, above all else, be glorified and praised!

1

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Most people have heard of "the Lord's Prayer" and many people can recite it. It is a prayer outline which Jesus gave to His disciples when they asked Him to teach them to pray. It is amazingly simple and amazingly short! The following is a free translation of the Greek, both from Matthew's Gospel and from Luke's.

It came about that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “*Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.*” He said to them, “When you pray, say: ...****

Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father, Who is in Heaven,
Let Your Name be hallowed.
Let Your Kingdom come.
Let Your will be done on earth
as it is in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts as indeed
we forgave our debtors.

Bring us not into temptation,
but rescue us from evil (*or, the
evil one*).

Luke 11:1-4

Father,
Let Your Name be hallowed.
Let Your Kingdom come.

Give us each day our bread for
tomorrow.
Forgive us our sins, for indeed
we ourselves forgive everyone
who owes to us.
Lead us not into temptation.

Notice that there is no reference anywhere in the Bible to this prayer ever having been prayed, either by Jesus or by His disciples! The reason is found in the words “Pray, then, in this way ...” or “Therefore, pray thus ...” or “Therefore pray after this manner ...” That is, Jesus did not intend this prayer to be recited as such; it is basically a list of prayer points rather than a prayer we must pray. Luke’s account of the Lord’s Prayer consists of 5 short, simple sentences, and Matthew’s account only contains 6 short sentences. Of course, Jesus taught much more about prayer, and the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament give us many prayer principles, which we shall look at.

Let us look at some of the words and phrases which make up this prayer outline which Jesus gave His disciples. Note that while the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew and Luke only consists of the above few sentences, what we usually call the Lord’s Prayer today has some further words added onto the end. We shall look at the Lord’s Prayer in this longer format.

“**Our**” Jesus gave this pattern of prayer to His disciples as a whole, for their corporate prayer times. While God is also “my” Father, in times of corporate united prayer we are

especially reminded that He is “our” Father. Jesus encouraged His disciples both to *pray together* and *agree together* in prayer (Matt. 18:19-20).

“Father” Here Jesus shows us that in our prayers we come to the Lord as a child comes to a loving, caring, understanding Father. While it is true that He is the Lord God Almighty, creator of the whole universe, He is neither remote nor unconcerned about our needs (Heb. 4:14-16). The Lord’s Prayer thus does not begin “Almighty, eternal and most holy God ...” (although He is!); it begins “Our Father ...”

“Who is in Heaven” Nevertheless, while He is our Father, and we can approach Him as such, this does not mean we can become casual or disrespectful to Him. He dwells in Heaven; He rules over all; He, above everyone else, is Lord. Familiarity can breed contempt, but the balance between calling Him our Father and recognising that He reigns in Heaven, will bring both respect and awe, as well as a sense of His closeness, love and care.

“Let Your Name be hallowed” God’s holy Name is to be respected, honoured and treated as holy (hallowed). There is a Name which is above every Name, and at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord” to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

No wonder the third commandment forbids people taking the Name of the Lord our God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain (Ex. 20:7). In fact, God’s Name is to be praised, and He is to be worshipped and adored (Rev. 4:8-11; 5:8-14; 19:4-8)

“Let Your Kingdom come” God’s desire is that His Kingdom should be set up on earth, where He is recognised as Lord and where everyone worships and serves Him (Matt. 4:10). He is the King; true believers are His subjects, His servants; and His Kingdom is where He is acknowledged in this way. In one sense the Kingdom of God has already come, and where Christians serve, obey, love, honour and worship Him as King, there is part of His Kingdom. In another sense, it is yet to come. May it soon come in all its fulness! For this we are to pray.

“Let Your will be done” What a place this world would be, if God’s will was perfectly carried out here on earth! Indeed, what a place the Church would be, if His will was perfectly carried out by the Church! We cannot fully comprehend or imagine what the world or the Church would be like if this was the case! We need to intercede that God’s

will *will* be done – not partially but completely and perfectly; not just His permissive will but His absolute, perfect will. “Lord, let it begin in me!”

“On earth as it is in Heaven” In Heaven we see the will of God perfectly fulfilled. When Satan and his angels sinned and rebelled against God they were cast out of Heaven because there is no place for sin, rebellion or anything short of God’s perfect will and purpose, and God’s holiness, that can remain in Heaven (Rev. 21:7-8; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). We need to intercede that God’s will will be done as perfectly here on earth as it is in Heaven. And this prayer needs to start being answered in my life, and then in the life of the Church, before it will ever be answered in the whole earth.

The fact that we will never see this totally fulfilled before Jesus returns does not negate the fact that Jesus told us to pray that prayer; and also let us start to move in the right direction at least, even if we do not fully achieve it!

“Give us today (each day) our daily bread” God has wonderfully promised to supply all our needs (Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:19). He has also told us to ask (Luke 11:5-13). In fact, God’s Word tells us that one of the reasons we do not have (sometimes) is because we do not bother asking (James 4:2). Thus Jesus taught His disciples to supplicate – to ask for things that they needed. God has not promised to supply all we want, but He will supply all that we need. He has not promised to supply our needs years in advance, but He will give us our daily bread, day by day, each day’s supply being sufficient for that day (Matt. 6:33-34; Ex. 16:11-30). Remember, for example, how God provided manna and water for the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 16 and 17:1-7), how He sent ravens to feed Elijah in the desert (1 Kings 17:1-6; 19:5-8) and how He provided day by day for Elijah, the widow and her son (1 Kings 17:8-16).

“Forgive us our sins” This is the prayer of confession. We cannot expect God to hear and answer our prayers if we refuse to confess and forsake our sin. In fact, He has said He will *not* answer them if we will not forsake our sin (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9, 13; Is. 59:1-2). But if we repent and confess our sin, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sin and cleanse (wash) us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7-9).

It is interesting to note the context in which James puts prayer for healing (James 5:13-16). Many people pray for healing; many are anointed with oil for healing; but how many confess their sins first so that they can be forgiven and then healed? Somehow we have “forgotten” (ignored) the repentance and confession, and focussed only on the prayer for good health!

“As indeed we forgave our debtors” Not only must we repent and confess our sins, in order to be forgiven, but we must also first forgive others (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26). Notice that “forgave” is in the past tense: we forgave our debtors, so now we can come to God and ask Him to forgive us! If God has forgiven us so much, what right do we have to refuse to forgive others for the comparatively small wrongs they have done to us? (Matt. 18:23-35).

“Lead us not into temptation” This is a prayer that God will not allow us to fall into temptation. We will all be tested. We will all be tempted (the world, the flesh and the devil make sure of that!) but we need not yield to temptation and end up in sin. Christ was tempted in all points as we are, yet He did not sin (Heb. 4:15-16).

God does not *tempt* us to sin – temptation to sin comes from the devil, working through the flesh and our sinful desires (James 1:12-15).

God *tests* us – He tests and tries our faith, our character, our lives, etc. The devil tempts us, tempting us to sin against God. We need to pray that in the time of temptation we will be strong and not give in to the temptation. God alone can give us the strength we need (Matt. 26:41).

“But deliver us from evil (or, the evil one)” This is a prayer for deliverance, praying that God will rescue or deliver us from the powers of darkness, from the evil one, and keep us from all evil and sin. In this way we will remain true to Him, and help fulfill the prayer that His will be done on earth (and in our lives) as it is in Heaven.

“For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever, Amen!” Here the Lord’s Prayer ends on a note of praise and worship, giving glory to the only One to Whom it is due.

Thus we see in the Lord’s Prayer a number of different types of prayer illustrated:

- Worship, praise and adoration
- Intercession
- Supplication
- Confession, repentance and forgiveness
- Deliverance

May the Lord enable us to pray in this manner, with all our hearts!

QUESTIONS

1. Why is there no reference in the New Testament to the disciples ever having prayed the Lord's Prayer?
2. What does it mean to "hallow" God's Name?
3. How can we maintain a balance between friendship and familiarity with God, and a sense of awe and reverence at His holiness and greatness?
4. What is the difference between the "absolute" and the "permissive" will of God?
5. Does God lead us into temptation?
6. The Lord's Prayer contains Adoration, Confession and Supplication but not Thanksgiving. Why?

2

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

Why are praise and thanksgiving so important?

There are a number of reasons why praise and thanksgiving are very important in the life of a Christian:

1. Because praise turns our eyes onto the Lord God almighty – Who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. It helps to build faith by showing us how great is our God, and how He longs to bless. Without it, our intercession may become merely a pleading for what we hope we might receive, instead of the certainty that we will receive whatever we ask (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15).
2. Because thanksgiving is the spontaneous overflow of a heart filled with gratitude for what God has done for us – His goodness, love and wonderful answers to our prayers. It gives thanks to Him to Whom all thanks and praise are due (Luke 17:12-19). Ten lepers were healed of their leprosy, but only one returned "praising God ... and giving Him

thanks". And it was to this leper alone that Jesus said, "Your faith has made you whole". Ten lepers received physical healing, but praise and thanksgiving brought complete wholeness only to the one who praised and thanked God. Sometimes, when things have been given to children, their parents say, "What do you say?" – prompting them to say, "Thank you". We should not have to be told to give thanks to God for all He has done!

3. Because praise and thanksgiving stops our intercession from degenerating into a "shopping list" of things we want God to do for us. About two thirds of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) is worship and praise, while only about one third is intercession and confession. The Lord's Prayer both begins and ends with praise.

4. Because praise and thanksgiving lift our soul and spirit out of apathy, depression, discouragement, frustration, doubt, and anger as nothing else will. See Psalms 42 and 43, especially 42:3-6a. Praise looks towards the victory! Satan will give us as much as we will accept; therefore resist him, and praise God! Praise lifts our eyes off the problem (real though it may be), and onto Him Who alone can meet that problem (Matt. 11:28-30).

5. Because thanksgiving is an expression of our faith in God, whereas merely asking may not be. E.g., If I ask God to heal me and I am not healed, then I can always say: "I asked God to heal me, but He didn't." However, if I not only ask, but also genuinely thank Him in faith for my healing, then I am expressing my commitment to believe that He will heal me. It is "Thanking You in anticipation!" Thanks shows that you "believe that you will receive it, and you will!" (Mark 11:24).

6. Because we are commanded to give thanks. The following Scriptures exhort us to give thanks:

- (a) "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Notice that this does not say "give thanks **for** all circumstances" because we do not give thanks for evil, for sin or Satanic works; but "give thanks **in** all circumstances" because, in the midst of any and every situation we can still praise and thank God.
- (b) "... in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6-7).
- (c) "sing ... with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:15-16).
- (d) "always, and for everything, giving thanks" (Eph. 5:18-20).

Some Biblical examples of giving thanks

John 11:41-42. “Father, I thank You.” Notice that in this passage there is no indication that Jesus prayed that Lazarus would be raised from the dead; Jesus simply thanked God that he would be! (What a prayer meeting we would organise to raise someone from the dead!)

Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10. In spite of all that Job suffered, and all his testing, he still praised and worshipped God, and got the victory over his circumstances. Some Christians give up too easily. We may not know all the answers, but our faith in God should be so strong that we will never give up. Satan wants us to give up; praise and thanksgiving encourage us to look towards the victory. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13:15).

Romans 1:8-9; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15-17; Philippians 1:3-6; Colossians 1:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4-5. Paul constantly prayed for, and gave thanks for, his converts. No wonder they stood the tests of time!

2 Chronicles 20:1-30 (especially verses 12, 15, 17-22).

How to praise and give thanks

True praise and thanksgiving come from the spirit (John 4:23-24), not from the soul (mind) or feelings, although they might be involved. Hence it is independent of outward circumstances. How else could Paul and Silas pray and sing hymns in jail at midnight (Acts 16:25). The Holy Spirit inspires true worship within us as we are filled with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27). Do not get discouraged; but in true humility and dependence on God, look to Him. As it says in the Psalms: “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! Let everything that has breath, and every breath of life, praise the Lord! Praise ye the Lord! Hallelujah!”

Some of the things for which we can praise God

- God’s everlasting love for us, and His grace and mercy.
- The gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Forgiveness from all our sins.
- Victory over the world, the flesh and the devil.
- The fulness and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- The guidance God gives us through His Word and His Spirit.
- The beauty of God's creation and the country He has put us in.
- The freedom to worship, witness and read His Word.
- Family, friends, support from other Christians.
- Our Christian heritage; good, strong, Bible-believing churches.
- Hearing our prayers and meeting all our needs.
- Justice, relative freedom from corruption in high places.
- Freedom, safety, protection, peace, prosperity, democracy.

