



Lord,
Teach Us To Pray

Part 2

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“Lord, Teach Us to Pray!”

INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 of ***“Lord, Teach Us to Pray”*** (obtainable online through *Pray for the Nation’s Bible Study Books* page) we looked at the following aspects of prayer: Praise, Worship, Thanksgiving, Confession and Intercession. In particular, we looked at intercession for our Nation, the Government, the Church; for unity, evangelism and revival.

In this book, Part 2, we look at some general points on praying, and then the problem of “Unanswered Prayer”. This leads us to look at what “Knowing God” really means and how we get to know Him; the problem of wandering thoughts while we are trying to pray; healing the memories and the place of laying on of hands in prayer.

Having looked at “Knowing God”, we also turn to the subject of understanding the spiritual realm and “Know your enemy!” While Christians should not over-emphasize the subject of Satan and demonic powers, nevertheless in our Christian lives (and especially our prayer lives) we are engaged in spiritual warfare and we must know our spiritual enemy if we are to defeat him and be victorious through Christ.

We then look at praying for our community, using what are sometimes called “spiritual mapping” and “prayer walking” to assist us as we do so; and also praying for people who are in authority.

Finally we look at three aspects of Faith – the power of positive confession (declaring our faith), the prayer of faith and the rest of faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please God” and “whatever does not proceed from faith is sin”. Our Christian lives, and our prayers, must at all times be undergirded by faith in a faithful God.

“Lord, teach us to pray – fervent, effective prayers so that our lives, and this world, will be changed for Your glory! Amen!”

1

SOME POINTS ON PRAYING

Jesus, after praying in the garden of Gethsemane, said to His disciples, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:40-41).

Not many Christians regularly spend an hour (or more) in prayer, but on some occasions, either by themselves, or in a prayer group, they will have prolonged times of prayer. How do we spend “an hour in prayer”? How do we pray? The following

points on prayer are given as suggestions for praying when you are going to spend more than just a few minutes in prayer. They are not rules, but guidelines, to more effective praying (James 5:16-18).

1. Be clean

Ask God to cleanse you from all sin so that there is no hindrance to your prayers. See Psalms 24:3-4; 66:18; 139:23-24.

2. Be filled with the Spirit

Ask God to fill you with His Spirit, so that you are led by the Spirit as you pray. See Ephesians 5:18; 6:18a; Romans 8:26-27; John 15:5.

3. Be expectant

Believe that God is going to lead you in prayer; that He will hear and that He will answer. See Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:14-15.

4. Resist the devil

Sometimes in prayer (especially in intercession) you are going to be fighting against evil authorities and powers. Submit yourself to God and resist the devil in the all-powerful Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. See 2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:10-18; James 4:7.

5. Be still

There are times to pray and times to be silent. Wait on God; expect Him to guide your thoughts and prayers. See Psalms 46:10; 62:5; Isaiah 55:8; John 10:27.

6. Pray through

Do not move onto the next prayer topic until you have prayed through the previous one – that is, until God has lifted the burden and the need to continue in prayer for it. This is especially important in prayer meetings – pray over one subject at a time until there is no further prayer, before moving on to the next subject. In a prayer group, learn to pray in unity of mind, purpose and heart. See Matthew 18:19-20; Acts 4:24a.

7. Use your Bible

Let God speak to you and guide you through His Word. At times He may lead you to passages of the Bible to read, or hymns and choruses to sing. See Psalm 119:105; Ephesians 5:19-20.

8. Praise the Lord

Remember to give thanks and praise to God for hearing and answering prayer. Give thanks in anticipation of what God will do, as well as for what He has done! See Philipians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:1.

Generally, prayer will cover five major areas:

- **Confession:** confession of sin and positive confession of the truths of God's Word.
- **Worship and praise.**
- **Intercession:** asking for God to meet the needs of other people.
- **Supplication:** requests for your own needs.
- **Thanksgiving:** for all God has done, including prayers He has answered.