“Why are you cast down, O my soul? ... I **will** praise the Lord!”

QUESTIONS

1. In what sort of circumstances should we praise God?
2. How can we praise God in the midst of adverse circumstances?
3. What is the difference between healing and wholeness?
4. Study 2 Chronicles 20 and see how victory came through praise and worship. Note that praise and worship preceded the actual victory, as the people believed God's prophetic word.
5. How can we prevent praise and worship from becoming repetitious?
6. Too often we spend a lot of time asking God for things, and very little time in thanksgiving. How can we maintain a balance between asking and thanking?

3

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Many people do not really understand what praise and worship are all about; especially is this true before a person has been filled with the Holy Spirit. The Psalms of praise take on a new meaning when a person, full of the Holy Spirit, finds a new release in the Spirit of Praise.

Praise and worship are being restored to the Church in this time of preparation for revival and the second coming of the Lord Jesus. They are part of “preparing the way of the Lord” (Is. 40:3-5).

In John 4:23-24 we are told that we must worship God in **Spirit** and in **Truth**. Both are necessary, and a balance between them is also necessary. Many people know the truth, but are not worshipping in Spirit; others worship the Lord but not in complete truth. We need to worship God both in Spirit and in Truth.

What are praise and worship? What do these words mean and what does the Bible have to say about them?

Four words

There are four main words used in conjunction with praise and worship:

1. **Worship** is devotion to God for Who He is – the Lord God Almighty.
2. **Praise** is glorifying (or blessing) God for things He has done (e.g., in creation, incarnation, redemption, answers to prayer, etc.)
3. **Adoration** is affection to God for our relationship with Him as our Father.
4. **Thanksgiving** is gratitude to God for things He has done for us (answered prayer, blessings received, encouragement, etc.)

The first and most obvious way in which we praise God is through song, but this is not the only way!

The Bible mentions:

Singing

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Psalm 66:4 | “worship ... sing praises” |
| Psalm 68:4 | “sing to God, sing praises” |
| Psalm 100:2 | “come into His presence with singing” |
| Zephaniah 3:17 | God rejoices over us with gladness and loud singing! |
| Acts 16:25 | Paul and Silas sang hymns to God in prison. |
| Ephesians 5:18-20 and Colossians 3:16 | We are told to be filled with the Spirit and sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness and gratitude in our hearts. |
| James 5:13 | If we are cheerful and joyful, we should sing psalms or praises to God. |

Singing is an expression of joy, thankfulness, worship and praise. Singing is often accompanied by clapping.

Clapping

Psalm 47:1 “Clap your hands, all peoples!”

By clapping we are participating in the singing or music. We may clap the Lord without music too! It is also a sign of approval, thanks, adoration, gratitude and happiness.

Lifting hands

When we lift our hands to God, what is it a sign of?

- That we have clean hands (Ps. 24:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:8)
- Surrender (Rom. 6:13; James 4:7a)
- Receiving (Mark 11:24; Luke 11:9-10)
- Worship and blessing (Ps. 63:4; 134:1-2)
- A vow or oath (Deut. 32:40)
- For help (Ps. 28:2)

Shouting (loud noise)

Shouting or loud noise is a sign of great joy, victory and excitement. It is mentioned a number of times in Scripture: 1 Chr. 15:28; 2 Chr. 30:21; Ezra 3:11-13 (“shouted aloud for joy”); Ps. 47:1, 5-7; 100:1; 1 Thess. 4:16.

Some people might think that it is “irreverent” to shout or make a loud noise in church. But God is not afraid of noise. There is a place for quietness; there is also a place for exuberance. The key is to make sure it is genuine. It is interesting to note that Psalm 46:10 speaks of being still before God, but two verses later (Psalm 47:1) it talks of shouting!

Singing with the Spirit

1 Corinthians 14:13-15 (singing in tongues). This is singing which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, not understood by the natural mind, but which is edifying to us (1 Cor. 14:4) and glorifying to God (Acts 2:11).

Dancing

Psalm 30:11; 149:3; 150:4. This is a sign of joy, thanksgiving and adoration.

Musical instruments

Psalm 150:3-5. Speaking on Psalm 150, Arthur Wallis made the following observations on the different instruments which were used at different times:

Trumpet: This was used (a) to rally the people together; (b) to summon the leaders to the Tabernacle; and (c) as the instrument associated with battle (1 Cor. 14:8). In the Christian life we have battles to face, but we should still praise the Lord with trumpet sound! E.g., 2 Chronicles 20:20-23 Praise went before the army, not behind! When the battle is tough, praise the Lord and see the way He drives back the enemy (the enemy can't stand to hear the true praises of God's people!)

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 5:18-20; Acts 16:25-26. Praise God even when you do not feel like it. Do not let your feelings rule your life – exercise faith and praise God in spite of everything!

Lute and harp: The psaltry (lute) and harp were especially used early in the morning (Ps. 57:8), before the day began with all its decisions, pressures, etc. In his devotional life, David praised the Lord even before the day began. Our day will be blessed if we first learn to praise God at the beginning of our day, in our private devotions.

What percentage of our prayer time is praise? Frequently we spend far more time in intercession than in praise. In the Old Testament, the ingredients of incense (which is an example of prayer) had to be in equal parts (Ex. 30:34-36).

Timbrel and dance: Exodus 15:20. When the Israelites were redeemed, delivered from bondage and captivity, and brought into liberty, joy and victory, they praised God with the timbrel and dance. The sin of ingratitude to God is a tragic thing. Too often we pray, God answers, but we forget to praise Him for the answer. Praise Him for deliverance, for victory, for every answer to prayer. E.g., Only one of the ten lepers who was healed returned to give thanks to Jesus, "with a loud voice" (Luke 17:15-16). Praise God for His blessings, goodness and benefits to us.

Strings and pipe: These were used in times of mourning and sorrow (Matt. 5:4). When our peace is disturbed, it is so easy to get under our circumstances instead of above them. Praise God in the hour of adversity – when everything seems to have gone wrong. As one Christian father said to his crying son, "Don't cry sonny – say Hallelujah!" This was later reported in a newspaper as follows: "Secret of Christianity's success – a religion that can

say ‘Hallelujah’ through its tears!” Even in sadness there can be a note of victory, joy and praise. There is power and victory when we can praise God even in times of adversity.

Cymbals: There is a place for noisy praise, just as there is a place for quiet worship. “Be still and know that I am God. ... Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy” (Ps. 46:10; 47:1).

Cymbals were used when the ark of the Lord was brought out; in ministry before the ark; in the dedication of the Lord’s House in Solomon’s time; in the great revival under Hezekiah; in the foundation of the restored Temple; and in the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem in Nehemiah’s time. Cymbals are thus related to the House of God, and to the Ark of the Covenant, which speak of the presence and power and glory of God. A time of release and rejoicing, a time of recovery, revival and restoration of God’s glory and power, are thus associated with cymbals.

God is coming back in glory, so we need to start using the “loud clashing cymbals” of praise! Revivals are usually noisy times, but this should not be fleshly noise but times of glorious release and praise in the Spirit. Noise does not *bring* the presence and power of God, but the presence and power of God often produce great noise. See Psalm 149.

There is a time to clap your hands, to lift your hands up to God, to shout the praises of God. God is not deaf, but He is not nervous or timid either!

Why do we praise the Lord?

- Because God commands us to praise Him (Ps. 117:1-2; Rom. 15:11). Do not allow feelings to dictate – it is God’s Word that we must obey.
- Because of Who He is – and not necessarily because of what we can get from Him! He is King of kings (Ps. 47:6-7).
- Because it is good and pleasant to praise Him (Ps. 147:1).
- Because it glorifies God (Ps. 50:23). It should be the desire of all God’s people to glorify Him.
- Because of all His blessings to us (Ps. 103:1-5): salvation, healing, forgiveness, love, mercy, life, etc.
- Because of His goodness (Ps. 107:8-9; 118:1).
- Because of His mighty acts (Ps. 150:2).
- Because we ultimately become like the one we worship!

Beauty and order

There is a beauty and order in true worship that is led by the Holy Spirit. It is not harsh, or discordant, objectionable or confused.

We need to worship God in unity as we worship corporately, and also be led of the Holy Spirit and be sensitive to Him. There will be order and a flow of the Spirit throughout the whole time. 1 Corinthians 14:26, 33, 40 are all in the context of charismatic worship!

Be led by the Holy Spirit

Do not let other people force you into praise and worship – it must be spontaneous, genuine, sincere and without hypocrisy. Do not be forced, but if you do not worship God, the very stones will! (Luke 19:37-40).

The blessings of praise and worship

Out of everything we offer to God, praise and worship, supremely, should be offered without any thought of getting anything in return. And yet, as we give to God, He gives back to us “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” (Luke 6:38).

When our motives are right, when we desire to worship and praise God for Who He is and not for what we hope to get in return, God will do many things:

People will be saved: People can be drawn to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour in the context of a service of praise and worship.

People will be filled with the Spirit: As Christians open their hearts and lives to the Lord in praise and worship, they will be filled with the Spirit.

People will find deliverance: Praising God will deliver people from satanic oppression, depression, fear, demon possession. The devil cannot stand the praises of God’s people.

People will be healed: Spiritual, mental and physical healing can come from God as His people praise Him.

Other needs will be met: All our needs are met as we come to Him in worship (Matt. 11:28-30; Phil. 4:19). *Hallelujah!*

QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between praise and worship?

2. To what extent should praise be inspired by the Spirit, rather than simply be words which we utter?
3. What does it mean to “worship God in Spirit and in Truth” (John 4:24)?
4. Why do many Christians raise their hands to God when singing or worshipping Him?
5. How can we distinguish between emotionalism and loud praise? Is it wrong to use our emotions to praise God? Can we praise God without using our emotions?
6. While praise is primarily towards God, nevertheless God blesses us as we praise Him. What are some of the blessings God often bestows during (or as a result of) praise?

4

THANKSGIVING

The Bible has much to say about giving thanks. The prayer of thanksgiving is the Christian equivalent of the Old Testament thank offerings (2 Chr. 29:31).

It is interesting to note that in the Lord’s Prayer there is no mention of thanksgiving, although all the other types of prayer (praise, worship, confession, intercession, supplication) are all mentioned. However, our Lord’s life was full of thanksgiving to His Father. Out of the 13 references to “thanks” in the Gospels, in 10 of these instances it is Jesus who is giving thanks:

- He gives thanks to His Father in Matthew 11:25 and Luke 10:21.
- In the first three Gospels He gives thanks for the bread and the cup during the last supper (e.g., Luke 22:17-19).
- He gave thanks before feeding the 4000 (Mark 8:6), the 5000 (John 6:11) and before a meal (John 6:23).
- Before raising Lazarus from the dead, He does not plead with God for a miracle; He does not even intercede; He simply said “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me ...” (John 11:41-42). Then He commanded “Lazarus, come forth!” and he came forth!

For what should we give thanks?

- 1. For our own salvation.** We need constantly to thank God for our own salvation – for those things from which He has delivered us and for that to which we have been saved – eternal life. “Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:24-25). “Thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient ... having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). “O death, where is your sting? ... Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55-57).
- 2. For those we have led to Christ.** Twelve times in his epistles, Paul gives thanks for those he has had the joy of leading to Christ (e.g., Ephesians 1:16 “I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers”). What follow-up!
- 3. For fellow Christians.** We should constantly thank God for fellow Christians who help and encourage us, who are generous to us (2 Cor. 9:11-15) and who give of themselves (Rom. 16:4). God said, “It is not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18) and He has given us a Bride – the Bride of Christ, the Church, to be our helpers, our companions, our friends and our spiritual family.
- 4. For answered prayer.** We pray “many prayers” but do we “give thanks ... for the blessings granted to us in answer to our many prayers”? (2 Cor. 1:11). Most of us ask a lot, but give little thanks. Let us ask less (!), give thanks more, and see God answer even more!
- 5. For food and daily needs.** On several occasions in the New Testament we have examples of thanks being offered before a meal; all good food is to be received with thanks – something which many Christians seem to forget these days! (1 Tim. 4:3-4; Acts 27:35-36).
- 6. For good government.** 1 Timothy 2:1-2 not only commands us to pray and intercede for our leaders, but also to give thanks for them: “I urge that ... thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions”. In a free, democratic country, and especially in our own nation, we should give thanks for our leaders, our freedom, and for peace and quiet. While there are many things that still trouble us concerning our country, let us not forget to thank God for all the good things.

7. **For victory over the enemy.** Our God reigns, and has given us victory over the enemy – let us thank God for that (Rev. 11:17-18; 12:11).

8. **For safety and protection.** See Acts 28:15. The Christians thanked God for His protection and for Paul's safety. God has said "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

9. **For God's unspeakable gift of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Let us never forget, with deeply grateful hearts, to thank God for His provision of Jesus Christ for our full salvation, eternal life, life lived to the full (John 10:10). Here is God's love demonstrated to us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! (Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 9:15).

10. **Always and for everything.** "Always and for everything giving thanks to God the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). Thanksgiving is part of our worship (Eph. 5:18b-20). "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

We are to give thanks in all circumstances, no matter how difficult, and even if it is the "sacrifice of praise ... giving thanks to His Name" (Heb. 13:15). Praise with thanksgiving is a positive, faith-building act of obedience in times of stress, despair and depression; when the enemy would seek to push you down – don't let him; look up and thank God!

We are told to give thanks

1 Timothy 2:1 "First of all, then, I urge that ... thanksgivings be made ..."

Colossians 2:7; 3:15; 4:2 "... and be thankful ..."

Philippians 4:6 "... by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Thanksgiving is commanded; thanksgiving is expected. Romans 1:21 recounts the fate of those who refuse to honour God and give thanks to Him. (But beware of false thanks, which is really pride in disguise – see Luke 18:11-12).

We can thank God in tongues

Speaking in tongues has several purposes, one of which is to express gratitude, thanks and praise to God. God gives us this gift so that we can:

- Declare the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11).

- Be edified (1 Cor. 14:4-5).
- Pray in our spirits (1 Cor. 14:13-15).
- Give thanks (1 Cor. 14:16-17).
- As a supernatural sign (1 Cor. 14:22).
- Pray, when we otherwise do not know how to pray (Rom. 8:26-27).

Why give thanks?

- Because it shows the gratitude of our hearts (cf. Luke 17:12-19).
- Because it recognises God as the source of our supply (Phil. 4:19).
- Because God is worthy of praise and thanksgiving (Rev. 4:8-11; 7:11-12).
- Because God desires it (1 Thess. 5:18).

Finally, remembering that the prophetess Anna lived almost all her life prior to the birth of Jesus, we have this remarkable testimony to her prayer life: “She did not depart from the temple, *worshipping with fasting and prayer* night and day, and coming up at that very hour [of Jesus’ dedication to the Lord] she gave thanks to God and spoke of Him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36-38).

God’s response to a life of worship, prayer, fasting and thanksgiving night and day was that He allowed an 84-year old widow to see her Saviour and tell others about Him!

May we, too, see our Lord and Saviour as we pour out our hearts in thanksgiving and praise to Him!

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the fact that Jesus gave His Father thanks before raising Lazarus from the dead, rather than interceding? (John 11:41-42).
2. Why do most Christians spend very little time thanking God, in comparison to other forms of praying?
3. Should we spend more time thanking God for specific things? Why?
4. Why is specific thanksgiving more important than a general “Thank You Lord” type of prayer?

5. How can Christians “give thanks in all circumstances”, even in adversity?
6. Why is thanksgiving so important?

5

THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

There is always a danger in the Christian life of going to one extreme or the other. This is true of many things, including the area of sin and confession. On one hand, some Christians come under great condemnation, even over things they have already confessed and been forgiven for; on the other hand some think that saying “Sorry” is all that is required.

Confession and forgiveness are important, not only in themselves, but also in regard to effective prayer.

The importance of the prayer of confession

“If we know that he hears us ... we know that we have obtained the requests made of Him” (1 John 5:14-15). But Psalm 66:18 says, “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened”, and consequently we would not have received an answer. In other words, unconfessed and unrepented sin hinders God from answering our prayers. See also Proverbs 28:9, 13. The prayer of the unrighteous person God will not hear. This is one reason why sometimes when we pray it seems as if our prayers go no further than the ceiling. The ceiling is sin!

If we want God to hear and answer our prayers, there must be no unforgiven sin in our lives. “The prayer of the *righteous* person has great power in its effects” (James 5:16).

Four factors to forgiveness

1. **Repentance:** To repent means to turn away from sin, self and Satan, towards God and His ways. It is being sorry enough to quit. “Godly sorrow works repentance” (2 Cor. 7:9-10). True repentance is shown by a change in one’s way of life – it is walking in the light (Matt. 3:1-12; 1 John 1:7). John the Baptist, Jesus and the disciples all preached repentance (Matt. 3:1-12; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19).

2. **Confession:** Repentance is not enough, we must confess our sins to God: “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9; James 5:16). If we have sinned against other people, we need to also confess our sin to them.

3. **Restitution:** If possible, we should make restitution to those we have wronged (Ex. 22:1-15; Matt. 5:21-26; 18:15-17; Luke 19:1-10). This also shows the sincerity of our repentance and confession. Where restitution is not possible, but a public confession is necessary, the circle of confession should be the circle of transgression. In other words, we need only confess to those people we have wronged. We need to be very careful with public confession of sin because unwise public confession can do a great deal of harm. Ask God if you should confess some wrong to other people or not; some sins should only be confessed to God and not to other people. God’s wisdom is needed in these matters.

4. **Forgiving others:** If we do not forgive other people, neither will God forgive us (Matt. 6:12-15; 18:23-25).

If you are uncertain as to whether or not there is sin in your life, pray the prayer of Psalm 139:23-24 and listen for an answer! It is the Holy Spirit’s work to convict of sin, and He will if we ask Him (John 16:7-11).

Note that God convicts specifically when there is sin, showing exactly what it is. The devil brings blanket condemnation, depression, etc., even if there is no sin. Confess and forsake all sin, and so give no foothold to the devil (Eph. 4:27; 1 Thess. 5:22). Conviction of sin by God requires confession; condemnation from the devil needs renunciation and maybe even deliverance. There is a vast difference between conviction and condemnation!

If you are not sure whether you are coming under divine conviction or demonic condemnation, ask this question: “Am I being specifically convicted of some sin which I have not repented of and confessed to God?” If the answer is “Yes”, then confess it to God and ask His forgiveness. If the answer is “No” then resist the devil and command him to flee (James 4:7).

What happens when God forgives?

In the Bible there are some wonderful pictures of what God does with our sin and some tremendous promises in His Word as to what happens when God forgives:

1. There is no more condemnation. The devil can only condemn when there are grounds for condemnation (or when we believe his lies). See Romans 8:1, 4 AV.
2. Our sins are trodden under God's feet: Micah 7:19.
3. Our sins are cast into the depths of the sea: Micah 7:19 (and there is "No fishing"! Don't bring up past forgiven sins, and don't let the devil or other people fish them up either!)
4. Our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west: Psalm 103:10-12.
5. Our sins are forgiven, and we are cleansed from all unrighteousness: See 1 John 1:7,
6. Our sins are cast behind God's back: Isaiah 38:17.
7. Our sins are remembered no more: Jeremiah 31:34. Forgiven and forgotten! Hallelujah! "It is finished", Jesus cried from the cross (John 19:30). See Colossians 2:13-15. Satan is defeated! Christ has won! His blood avails for us. Praise the Lord!

Two great Psalms of confession and forgiveness are Psalms 51 and 103. Read them slowly and ponder over them. Make them your own prayers to a loving and forgiving Father.

Identifying with others

Sometimes, when confessing sins, we need to identify with other people: a group, church, city, nation or world, even though we may not have specifically committed that sin ourselves. See Daniel 9:3-20; Nehemiah 1:4-11; Ezra 9:5 – 10:1. Remember this as you pray for God's forgiveness for your nation.

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children" (Ps. 103:17).

QUESTIONS

1. Before God forgives us, what must we do first?
2. In what ways could public confession of sin be harmful?
3. Do we ever need to confess our sins to other people, or is it sufficient just to confess them to God?
4. What does “Confess your sins to one another” (James 5:16) mean? What sins does it include, and what does it exclude?
5. If we still feel condemned after confessing sin, what should we do?
6. What is the difference between condemnation and conviction? Who is the author of condemnation and who is the author of conviction? How should we deal with condemnation and how should we deal with conviction?

6

INTERCESSION

See Luke 11:1-13 and 1 Timothy 2:1-5.

What is intercession?

“Intercession” literally means “to stand in between, and plead on behalf of another person”. Intercession is a “standing in the gap” (Ezek. 22:30). There are two gaps in which the intercessor may have to stand:

- the gap between man and God (see Psalm 106:23)
- the gap between man and Satan (see Luke 22:31-32)

Intercession means to intervene between two parties. With reference to Luke 11:5-8 Arthur Wallis has described intercession as the linking of two friends – one with a need and the other with the supply.

Intercession is praying for other people. We may supplicate (make requests to God) for our own needs, but we can only intercede on behalf of others. A solicitor is an intercessor – pleading our case for us.

In his book *“The Ministry of Intercession”*, Andrew Murray says “Intercession is the link between man’s impotence and God’s omnipotence!”

Some important aspects of intercession

It is essential that we intercede. The Bible says, “You do not have because you do not ask” (Jam. 4:2). “Ask and keep on asking, and you shall receive” (Luke 11:9). Jesus said, “When you pray ...” – that is, He assumed that we would pray, Matt. 5:6). In 1 Timothy 2:1 Paul says, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all men ...”

Intercession is often a neglected ministry. In spite of its importance, intercession is often neglected. See Isaiah 59:16; 63:5; 64:7; Ezekiel 22:30. God looked for intercessors and found none! Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that intercession is mainly done in secret (Matt. 6:5-6) and so we get no glory or honour from others. It is always easier to be in the public eye and get the applause of men, than to be hidden away with God in intercessory prayer. Preaching the Word is a public ministry; intercession is not. Yet surely there is an imbalance if either intercession or Bible study is neglected. Jesus’ disciples should devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). Often, Bible colleges spend most of their time in Bible study – perhaps we need a better balance with Bible colleges becoming Prayer colleges as well!

Another reason that intercession (as distinct from supplication) is often neglected is that it is always far easier to spend time praying for our own needs than for the needs of others! Too often our prayers are self-focussed rather than focussed on the needs of others.

We need perseverance. It is not easy to persist in intercession when the answer is delayed but Jesus said, “Ask and keep on asking ...” (Luke 11:9). In fact, He told a parable to the effect that we should always pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1-8).

Intercession shows our complete and utter dependence on God, and all the more so when God delays the answer and we see our total inability to do anything but hold on to God in persevering prayer.

The parable of the friend asking for three loaves of bread (Luke 11:5-13) shows how we need to hold on to God in spite of obstacles – the friend’s very real need would not allow him to take “No” for an answer. It was midnight, his friend did not want to be bothered, the door was shut, the family were in bed – but he still got his three loaves because of his persistence! “How much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him?” (Matt. 7:11). “Will not God vindicate His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will vindicate them speedily” (Luke 18:7-8).

Intercession stops selfishness. Intercession is a form of giving – giving our time, love and concern in prayer for others. It thus helps to stop introversion and selfishness. Suppose every pastor and every Christian in every church started praying for all the other pastors, Christians and churches in their town – imagine what would happen! The love of God would produce a unity in the Holy Spirit that could never be organised by man! If you find it hard to get along with some other Christian, start interceding for them, and let the love of God for them flow through you as you pray.

Intercede over news items. How do we react to news items of tragedies, violence, immorality, scandal, etc? Do we throw up our hands in horror and say, “How terrible”? Do we simply say, “I don’t know what the world is coming to; it’s getting worse and worse all the time”? Are we immune to it all? Or do we pray? We should turn such news, as the Lord leads, into topics for intercession. We can change the world and shape history by our fervent prayer (Jam. 5:16-18). We do not have to let the world get worse – in fact, as the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” we should be preserving it from decay and we should be lights dispelling the darkness. Even if things do get worse, it should be in spite of our intercession, not because of lack of it!

God can “change His mind” over a nation. His conditional promises and His threats of judgement and punishment can be altered if we will fulfill the conditions. “If My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chr. 7:14). See Numbers 14:1-24; Jeremiah 26:1-19; Jonah 3:1-10.

All real intercession begins in the heart of God. As we learn to be sensitive to God and to wait on Him in prayer, He will show us things for which to intercede. He will give us a “burden” or concern in prayer to intercede on behalf of others. We cannot pray specifically for everything, so we need to seek God as to what He wants to lay on our hearts for prayer, and pray that situation through to completion. Ask God who or what you should pray for; let Him give you the burden in prayer; let Him inspire your praying; and let Him lift

the burden when He knows it is the right time to do so. See Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 18:18.

Intercessors in the Bible

In the Old Testament we see many examples of men of God who interceded for others – for individuals and nations:

Moses for Israel: Ex. 32:30-32; Num. 14:11-19; Deut. 9:25-29; Ps. 106:23.

Moses for Miriam: Num. 12:9-13.

Samuel for Israel: 1 Sam. 7:3-5.

A man of God for Jeroboam: 1 Kings 13:6.

David for Israel: 1 Chr. 21:14-17.

Hezekiah for his people: 2 Chr. 30:18-20.

Job for his friends: Job 42:10.

Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Solomon and Abraham were some other people of prayer and intercession. To Esther it was said “Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esth. 4:13-14) and how true those words proved to be of Esther, and how true they are of intercessors today!

In Luke 2:37 we read this testimony of 84-year-old Anna: “She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day”.

But of all the people in the New Testament one of the greatest intercessors apart from Jesus Himself was Paul who, in almost every one of his letters, mentions how constantly he interceded for the saints (e.g., Eph. 1:16-17; cf. 2 Cor. 11:28).

Jesus, the Intercessor

What a thrilling thing it is to realise that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, our Great High Priest, makes intercession for **us**, day and night! (Is. 53:12; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). He interceded for Peter, that his faith might not fail (Luke 22:31-32). He interceded for us on the cross (Luke 23:34). He interceded for us that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, might be sent to us (John 14:16). Indeed, “He ever lives to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7:25; John 17:9-10).

How to pray when you don't know how!

There are some situations in which we do not know how to pray. At these times there are three things we can do:

1. Ask God to show you how to pray. He may show you specifically the way in which you should intercede in that particular situation.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to intercede through you with sighs too deep for words (Rom. 8:26-27). You may groan or sigh or yearn or weep over a situation, and God, Who knows our hearts and desires, will hear our prayer.
3. Pray with the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:14-15). We can intercede in tongues when we do not know how we should pray with our mind. Our mind will still be 'unfruitful', but this does not matter, because God knows what we are praying and that is all that matters!

"I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none" (Ezek. 22:30). Will **you** be one to stand in the gap before God, on behalf of our nation, and intercede, so that this land will not be destroyed?

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to "stand in the gap between God and man"? (Compare with the Old Testament priests).
2. How do we know what we should intercede for?
3. How can I really intercede for someone that I find it difficult to get on with?
4. What is involved in Jesus' ministry as an Intercessor today?
5. How should we pray in a situation when we are not sure of God's will?
6. "All real intercession begins in the heart of God". What does this mean?

7

“IF MY PEOPLE ...”

God said, “If My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land” (2 Chr. 7:14).

This verse is both a promise and a warning to God’s people: if they will fulfill His conditions then God will bring blessing; if not, there will be judgement.

Notice that it is God Who says this, not man, and “God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not fulfill it?” (Num. 23:19). Since this is a word from God, we do well to heed it, and we are foolish indeed if we neglect it.

Most of God’s promises have a condition attached to them: sometimes this is implied and sometimes it is specifically stated. In this verse we have a specific, four-fold set of conditions (“If ...”) which must be fulfilled if we desire to see God’s three promises come true.

CONDITIONS: <i>God’s people must ...</i>	PROMISES: <i>God will then ...</i>
Humble themselves	Hear from Heaven
Pray	Forgive their sin
Seek God’s face	Heal their land
Turn from their wicked ways	

Whose responsibility is it?

Who is it that God is asking to fulfill these conditions? Not the unbeliever; not the nation as a whole, but “My people, who are called by My Name”. Revival begins with God first touching His people, the children of God, those who are named after His Son – “**CHRIST**ians” – followers or disciples of Christ (Acts 11:26), and when revival has first touched God’s people, it will then spread to the nation as a whole, until the land is healed.

Conditions

God's people must:

Humble themselves. Humbling ourselves is a condition of our hearts and minds – it is recognising that we are utterly dependent upon God to move by His Spirit if we are to see our nation healed. It will never be achieved by our might or power, by our plans of efforts or determination, but only by God's Spirit (Zech. 4:6). We therefore cast ourselves upon Him and say, "Lord, if You do not move, nothing will happen", and when God does move we say, "To You, Lord, belong all the praise and glory".

We can humble ourselves by prayer and fasting. Abstaining from food for a time of prayer is a discipline that affects both body, mind and spirit. In a sense it is an "extreme" measure, showing the sincerity, depth and earnestness of our intercessions.

We can humble ourselves by prostrating ourselves before God in prayer.

We also need to humble ourselves before one another, not seeking to promote self but only seeking to glorify God (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

Pray. Even prayer itself is a form of humbling ourselves. To pray is to recognise our own need, and someone else's (God's) ability to meet that need. It is to beseech, entreat, ask earnestly, beg for, or intercede for something, the lesser person asking of the Greater One. When we pray, we admit our dependence upon God – "I can't do it, but You can!"

James reminds us that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much" (James 5:16), and Jesus Himself said "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it shall be done for them by My Father in Heaven" (Matt. 18:19).

Seek God's face. True prayer should involve seeking God's face, but seeking God is far more than just asking Him for something. It is so easy for our praying to degenerate into a list of prayer requests, when God wants us to seek Him simply for Who He is, not just for what we can get from Him. And as we seek God, we get to know Him better, so our praying will become more effective because we will get to know His will and His ways far better.

Turn from their wicked ways. The Church needs to repent; believers need to repent; all who call themselves by His Name need to turn from their wicked ways, from sin and from

every weight which hinders us. A weight is not a sin in itself, but it hinders us from getting to know God better and hinders us from serving Him more effectively (Heb. 12:1-2).

Judgement begins with the Household of God, the Church (1 Pet. 4:17-18) and when the world sees *Christians* repent and their lives change, they will start to sit up and listen!

We need to repent of divisions within the Church, lack of love and unity, hypocrisy, shallowness, lack of concern for others in physical, mental, spiritual and moral need, of sins of the flesh, of the soul and of the spirit. We need to show forth the unifying love of Jesus which will convince the world (John 13:34-35; 17:21).

When we fulfill God's conditions, then He will fulfill His promises!

Promises – God will then:

Hear from Heaven. What a wonderful assurance when we know that God has heard us! (1 John 5:14-15). When God says He “hears” this means not only that He knows what we have prayed for, but also that He will answer our prayers. “If I cherish iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9, 13) – that is, although He knows what I pray for, He will not answer. But if I forsake my wicked ways, then He will both hear and answer the requests I have made.

Forgive their sin. Wherever and whenever there is true repentance and confession, God will forgive our sin (1 John 1:9). If God's people collectively will confess their sins and turn from their wicked ways, then God will forgive and bring blessing instead of punishment. Read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 – these two chapters clearly show:

- (a) The blessings of obedience
- (b) The curses, punishment and judgement that follows disobedience
- (c) There is forgiveness where there is repentance

If we repent, God will forgive; if we will not repent, God in justice must punish. See 2 Chronicles 7:12-22.

Heal their land. “Healing” and “wholeness” in the Bible mean far more than just healing from physical sickness – they mean healing physically, mentally, spiritually, socially, materially, economically, and so on. They mean ‘prosperity’ in every aspect of a nation's life.

If an individual person fulfills God's conditions, they will receive God's healing and wholeness. If a nation fulfills His conditions, then the nation will be healed and will prosper. "I will heal their land". When the people of Nineveh, a great and wicked city, met God's conditions and repented, God did not overthrow the city as He had threatened to do (Jonah 2).

We, God's people, can determine the future by our obedience or disobedience; repentance or lack of repentance; prayer or prayerlessness; faith or unbelief. God's promises and God's judgements are dependent upon whether or not we meet His conditions.

"I call Heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice and clinging to Him" (Deut. 30:19-20).

Perhaps, as a nation, our biggest problem is that in the midst of our material prosperity we have forgotten God. Materialism, wealth, busyness, leisure and pleasure have become our gods and we have forgotten the Lord Who has blessed us with all good things.

"Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments ... lest, when you have eaten and are full, and have built nice houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your money is multiplied, and all that you have increases, then your heart becomes lifted up and you forget the Lord your God. ... Beware, lest you say in your heart 'My own power and the might of my hand have brought me this wealth'. You shall remember the Lord your God for it is He Who gives you power to get wealth. ... If you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you this day that you will surely perish ... because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Deut. 8:11-20; 6:10-15). These words need to be engraved on the hearts of every citizen of every nation!

Let us repent of the sins of materialism, greed, forgetting God, and of not giving Him thanks, glory and praise for all He has given us. If we want our nation to be prosperous, to be healed, to be exalted, then God's conditions are simple and straightforward: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). "If My people will ... then I will heal their land" (2 Chr. 7:14)

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to “humble ourselves” when we pray? Why fast when we intercede?
2. What is “seeking God’s face”? How does it differ from praying?
3. Are “natural” disasters (earthquakes, fires, famine, drought, floods, storms, plagues, etc) really God’s judgements on a nation, and will they be removed if the nation repents and turns to God?
4. What does God mean when He promises to “heal their land”?
5. “Righteous exalts a nation”. What can Christians do to increase the righteousness in a nation?
6. Materialism (the worship of material things such as money and possessions) has become a god in our nation. What can we do about it (a) in our own personal lives, and (b) in our nation?

8

PRAY FOR THE NATION!

Why do we need to pray for the nation?

First, because God has said “***If*** My people, who are called by My Name (that is, *Christians*), will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chr. 7:14). If Christians will not pray for their land, who will? No one else can! If we will not pray *for* our land, the enemy will certainly prey *on* our land!

Second, because Jesus said, “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by My Father Who is in Heaven” (Matt. 18:19). We need to pray with one accord, agreeing in our prayers to God.

Third, because the Bible says, “The effective fervent prayer of a righteous person, avails much” – it is powerful! (James 5:16). “The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results” (Living Bible). There is great power in prayer!

So, we Christians have both the responsibility and the privilege to pray for our nation and see God move in answer to our prayers. The powers of darkness can be driven back, and the glorious light of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will shine with power upon the ungodly, bringing many to the Lord, as a result of our fervent, effective praying.

Some areas for our intercessory prayers

The Nation	Moral issues	Youth – schools and Christian education
The Government and our nation’s leaders	Social issues	The poor, needy, elderly, and disadvantaged
Our cities and towns	Spiritual issues	Bible colleges
The media (Christian and secular)	The Church	Education, health, social welfare, economy
The home and family	Unity in the Church and nation	Evangelism, missions and revival

Besides these, there are many other issues for which we need to intercede. But whatever the need, and whatever God lays on our hearts, we **must** intercede. We may not all agree on the issues, but we must all pray as we are led and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27).

In some cases we will see and rejoice over the answers to prayer. In other cases we will pray in faith and may never know (at least in this world) exactly how God answered our prayers. But whether or not we see the answers, we “ought always to pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1).

Let us therefore stand in the gap. Let us take our position of authority in God, resist the powers of darkness, bind the strong man, and see the power of God released into the situations about which we are so concerned. (Eph. 6:10-18)

What to pray for

1. **Leaders.** Pray for governmental, civic and spiritual leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Pray for the laws of our land, and any changes which may be made to them.
2. **Cities and towns.** Pray for peace in the land; for our cities and towns; and pray against violence and crime (Jer. 29:7).
3. **The Church.** Pray for pastors, elders, deacons and other church leaders. Pray for unity within, and between, churches. Pray for the proclamation of the truth. Pray for national repentance and confession (Dan. 9:3-19). Pray for revival in the Church and in the nation.
4. **Evangelism and mission.** Pray for the unsaved, for evangelism and evangelistic organisations, that many people will be drawn by the Holy Spirit to the Saviour.
5. **Industry.** Pray for industrial relations, employers, employees and Trade Unions. Pray for industrial harmony. Pray against laziness and greed. Pray for the unemployed and the poor.
6. **The media.** Pray for radio and television, films, videos, books, magazines and newspapers, internet, social media, etc. Pray that the truth will be presented. Pray against pornography and everything which would encourage immorality, violence, the demonic, etc. Pray for the Christian use of the media to be effective.
7. **Victory over the powers of darkness.** Pray against all forms of immorality and sexual perversion, drugs, alcoholism, the occult, idolatry and worship of false gods. Pray that the veil over the minds of unbelievers will be lifted; that people will see, hear, understand and receive Jesus as their Lord, Saviour and Deliverer. Believe Matthew 18:18 as you pray.
8. **Youth.** Pray for our young people, that they will find the Lord at an early age, will be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk with the Lord. Pray that they will be kept from the wiles and temptations of the enemy; that they will know the truth that sets them free and not become enslaved to lies and deception. Pray for schools, colleges, universities, Sunday Schools, Bible classes and Bible colleges.
9. **Justice.** Pray for justice in the land – both legal justice and social justice. Pray against racial and other wrong discrimination.

10. **Families.** Pray for our homes and families. Pray that marriage will always be held in high honour. Pray against those things which encourage family breakdown and divorce. Pray for solo parents who struggle to bring up their children on their own, and for children who live with only one parent.

11. **Missions.** Pray that we will always be a strong evangelizing and missionary-sending nation. Pray for all Christians who are witnessing and serving the Lord, sharing the Gospel with those who are lost. Pray for those who are persecuted for their faith.

12. **Christian literature.** Pray for the writing and distribution of Christian literature, and especially the Word of God itself. Pray for the upholding of the truths of God's Word, and of Christian principles and standards as laid down in the Bible.

“Pray without ceasing ...” (1 Thess. 5:17).

QUESTIONS

1. How should we pray for the leaders of our nation?
2. What are some of the major things we should be praying, for the Church and for the nation?
3. How can we pray unbiased prayers?
4. What does it mean to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17)?
5. “Christians have both the responsibility and privilege to pray for their nation”. In what ways is intercession a responsibility and in what ways is it a privilege?
6. How can a group of Christians pray together in unity when they disagree on some of the issues involved in a situation (e.g., when praying for the Government)?

9

PRAY FOR THE GOVERNMENT

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men – for kings and all who are in authority (in high positions), that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, Godly and respectful (honest) in every way. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, Who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

In this passage we are urged to pray for our rulers, leaders and others who are in authority over us, but how often do we do this, let alone “first of all”?

To a certain extent we get the government and authorities that Christians deserve, since we have the power, through prayer, to determine who rules over us. There are plenty of Biblical examples which show that Godless leaders and nations can be toppled by prayer; enemies can be overthrown, unrighteous kings and rulers put down, Godliness and peace reinstated as a result of fervent, persevering, united, believing prayer, backed up by Godly lives. And only Christians can do this, hence our responsibility to pray!

Jesus said that Christians are the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13). If our land is not affected by our presence and our prayers, then our salt has lost its savour (its essential qualities or characteristics – taste and preserving ability). Salt is used for flavouring, and we should bring a Christian flavour to our community and nation, bringing out the best in society. Salt is also used as a preservative, to stop things going bad. Likewise, the presence of Christians in the world should prevent things going bad – our prayers and efforts to maintain standards of decency, honesty, peace and Godliness, should be seen in our nation. We should be holding back all forms of corruption – moral, social, spiritual and political.

“For the time has come for judgement to begin with the Household of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17). If our land is not healed and our nation is not turned towards God, the fault may lie with the people of God (see Ezek. 33:1-9). We Christians are responsible to pray! When did we last pray for our Queen, Governor General, Prime Minister, Cabinet and Members of Parliament? In fact, which did we do last – pray for them or criticise them? If we took less time to criticise and more time to pray, then maybe we would have less to criticise!

Four things God's people must do

Second Chronicles 7:12-18 shows that if a nation is suffering from drought, pestilence or disease, or if we want Godly authority over our land, then there are four things which God's people must do:

- Humble themselves
- Pray
- Seek God's face
- Turn from our wicked ways (repent)

When we do this, God will hear our prayers and answer. He will:

- Hear from Heaven
- Forgive our sin
- Heal our land

We need to identify ourselves with the sins of our people. It is not enough to point the finger at other people and say, "Lord, the people of our land have sinned ..." We must say, "Lord, **we** have sinned ..." As well as this, if we (as Christians) are not willing to repent and turn from our sins, how can we possibly expect our prayers to be answered for the repentance of our whole country?

We need to specifically confess the sins of our nation: immorality, rebellion, addictions, idolatry, violence, hatred, neglect of God, greed, self-centredness, etc.

We need to recognise too, that though God hates sin, He loves sinners and longs for their repentance and salvation (2 Pet. 3:9). Our hatred, likewise, must be of sin and not people.

We need to realise that although we are totally responsible for our sin, there are evil spiritual powers behind temptation, sin and bondages, which are also in opposition to the welfare of our nation and the salvation of people. We are fighting against demonic rulers and authorities – hence we need spiritual weapons that have divine power to destroy the strongholds of Satan (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

Ephesians 6:10-12 lists four categories of spiritual power and authority, all of which are in opposition to what is good:

1. **Principalities (rulers):** A principality is an area (city, region or nation) which is ruled over by a prince – in this case, a satanic prince (demon or fallen angel).

2. **Powers (authorities):** Areas governed by some particular authority (civic or national) and under the control of evil powers.
3. **World rulers** of this present darkness.
4. **Spiritual hosts of wickedness** in heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 in the Greek is literally: “Our conflict is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of evil in the heavenlies”.

Behind every kingdom, nation and city there are evil spiritual rulers and authorities. These may manifest as spirits of lust, impurity, corruption, violence, witchcraft, idolatry, addictions, pride, domination, greed, rebellion, disunity and division, or some other foul and wicked spirits, which may differ from city to city. These evil spiritual powers must be broken by prayer, if we are ever to see a major breakthrough of the Spirit of God in that nation or city.

For example, the king and prince of Tyre, in Ezekiel 28, are none other than Satan himself and his fallen angels. Behind the visible kingdom of Tyre with its prince and king were the world rulers of darkness – Satan and his evil hosts.

In other words, the course of affairs in the visible kingdom is affected by the powers in the invisible kingdom. Behind kingdoms, nations and cities there are invisible hierarchies. The pervading evil may be sexual impurity and lust, violence, witchcraft, etc., and before there can be a real breakthrough in the Kingdom of God, these evil powers must be brought into subjection to God through prayer. When this happens, God will move in great power. But if we are not prepared to pray through, we will not see the breakthrough we long for.

Praise God, “Greater is He (the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ) Who is in you, than he (the devil) who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). In other words, we have the power and authority, through Christ, to break the strongholds of the enemy, to bind the works of darkness and to loose our nation from bondages (Matt. 18:18-20). And this we should be doing, through prayer! The gates (defences) of hell will not prevail against the onslaughts of an aggressive, praying Church (Matt. 16:18).

If God could have found ten righteous men in Sodom, He would have spared the city – but He could not (Gen. 18:16-33).

Centuries later, in a different context, God looked for an intercessor for Israel, but found no-one: “He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor” (Is. 59:16). “I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none!” (Ezek. 22:30).

Our spirit should be provoked within us when we see the evil in our land, and this should stir us to intercession. One person’s prayers can change God’s mind over a whole nation, and over the destiny of a nation. Esther, at the risk of her life, interceded for her people and changed the destiny of the Jews. Daniel fasted and prayed for three weeks to secure the release of the Jews from Babylon.

Satan has always hated government and authority. In Heaven, before he was cast down onto the earth, he rebelled against God’s authority (Is. 14:12-15; Rev. 12:7-10). In the garden of Eden he undermined authority by tempting Eve, not Adam (Gen. 3:1-7) and when Satan had succeeded in deceiving the one who should have been under authority, Eve then led Adam into sin.

Satan attacks government and authority in the home, in schools, in the church and in the nation. When he tried to usurp authority in Heaven, he led a third of the angels in rebellion against God – these angels fell, and these fallen angels are the devils and demons which still attack us, tempt us, deceive us, and try to undermine authority. The spirit of rebellion still causes people today to refuse to obey legitimate authority, whether God’s or that of the people who have authority over us (cf. Rom. 13:1-7).

The ultimate source of all law and authority is God Himself. The Christian’s authority comes from the throne of God, and consequently the devil will do all he can to stop us from coming to the throne of God. Satan (Lucifer) once stood before the throne, and he knows what goes on there – consequently he will especially attack those who know their access to the throne and their rights as children of God (e.g., Paul – 2 Corinthians 12:1-10), and will try to undermine their authority. But if we know and stand firm on our authority in Christ, and constantly come to the throne of God in prayer, the enemy can have no power or authority over us.

Christ has disarmed the evil rulers and authorities (“principalities and powers”), and made a public example of them, having triumphed over them through the Cross (Col. 2:13-15). The devil will try to deceive us into believing otherwise, but if we know and declare the truth, it will set us free – evil rulers and authorities will be subject to us if we know and exercise our authority in Christ!

When Daniel fasted and prayed for three weeks, the devil hindered his prayers from being answered for this period of time, until the arch-angel Michael fought against the devil and defeated him (Dan. 10:10-21). So Daniel's prayers were opposed by the devil, but God released Michael to contend with the devil, and when the battle was won, Daniel's prayers were answered and his people were set free.

We can fight against unrighteousness, through prevailing intercession, and cause the release of a flood of righteousness, by praying consistently for our government. We can defeat evil rulers and authorities.

But we need to pray specifically for situations and people; then we can read the answers in the media! Through the combined prayers of God's people we have the power to influence legislation, the choice of Godly leaders, and so on. We can release angelic power, and the power of the Holy Spirit, into those situations.

God commands us to be subject to the governing authorities and to honour them (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). But more than this, those in authority are to be "not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. ... Do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good ... to execute wrath on the wrongdoer". Rulers are "to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right". These are the type of leaders God wants us to have. Let us pray, then, that this will be so.

Authorities we should pray for:

King, Queen or President.

Governor General.

Prime Minister, Cabinet and all Members of Parliament.

Ambassadors and diplomats.

Law enforcement officers (police, customs officers, censors).

Judges, magistrates and juries.

Mayors and city/town councillors.

Civic authorities.

Church leaders, pastors, elders.

For those of the above who are already Christians, pray that they will at all times uphold God's standards of righteousness, take a fearless stand for Christ, without wrong compromise, and not be ashamed of their Christian faith.

For those of the above who are not yet Christians, pray for their salvation so that they can properly uphold the positions of authority which they have been entrusted with, and fulfill the will and purposes of God.

Pray for those in authority!

Some Examples of Prayer Affecting Kings

Moses' prayers led to the Red Sea being opened for the Israelites to escape from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and the destruction of the Egyptian army (Ex. 14:10-31).

Joshua's prayers caused the sun and moon to stand still so that the Amorites were defeated (Josh. 10:12-14)

Elijah's prayers stopped the rain for 3.5 years and led to King Ahab allowing all the prophets of Baal to be put to death (1 Kings 17:1 – 19:1; James 5:16-18)

Hezekiah and Isaiah, through prayer, turned back the army of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:1-37)

Nehemiah's prayers caused Artaxerxes to send him back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 1:4 – 2:6)

Daniel's prayer caused Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to their land (Dan. 9:3-19)

A Prayer for our Government

Every day that our New Zealand Parliament sits, the Speaker of the House prays the following prayer before the commencement of the day's activities. Please pray this as a prayer for our Government!

“Almighty God, Humbly acknowledging our need for Thy guidance in all things, and laying aside all private and personal interests, we beseech Thee to grant that we may conduct the affairs of this House and of our country to the glory of Thy holy name, the maintenance of true religion and justice, the honour of the Queen, and the public welfare, peace and tranquility of New Zealand, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen”

QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do we get the government and authorities that Christians deserve (based on their prayers or lack of prayer)?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said that we are the “salt” and “light” of the world? (Matthew 5:13-16)
3. Should Christians be involved in politics and political issues? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean to “identify ourselves with the sins of our nation”? What are some of the sins we need to identify with?
5. To what extent is the evil and wickedness in a city due to evil spiritual rulers and authorities over the city?
6. How were each of the following intercessors able to affect their nation’s destinies: Moses, Esther, Nehemiah, Elijah?

10

PRAY FOR THE CHURCH

“The time has come for judgement to begin with the Household of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God? If righteous people are scarcely saved, what will happen to the ungodly and sinners?” (1 Peter 4:17-18).

We, as Christians, and as part of the Church of Jesus Christ, are called the “light of the world” and “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13-16). If the world is in darkness, then it is either because the light of the world is not shining or that light has been rejected. If the world is bad, then it is either because the salt of the earth has lost its saltiness or the salt has not been used. If we are not shining as God intended, or we have lost our saltiness, then we need to repent.

While the Church should never condone or excuse sin, nevertheless what right has the Church to speak against sin or sinners unless it is exercising the power by which people can be set free from sin and find deliverance and forgiveness? If we cannot provide

practical answers to people's problems then we have no right to condemn or criticise them for their sin or depravity.

Christians – we need to pray for the Church!

Local churches vary widely in their needs and shortcomings. Intercession for our own local church will thus vary from person to person, and from church to church. However, the following are some major areas for which we need to intercede for the Church.

1. Unity

Pray for unity **between** churches and **within** local churches. See Psalm 133 and John 17:20-23. Pray for a spirit of unity within the Church – there can be an outward appearance of unity but a real spirit of disunity within!

2. Pastors

Pray for the pastors and leaders of the church. Especially pray for those ministers who are unconverted, liberal in their beliefs or even agnostic; pray for their salvation or their removal (see Ezekiel 34).

Pray that pastors, elders and other church leaders will know divine anointing and authority for their ministries, and will not be afraid to use the authority God has given them (John 20:21-22).

Pray that God's Word will be preached with power and authority, and will be quick and sharp, like a two-edged sword, in the hands of those who know how to use it (Heb. 4:12-13).

Pray for a return to the true Faith, and a rejection of all unbelief and that which is unscriptural.

3. The outpouring of God's Spirit

Pray that God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17-18) and that He will restore spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church (1 Cor. 12:1-11). Pray that God will confirm the preaching of His Word with signs following. God desires that all His children should be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and that we stir up the gifts God has given

us (2 Tim. 1:6-7). If the Church is to have life, power and authority then its members need to be filled with the Spirit, and exercise the gifts and power God has given them.

4. Righteousness

Pray for righteousness and holy living within the Church. The Church is to be an example to the world, and hypocrisy is not a good example! Unless the Church can show the world, lives that have been transformed by the power of God, what kind of example will it be? Rather, it should be a case of “thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart ... and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18)

Pray that the Church will powerfully affect the morals and laws of the nation through prayer and through a Godly example of true righteousness.

5. A praying Church

Many churches do not have a weekly prayer meeting; many Christian families do not pray together, and many Christians seldom pray! Pray for a praying Church! The secret of the Church’s success is **prayer**! Its most important spiritual weapon is prayer in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18-20). Jesus taught His disciples a parable to show that they “ought always to pray and not to lose heart (faint)” (Luke 18:1). A lot of “fainting” churches – ones which have “lost heart” – could be revived by prayer. Pray for this!

6. A giving Church

Prosperity lies, not in getting, but in giving. How prosperous the Church would be if its members really learned to give – not just giving tithes, freewill offerings and alms (gifts to the poor, for social needs, etc.) – but sacrificial giving. While our motive for giving should never be to get back, nevertheless God has promised: “Give and it shall be given to you ...” (Luke 6:38). Pray that the Church will be a giving Church and will never lack financially for all that God would have it do.

7. Concern for the persecuted Church

There are a number of countries where Christians face persecution (even very severe persecution) for their faith. Sometimes it is opposition and discrimination; rejection from home, family and work; attacks on them personally; imprisonment, torture and sometimes

martyrdom. Pray both for your brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering because of their faith, and also for their persecutors, that God will send revival and bring many of them to Himself. Paul was a real persecutor of the early Christians until he met Jesus! (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-22). While we may be remote in distance, let us never forget to pray for those who are in chains, suffering with those of our fellow believers who suffer, and praying for God's supernatural power and strength for them (Eph. 6:18-20; Heb. 13:3).

8. A New Testament Church concept and program

The five-fold task of the Church is:

- (a) **Evangelism:** Bringing the lost to Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20)
- (b) **Fellowship and worship:** Corporate fellowship and worship of believers (Heb. 10:23-25; Acts 2:42)
- (c) **Teaching and discipleship:** Training those who have come to Christ (2 Tim. 2:2)
- (d) **Worldwide missionary vision:** An outgoing vision (Matt. 9:35-38)
- (e) **Social concern:** A practical concern for the welfare of the poor, the sick and the needy (Jam. 2:14-17; Acts 4:32-35)

Most churches lack in their concept of what the Church should be doing – pray that God will restore His vision to the Church.

Finally, pray that the Church will be held in high honour (Acts 2:41-47; 5:11-16); that it will be militant and victorious against the powers of darkness, destroying the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18); and that it will truly be the light of the world and the salt of the earth as God intends it to be.

QUESTIONS

1. Why must judgement begin with the Household of God (the Church and Christians)?
2. What are some of the most important things we should be praying for the Church?
3. What is the five-fold task of the Church? In which of these areas is it most lacking?
4. Is the Church today held in high honour like the early New Testament Church was? (Acts 2:41-47; 5:11-16). If not, why not?

5. Are the gates of hell prevailing against the Church? (Matt. 16:18). If so, in what ways, and what can we do about it?
6. If we prayed for the release of apostles, prophets and evangelists within the Church, what effect would this have on the Church and nation?

11

PRAY FOR UNITY

Jesus, in summing up the commandments, said they could all be condensed into two commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God ... You shall love your neighbour”. Moreover, He said that “there is no other commandment which is greater than these” (Mark 12:28-31). Paul said, “The commandments ... are summed up in this sentence, You shall love ...” (Rom. 13:9). Indeed, “God is love” (1 John 4:8), and all His commandments are designed to mould our lives so that we take on His very nature – the commandments are an expression of His nature – love!

Love is the first of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22); it should be the motive behind all ministry (1 Cor. 13:1-3); it is the greatest of the three abiding qualities – faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13:13).

How sinful, (yes *sinful*) it is then, when people, looking at Christians, see so much division, disunity, competitiveness, criticism, judging and condemnation of others, and back-biting. Paul lists these as works of the flesh: “dissent, party spirit” – sectarianism or division, rather than unity and love (Gal. 5:20). In fact, he lists them with immorality, impurity and idolatry!

Jesus said, “Everyone will know that you are My disciples by the love you have for one another” (John 13:34-35). It was said of the early Christians, “How these Christians love one another!” Can the world still say this today?

Two of the main accusations that non-Christians level at Christians are:

(a) hypocrisy, and (b) division. Sectarianism and division are thus major excuses people use for not wanting to become Christians.

But church union itself is not the answer, unless there is a true unity in the Holy Spirit. Union is not unity. If you tie a cat and a dog together by their tails, you will have union but not unity! Union may be just an outward agreement or convenience, but unity is a matter of the heart (the same is also true of marriage!)

Jesus was one with the Father in the most complete and perfect way, and He prayed that we might be one even as He and the Father are one, so that the world might believe (John 17:21-23). Surely, revival and worldwide evangelism can only come to pass as all believers are united by the Holy Spirit and sanctified by obedience to God's Word, which is Truth (John 17:17).

One of the most subtle and devilish ways the enemy has attacked the Church is by enticing Christians to spread lies, rumours, distrust, suspicion and division amongst Christians. "United we stand; divided we fall", and there is no more crippling way, no faster way, of destroying the Church than by division. Direct outside attack and persecution have caused the Church to thrive and Christians to grow stronger; underhand subversion from within is far more lethal. More people die from inner diseases (e.g., heart attacks, cancers, strokes, etc.) than from outer attacks (violence, accidents, etc.)

Some of the churches in Russia used to constantly pray, during the days of communism, that God would preserve them from inner and outer attack – outer attack from atheists, communists and those who would persecute the Church; and inner attacks due to sin within the Church – division, criticism, suspicion, etc.

"The time has come for judgement to begin with the Household of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). If we really want to see revival, if we really want to see our generation reached with the Gospel, worldwide, then we are going to have to get right ourselves.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I have a critical spirit?
- Do I judge and condemn other Christians?
- Do I say untrue and unkind things about other Christians?
- Do I try to destroy other Christians, or build them up?
- Am I sectarian?
- Do I truly love Christians in other churches, other denominations, and with other doctrines?
- Do I try to compete with other Christians?

- Do I really love the whole Body of Christ so much that I would do anything I could to help any member of the Body? See 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 and 12:12-27.

Division in the Church stems from many roots:

Envy: Jealousy of other Christians and other churches, and what God is doing in them.

Pride: Striving to be better than others, and trying to pull others down so that we can be on top.

Sectarianism: An unwillingness to really love and unite with others who differ in non-essential doctrines, mode of worship or denominational name.

Empire-building: An ungodly desire to build up “our” church, or “our” work, or “our” group at the expense of others.

A competitive spirit: Trying to compete with other sections of the Body of Christ and to be bigger and better than them.

Shortsightedness: A failure to see beyond the fence we have built around ourselves; failing to recognise or to have anything to do with other parts of the Body of Christ, or to see what God is doing in them.

Personality clash: Not getting on with some other Christian and refusing to put things right with them and to restore true unity in the bond of peace. This is caused by, or often leads to, bitterness and an unforgiving spirit.

Exalting doctrine above love: Becoming so obsessed with our “true and correct doctrine” and a determination never to let go one little bit of “truth” (as we see it!), that we become hard, inflexible and unloving towards those who differ from us. We forget that we are exhorted to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ... until we all attain to the unity of the faith” (Eph. 4:1-3, 13-14). The order here is important: if we were more eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit we would come to the unity of the faith more quickly, because truth lies in the whole Body, not just one section of it! We all have a lot to learn from each other!

However, this unity cannot be merely in words or on paper – that is meaningless – it must be a **practical, spiritual unity in the Holy Spirit**. Man-made union will never work. What people bring together, other people will pull apart, but when God does it His way, it will be permanent! “Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity! ... For there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore” (Ps. 133:1, 3).

There is thus an urgent need to pray for true unity in the Holy Spirit, between all Christians, churches and Christian organisations. In Matthew 16:18-19 Jesus talks of building His

Church so that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. God wants the Church, His Body, to be strong, powerful and mighty in the Holy Spirit, but division will always hinder this.

Scriptures about the Body of Christ, the Church

Romans 12:4-5. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 12:12-27.

Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:4; 4:11-16; 5:23-27. Colossians 1:18; 1:24; 2:19.

An examination of these passages shows the following things:

1. Christ is the Head of His Body, the Church.
2. There is only one Body, and all members are united in it.
3. The Body has many members, each with different functions, but all are needed, all are necessary.
4. Christ is sanctifying the Church, and building it up, until it is perfect, holy and without blemish – a Bride fit for Himself.

Headship: Christ.

Uniqueness: Only one Body.

Unity: Total unity within the Body.

Diversity: Diversity within the Body.

Equality: All members are equal, under the Head.

Sanctification: The Body is being sanctified.

Edification: The Body is being edified (built up)

Glorification: The Body will be glorified, and will glorify its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 10:16 shows us that there are many sheepfolds, but only **one flock** and **one Shepherd**. Because of the size of His flock, it is necessary for the Shepherd to have His sheep in many folds; nevertheless they are one flock under the care, protection and guidance of the one Shepherd.

The basis of unity

The basis of unity is **fellowship with the Lord and with one another, in the Body of Christ**. The basis is not doctrine, human leadership, tradition or denomination – but fellowship in and with Christ. See Revelation 7:9-12.

If we want to see the Church effectively reach our nation for Christ, we need to intercede for unity:

- Pray for unity within the churches
- Pray for unity between the churches
- Pray for unity between Christian organisations
- Pray for unity between Christians

QUESTIONS

1. Why is disunity sinful?
2. Do Christians really demonstrate a type of love that is unique to the Church, that is not seen in the world? If so, what is this love like?
3. Are the churches (and denominations) really disunited, or just different?
4. How can we overcome a critical spirit (especially when we know we are right!)
5. What are some of the root causes of division?
6. “The basis of unity is fellowship with the Lord and with one another, in the Body of Christ; not doctrine, human leadership, tradition or denomination”. Discuss what this means.

12

PRAY FOR EVANGELISM

It is easy, in evangelism, to organise and witness as though everything depended on us – on what we say and do, on our ability to answer people’s questions and objections, and persuade them to receive Christ. Sometimes we forget that no-one is converted unless the Holy Spirit works in their lives and draws them to Jesus (see John 1:11-13; 3:3-8; 6:44).

There is a real danger of organising and witnessing “in the flesh” instead of spending time before God in prayer, seeking His leading and guiding, His anointing and inspiration, and praying for the convicting, converting power of the Holy Spirit. In more-organised

evangelism, for example, we need to seek the Lord as to how we should witness, when, where and to whom, etc.

Moreover, spiritual warfare over people's eternal lives will only be won through fervent intercession – Satan does not easily let people come to Christ and into God's Kingdom, without a battle first (see Luke 16:16; 2 Cor. 4:3-4).

God has told us to pray

James 4:2 says "You do not have because you do not ask". In other words, there are some things which God is more than willing to give us or do for us, but which we do not receive simply because we do not ask God for them. "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9), and He wants us to pray and witness to this end. Luke 11:9-10 tells us to "Ask, and keep on asking, and you shall receive". We thus need to constantly pray for those who do not know Christ, and pray that God will use us to witness to them and lead them to Christ.

We ourselves need to be prepared by prayer

If we are to be effective witnesses, we ourselves need to be prepared by prayer. Witnessing is not just telling others about Christ – it involves making sure that we are right with the Lord ourselves, and that our lives are really backing up what we say. For example, how can we tell other people that they are sinners who need to repent, if we ourselves need to repent and ask God's forgiveness for something?

It has been said that the goal of every Christian should be "To know Christ, and to make Him known". But before we can effectively make Him known, we need to really know Him ourselves, and one of the main ways we get to know the Lord is through spending time with Him in His Word and in prayer – talking with Him!

Notice the reason given for the success of Peter and John's testimony, given in Acts 4:13 – "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered; and they recognised that they had been with Jesus". We may not be well educated; there are many things we do not know; we may not be very eloquent or be able to answer every question, but if we know Jesus, and have spent time with Him, then our witness will carry His authority and conviction. We know what we are talking about because it is part of our daily experience!

The early disciples prayed much, and worshipped much, not specifically to witness, but to be close to God and be filled with the Spirit. Then, in God's time, their prayers were answered. Their witnessing was a spontaneous overflow of being Spirit-filled – people in love with the Lord, sharing their love, joy and faith with others (e.g., Acts 10:1-3, 9). This also was the key to the day of Pentecost: after ten days of prayer the disciples were filled with the Spirit and they could not contain their new-found love, faith and joy in the Lord – it overflowed to the streets of Jerusalem, and 3000 were saved that day!

What was the key to the power and success of Jesus' ministry? He only did the things He saw the Father doing (John 5:19-20, 30). And how did He know what the Father was doing? He spent time in His presence!

Likewise, the call of the early disciples to evangelism was accompanied by the promise of power and authority in their lives too (Matt. 10:1, 5-8; 28:18-20; Mark 3:14-15; 6:7; 16:15-20; Luke 9:1-2; 10:1, 19; 24:49; Acts 1:8).

We, too, as co-workers with Christ, need to be one with Him in prayer (1 Cor. 3:5-9).

There is no effective evangelism without prayer

Evangelism involves spiritual warfare over people's lives. Satan does not easily allow people to leave his kingdom of darkness and enter the Kingdom of God (the Kingdom of Light). If we are to see people saved and set free from the powers of darkness, then we are going to have to become engaged in spiritual warfare through intercession on their behalf. After all, the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest they believe and are saved! (2 Cor. 4:3-4)

Intercession involves standing in the gap

"I sought for a man among them", said the Lord, "who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me, for the land, that I should not destroy it ..." (Ezek. 22:30).

In the ministry of intercession there are two gaps in which we may have to stand:

(a) **The gap between God and people.** We need to come to God on behalf of the lost and pray for their salvation. Unconverted people either cannot or will not pray for themselves. It is therefore the ministry of the intercessor to bring them to God in prayer for

their salvation. This is part of our priestly ministry – representing God to people and people to God.

(b) **The gap between Satan and people.** The enemy of people's souls will also do his utmost to prevent people from being saved, and again it is the intercessor's privilege to stand in the gap on their behalf, and drive back the forces of darkness that keep the person in darkness. Spiritual bondages need to be broken and blindness needs to be stripped away.

See Psalm 106:23; Daniel 10:12-14; Jude 9. Intercessory prayer for evangelism enables us to stand in both of these gaps.

The necessity of prayer

Prayer is necessary before we witness, both for ourselves and for the people to whom we will be witnessing, while we are sharing the Gospel, and after a person has come to Christ.

- **Before we share the Gospel**

(a) **Prayer for ourselves.** Seek God for His will concerning how, when, where and to whom you should share your faith. (Of course, in one sense, we should always be ready to share the Lord with anyone). Don't just rely on "good ideas", get God's ideas!

Also, we need to prepare ourselves and make sure there is no hindrance in our lives. We must be clean vessels – clean channels – through whom the Good News can flow (Ps. 139:23-24; Prov. 28:13).

More than that, having been cleansed, pray that God will fill you with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and equip you with everything you need to effectively share the Gospel. Witnessing should be the spontaneous overflow of a Spirit-filled life (Acts 4:8-13).

(b) **For those to whom you will be witnessing.** The best way to get a God-given burden and love for the lost is to pray for them. Pray for the love of Christ which will constrain you to witness (2 Cor. 5:14). Ask the Lord to show you people as He see them.

Pray that God will prepare their hearts, create a hunger for spiritual truth and reality, and illumine their hearts and minds to the Gospel.

Pray that God will order their circumstances, convict them of sin and bring them to salvation (John 16:8-10).

Pray for people by name, as the Lord leads you.

There will also be a need to engage in spiritual warfare through intercession on their behalf. The god of this world has blinded people's minds and hardened their hearts (2 Cor. 4:3-4). He especially uses fear (e.g., fear of the unknown) and unbelief to hinder people's salvation. But God has given us the power and authority to bind the powers of darkness and set the person free (Luke 9:1-2; 10:19; Matt. 18:18; Heb. 2:14-15).

Pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, cleansed and covered (protected) by the Blood of the Lamb. Witness in the power of the Holy Spirit, using the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

- **While we are witnessing**

If possible, while someone is witnessing, others should be praying for them. Pray for boldness, wisdom, faith, love and authority. Pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit on their words. Pray against fear and doubts. Pray that the person being witnessed to will be given spiritual insight and understanding. Pray that every satanic stronghold, argument, proud obstacle and thought will be taken captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Pray against the powers of darkness. Deliverance may be necessary if the person is bound by demonic powers through involvement in drugs, the occult, false religions, idolatry, sin, etc. Again, bind the powers of darkness in Jesus' Name and set the person free (Luke 4:18).

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the complimentary roles of intercessors and evangelists, and their need for each other.
2. The following verses show us some keys to the success of Jesus' ministry. What are they? John 5:19-20, 30; 8:28; 14:10; 15:14-15.
3. To what extent does a person need to be willing before they can be set free from bondages?

4. Why is it so important that we are filled with the Spirit, if we are to be an effective witness?
5. Why is spiritual warfare such an important part of evangelism?
6. Why do you think Jesus sent out His disciples “two by two”? (Luke 10:1-3)

[Continued in the next study]

13

PRAY FOR EVANGELISM *(continued)*

- **After we have shared the Gospel**

If, after sharing the Gospel, the person comes to Christ, give thanks to God that another person has been born into His Kingdom. Continue to pray for the new Christian’s growth and discipleship. The first few weeks and months are especially critical in the life of a new Christian. Pray that a good, firm foundation will be laid in the person’s life. Pray for their follow-up and linking with a good Church where they will be loved and encouraged to grow.

Pray that the new Christian will: pray and read the Bible, seek the fellowship of other Christians, be obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, be faithful in their witness for Christ; that they will become strong in the Lord, and be strong to resist temptation. Pray that they will be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit. Pray until they become established in the faith; in fact, pray until God lifts the burden of prayer and the responsibility to constantly uphold them in prayer!

We may often have to stand in the gap against the powers of darkness on their behalf, as often the strongest attacks of Satan come shortly after conversion.

Even if the person does not come to Christ at the time you witness to them, do not be discouraged. You may be one link in the chain that leads to their conversion. One plants, another waters, but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-9). Pray that God will continue to speak to them through His Word and by His Spirit, and that they will come to Christ. Pray that other Christians will witness to them too, and that God will not let them rest until they have come to Christ. Water the seed of the Word with fervent prayer. See Isaiah 55:6-11.

Finally, entrust them into the hands and safe-keeping of God the Father (John 10:29).

Colossians 1:9-12 is a beautiful prayer to pray for those who have recently come to Christ:

“We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father”.

Prayers in the New Testament relating to evangelism

What did the early Christians pray for, and how should we pray, as regards evangelism? In the New Testament we see that we should:

1. Pray that the Lord will send out labourers (Matt. 9:35-38; Luke 10:2)
2. Pray for boldness, and signs and wonders to confirm the Word (Acts 4:29-31; Eph. 6:18-20; Mark 16:15-20)
3. Pray for the inspiration, gifts, leading and fulness of the Holy Spirit to empower those who witness (Acts 1:8)
4. Pray against the god of this world who tries to blind unbelievers' eyes (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
5. Pray that people will be saved and reconciled to God (Rom. 10:1; 2 Cor. 5:20)
6. Pray for open doors, open hearts, and clarity in presenting the Gospel (Col. 4:2-4)
7. Pray for wisdom (James 1:5-8)
8. Pray for follow-up: most of Paul's prayers regarding evangelism were for those he had brought to the Lord (e.g., Eph. 1:16)
9. Pray that the Word of God will spread rapidly in these “last days” (2 Thess. 3:1)
10. Pray for God's protection over evangelists and missionaries (2 Thess. 3:2; Rom. 15:30-32)

Some other areas for prayer

1. Pray for all evangelists and evangelistic organisations, that many people will be brought to the Lord. Pray for all evangelistic meetings and outreaches: in the streets, homes, coffee bars, parks, beaches, camps and other places.
2. Pray for Bible Colleges and all who are training people in evangelism.

3. Pray that all born again Christians will share their faith in Christ, both by their words and their actions.
4. Pray that God's people will constantly be filled with the Holy Spirit and that the overflow of lives filled with the Spirit will result in many people coming to Christ.
5. Pray for a missionary vision – that Christians will be sent forth to other parts of the world to share the Gospel, including in “closed” countries.
6. Pray that new Christians will be soundly established in the Christian faith, and be brought into true discipleship and maturity in Christ.
7. Pray that the Gospel will be powerfully preached in our churches so that many nominal Christians will be confronted with the truths of God's Word, and the Gospel, and will be truly born again.

If we want to see our nation turn back to the Lord, and its sinful ways “healed”, then we need to realise that it starts in the hearts of individuals. Our nation will only be as strong, moral and Godly as its individual people. So we need to pray for the sharing of the Gospel, and pray that many people will be saved!

QUESTIONS

1. What sort of prayers did the early Christians pray regarding evangelism?
2. What do Paul's prayers for his converts teach us about prayer and follow-up?
3. Why is prayer so important before we start to witness?
4. Why is it important to pray while the Gospel is being shared?
5. How do we get “a burden for the lost”?
6. Why is evangelism so important to the well-being of the Church? Is the statement that we must “Evangelize or perish!” true?

14

PRAY FOR REVIVAL

What is revival?

There are five words used in the Bible, which have similar meanings, and which illustrate the meaning of revival:

1. Revival: To “revive” means to bring back to life again. “Will You not revive us again, so that Your people may rejoice in You?” (Ps. 85:6). “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years” (Hab. 3:2). See also Isaiah 57:15; Hosea 6:1-3 and Ezra 9:8-9.

2. Renewal: To “renew” means to make something new again. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). See also Isaiah 40:31; Lamentations 5:21; Psalm 103:5; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10 and Titus 3:5.

3. Restoration: To “restore” means to bring something back to its original state and glory. “I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten” (Joel 2:24-25). See also Psalm 51:10-12.

4. Refreshing: To “refresh” means to make something fresh, clean and new again. “Repent therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). See also Philemon 7.

5. Awakening: To “awake” means to come out of a time of sleepiness or sleeping. “Now it is high time to awake out of sleep” (Rom. 13:11-14). See also Ephesians 5:14.

Each of these five words has the same idea behind it: something was alive, vital, new, glorious, fresh and awake, but it is no longer. In revival, it is restored to its former life, newness, glory, freshness and wakefulness. Surely we need to pray that the Church will be revived in these days! See Revelation 3:1-3, 15-19.

Revival and Evangelism

Revival is not evangelism – it is not even mass evangelism on a large scale. Revival may come as a result of evangelism, and evangelism always comes as a result of revival, but the two are not the same.

Evangelism is basically an organised means of reaching non-Christians with the Gospel and bringing them to Christ and into His Church.

Revival cannot be organised – we cannot turn it on, nor can we turn it off! In true revival, God simply takes over; we see a supernatural, Sovereign God at work, and human organisation is more or less incidental. Also, revival primarily and mainly affects Christians – the Church. It is a restoration of life, vitality and glory to the Church. Certainly this will affect the nation and unbelievers as a result, but that is the second step, not the first.

Revival is a time when God breaks through into human history to awaken spiritual fervour in Christians, to touch them afresh by His Spirit, bringing renewal to the Church and creating a greater impetus for evangelism. Revival usually comes suddenly and unexpectedly.

Evangelism has to do with the initial stage of the Gospel, and revival with the backslidden state of the Church. Though they may occur together, they are not the same – saving (evangelism) has to do with the spiritual state of the unconverted; sanctifying (revival) has to do with the spiritual state of the converted.

Evangelism can be, and ought to be, engaged in everywhere in the world at all times, in obedience to Mark 16:15 and 2 Timothy 4:5.

Revival is a sovereign act of God on whom He will, and where He will. When God sees the necessary requirements being fulfilled, He can begin His work of revival.

Revival in Bible times

Moses (Exodus ch. 32-40)

As a result of this revival at Mt Sinai, the Israelites were given the spiritual impetus to move from the wilderness towards the Promised Land. It also gave them the strength to face further trials and battles in the wilderness.

Samuel (1 Samuel 7:3-4)

Samuel called upon Israel to return to the Lord with all their hearts and put away strange gods – and they did.

Elijah (1 Kings 18:20-46)

Elijah stood alone on Mt Carmel, challenging King Ahab and the 450 priests of Baal, and as a result the whole of the Northern Kingdom of Israel turned back to God.

Jonah (Jonah 3:1-10)

The whole of the great but wicked city of Nineveh turned to God as a result of Jonah's preaching, and repented in sackcloth and ashes, with fasting. And God spared the city!

Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Chr. ch. 14-16, 29-32, 34-35)

Revival came to Judah during the reigns of these kings.

Nehemiah (Book of Nehemiah)

Revival came when the people of Israel returned to Jerusalem after their time of captivity in Babylon, and rebuilt the city of Jerusalem.

It is important to notice that during this whole Old Testament period, when genuine revival came the people repented of their sins and forsook them, put away their idols, broke down the house of Baal and its altars, slew the heathen priests, cleansed and restored the Temple and its worship of God, put God's Word and Law in a place of prominence and authority, and restored the Sabbath day. These same areas need to be dealt with in our day and generation, in our nation. When revival comes, they will be dealt with!

New Testament (Book of Acts)

The greatest revival of all took place in an upper room when 120 fearful believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and their lives were completely revolutionised. No longer fearful, frightened, confused and uncertain, they now had boldness, authority, zeal and eloquence in preaching and testifying. They went out to turn the world upside down, and won 3000 people to Christ in the first day! (Acts 2).

Marks of revival

1. A sovereign move of God. The most obvious mark of revival is a sovereign move of God – while some things (evangelism, preaching, prayer meetings, etc) may have been organised by man, revival goes way beyond this, and God moves, at times, quite

independently of men. The sovereignty of God becomes obvious as He moves as He wills.

2. Suddenness. We must be a prepared people, for one of the characteristics of revival is the suddenness with which God comes, and the unexpectedness of it. “The Lord, Who you seek, shall suddenly come” (Mal. 3:1). “Suddenly there came a sound from Heaven” (Acts 2:2).

3. Holiness. “Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire ...” (Mal. 3:2). We must be a holy people, and one of the marks of true revival is a restoration of holiness amongst God’s people, as God convicts people of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:7-11). “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). Sin is exposed, and people become aware of the holiness and majesty of God, during times of revival. In fact, we will all react in one of two ways: either we will praise and worship God, or we will confess sin, when God comes in this way. Those with clean hands and hearts will worship Him; those without clean hands and hearts will confess to Him! (See Isaiah 6:1-7).

A fear of God will come over people, which will keep them from sin. This involves a deep awe and reverence for God; respect for, and obedience to, His Laws; and a real sense of His sovereignty and Lordship. See Exodus 20:18-20 and Jeremiah 32:39-40. “The fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil” (Prov. 8:13).

Backslidden Christians will be restored, unbelievers will be converted, sin will be dealt with at a much deeper level than ever before. There will be great conviction of sin, followed by deep and true repentance and confession (Ps. 24:3-4; Is. 57:15).

Wickedness and crime will decline. In revivals of the past, when God’s holiness has been seen and conviction of sin is great, pubs, brothels, gambling places, theatres, dance halls and places of iniquity have closed down through lack of patronage!

4. God’s Spirit is outpoured. “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17). Christians are awakened, filled with the Holy Spirit, endued with power from on High, equipped with supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, and become zealous in sharing their renewed faith with the lost. There will be much evangelism, not in the power of the flesh but in the power of the Holy Spirit, with multitudes being converted as a result (Acts 5:12-16).

All facades are stripped away, materialism, pride and sophistication are dealt with and lose their power, and in their place there is a real openness and brokenness, a new love, joy, praise, worship, liberty and concern for the lost.

Demonic activity frequently increases during times of revival, but demons will be cast out in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God will confirm His Word with signs following – miracles, healings, visions, dreams, prophecies, etc. (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 2:16-21).

The new love and fervour will also result in much greater social concern – it will unite people, people will share with one another and help each other in times of need (Acts 2:41-47; 4:31-37).

5. Prayer and study of God's Word. During times of revival, men and women turn to prayer as never before. Prolonged times of deep, earnest, pouring out of one's heart to God, often occur, lasting well into the night – or all night!

There will be a return to reading and studying God's Word, and especially a return to authoritative, inspired preaching of the Bible as true, trustworthy and the authority by which our lives should be governed. And it will be applied to people's lives, not just head knowledge!

6. The nation will know! No revival ever occurred in secret! When God moves in this way the nation will know; indeed the world will know about it, for "these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also" (Acts 17:6).

7. Persecution and bloodshed. Opposition, persecution and bloodshed frequently follow revival (see Acts 7:51-60; 12:1-4). When God moves, the devil always opposes. Demons are stirred up, and with them come hatred, opposition and persecution. This happened in the early Church and this has happened many times, in many countries, throughout history. But we should never fear persecution, because "greater is He Who is in us, than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). In fact, Peter says "Beloved, do not think it is strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you ... but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, so that when His glory is revealed, you will be glad also with exceeding joy!" (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

What should be of greater concern to us is that if we do not pray for, and work towards, revival, God may have to bring judgement and persecution in order to revive us. May this

not be so; but so great is God's concern for a revived Church and nation that He will, if necessary, use persecution to bring about revival.

How can we prepare for revival?

1. We must see the need for revival. If our eyes are blinded so that we cannot see the need for revival, then we will never have the faith to really intercede for it, or prepare for it. Leonard Ravenhill has said, "If the Church will only obey the conditions, she can have revival any time she wants it. The problem of the Church is the problem in the garden of Gethsemane – asleep!"

Pray that God will open your eyes, and the eyes of other Christians, to see the need, to intercede, and to prepare for revival.

2. We need to be ready. Revival comes suddenly so we need to be prepared and ready, having the faith to believe that the time could be now!

Pray that God will show you any ways in which you are not ready, and help you to be prepared. "Watch and pray" (Matt. 26:41).

3. We need to pray. The four pre-requisites given in 2 Chronicles 7:14 are that we must:

- humble ourselves
- pray – sincere, earnest, continuous intercession
- seek God's face
- turn from our wicked ways – true repentance, confession and restitution. God requires us to be holy, open and broken before Him (Ps. 51:7-13)

We must pray for labourers. While the human element is not nearly as important in times of revival as at other times, God will still use Christians to initiate revival as well as during revival.

Pray that the Lord will raise up men and women of God with a vision and calling to revival, who, under God, are anointed and inspired to lead God's people in a time of revival (Matt. 9:36-38). Pray for preachers, teachers, evangelists, leaders and prayer warriors.

4. We must be united. One major characteristic of the Church in Acts was that they were united – "of one accord", "of one heart and mind" (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24, 32; 5:12; 8:6; 15:25).

Pray that all true believers will be united in this way, in the Body of Christ, and will be of one heart and mind in longing for God's Spirit to be outpoured upon all flesh.

5. We must learn now, how to bind the powers of darkness. God has given us the authority and power to bind the powers of darkness (Matt. 16:18-19; James 4:7). We need to be exercising this now!

Pray that God will raise up Christians who will have the discernment and power to bring deliverance to all those who are bound by the powers of darkness – the occult, demon-possession, spiritism, false religion, etc.

6. We must learn to praise. Praise, worship and great joy accompany revival. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's (2 Chr. 20:1-30, especially v. 15, 17).

Pray that God will lead His people into true worship and praise, worshipping and praising God in Spirit and in Truth, as He desires us to (John 4:23-24).

7. We must avoid the dangers. Five dangers which must be faced in times of revival are:

- seeking experiences for their own sake
- relying on feelings and physical manifestations
- spiritual pride
- excesses and fleshly manifestations
- not discerning and dealing with demonic manifestations

Pray that God will give us the wisdom to avoid all the dangers associated with revival, and that in the outpouring of God's Spirit in these last days we will see a true, deep work of God's Spirit that will bring much glory to Him, that will save the lost, and revive and restore the Church.

"Will You not revive us again, so that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O Lord, and grant us Your salvation" (Psalm 85:6-7)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between revival, renewal, restoration, refreshing and awakening?

2. Which of those five terms best describes what God is doing in the Church today?
 3. What are the fundamental differences between revival and evangelism?
 4. What effects does revival have on (a) the Church, and (b) the unconverted?
 5. What were the keys to the New Testament revival in the book of Acts?
 6. What can we do to prepare for revival?
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PRAY FOR THE NATION ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

<https://www.pray-for-the-nation.org/>

“Righteousness exalts a nation” (Proverbs 14:34)

“If My people who are called by My Name will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked way, then I will hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Early one Sunday morning in November 1971 Brian Caughley woke and felt the Lord saying to him that he should call Christians to **“Pray for the Nation!”** Within a few minutes the Lord showed him the aims and ways in which this could be done (see below). Brian hoped that he would be able to rally about 200 Christians to pray for the nation, but was somewhat disappointed when *“Pray for the Nation”* commenced in January 1972 with only 80 people on the mailing list. But since then it grew to well over 10,000 on the mailing list, plus almost 500 people in other countries.

Later, many hundreds of people received the weekly email **Prayer Update**, since it commenced in February 2000 (something never envisaged in 1972 when magazines were printed by cutting stencils using a manual typewriter, and labels were typed on gummed paper using four carbons to make more copies at once!) Since then, over 3.5 million monthly magazines, and over 120,000 Bible study books, have been printed and distributed throughout the world. The weekly email *Prayer Update* has been going out since the beginning of 2000, while our website has been going since 1998.

<https://pray-for-the-nation.org/>

AIMS

1. To glorify God by uniting Christians throughout the Nation in praying regularly and specifically for Revival in the Church, our cities and our Nation.
2. To encourage them to continue to pray for Revival until the Lord sends such a Revival.
3. To instruct in the ministry of Intercession so that Christians will be more effective in Intercessory prayer.
4. To share specific prayer requests with Christians, related to Evangelism and Revival, so that they can pray more intelligently and specifically.

HOW WERE THESE AIMS BEING ACHIEVED?

Monthly *Prayer Letters* were sent free of charge to those who request them, but we encourage people to get them from our website (address above). These letters include a short challenge to pray, Bible studies on how to be more effective in prayer and related topics, and share specific prayer requests related to evangelism, revival, church, government and the nation, especially (but not exclusively) in this country.

The monthly magazine was posted on our website <https://pray-for-the-nation.org/> at the beginning of each month. Weekly *Prayer Updates* were emailed to those who requested them. (*Pray for the Nation* is also known as *Intercessors for New Zealand*)

After 50 years of mailing the monthly *Prayer Letters* (1972-2022), and 20 years of emailing the weekly *Prayer Updates* (2000-2023), these have now ceased, but an *Occasional Update* is emailed about monthly, to those who request it.

We have also conducted prayer seminars in many parts of New Zealand, and have taught on prayer in many different churches and groups throughout the country and overseas. About the time Pray for the Nation started, there were similar nationwide prayer groups which “joined together” to pray for their nations, using the name “International Intercessors”. They held two-yearly prayer conferences in about 12 different countries (1978-2000) Christians from almost every denomination are involved.

Our website, on which there are several other books on prayer, is ...

<https://www.pray-for-the-nation.org> ifnz@xtra.co.nz