Some suggestions of what to pray for

1. **Those in authority:** Government; civic and Church leaders; laws of the land.
2. **The Church:** For unity, purity, authority and power; confession of sins of the Church.
3. **Evangelism:** For all forms of witness within and from our nation.
4. **Revival:** For an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and revival in the Church.
5. **The nation:** Items in the news; for righteousness and peace; the media; schools; confession of the sins of the nation; for homes, youth, etc.

QUESTIONS

1. Must all Christians spend prolonged times in prayer, or is a short daily prayer sufficient?
2. How can I know when I am praying with the Spirit, and when I am praying with the mind?
3. What do I do when I "wait on God"?

4. Can I pray for the things I want to pray for, or should I always wait for God to show me what to pray for?
5. What can you do in a prayer meeting when someone “prays all around the world” – that is, in one prayer they seem to pray for everything, and leave nothing for other people to pray?
6. Why is it important to thank and praise God?

2

UNANSWERED PRAYER

Why is it that sometimes our prayers are not answered? Doesn't God hear, or doesn't He care, or haven't I prayed enough, or am I not praying correctly?

In order to answer these questions, first let us look at the different types of prayer.

What is prayer?

- Adoration (including worship and praise)
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Supplication (including intercession)

Let's look at each of these in turn.

Adoration is always “answered” (that is, accepted by God, and we are blessed as a result) if it is from a pure heart, genuine, in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23-24).

Confession is always answered (that is, God hears and forgives) if there is sincere repentance and restitution wherever possible (Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9). This includes forgiving others and putting things right with them (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:14-15; 1 John 1:7 “walking in the light and having fellowship with one another”).

Thanksgiving is always answered (that is, accepted by God) if it is genuine.

Supplication (and intercession) may or may not be answered in the way we expect because God knows what is ultimately best for us and for other people. So God's desire is (and ours should be) for what is best for everyone and which brings glory to God. See Romans 8:28. So sometimes His answer is “Yes” but other times His

answer is “No” or “Wait”. (Does any good parent **always** say “Yes” to **every** request of their child?)

One of the reasons the answer may be either “No” or “Wait” is that we might not be fulfilling God’s conditions for answered prayer. It is no good “claiming a promise” if we ignore other Scriptures which bring balance to our “claim”!

God’s conditions for answered prayer

1. Ask. Luke 11:9-10; James 4:2c. Christianity is not fatalistic. We do not sit back and say, “The will of allah be done”. We have the ability, through prayer, to change things – if we will ask and pray.

2. Right motives. James 4:3. So often our motives are wrong: we may be selfish, lazy, impatient, prejudiced, etc. It often takes time for God to show us our wrong motives and desires.

3. Pure heart. Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9, 13; Isaiah 59:1-2. This is a major reason why prayers go unanswered: if our hearts are impure then God does not even hear our prayers. “Hearing”, with God, is equated with answering – if God “hears” He answers. Hence obedience and holiness are necessary. See also 1 John 3:21-22. 1 Peter 3:7 indicates that wrong relationships in the home (especially between husband and wife) can hinder our prayers.

4. Faith. Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 21:22. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Unbelief is a real hindrance in the Christian life, including its hindrance to prayer being answered.

5. Persistency. Luke 18:1-8; 11:9 “Ask and keep on asking ...” But make sure that when you keep on asking it is not because of lack of faith! Keep on praying until God brings you to a place of complete confidence in which you know He has heard and will answer. Then pray the prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

6. With prayer and fasting. Matthew 17:21 (in the context of deliverance from demon-possession); Acts 14:23; Daniel 9:3. In times of great need or crisis, God may lead you to fast as well as pray. This is more of an “extreme” way of praying, in special circumstances.

7. In agreement. Matthew 18:19-20; Psalm 133. Imagine the power that could be released if the whole Church prayed together, agreeing and believing! See Acts 4:24-33 “They lifted up their voice to God with one accord ... when they had prayed the place was shaken ... and with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”.

8. In Jesus' Name. John 14:13-14. This means we are praying with His authority and His permission – you can't use someone else's name unless you have their permission and authority to do so. These verses do **not** mean that we just add Jesus' Name to the end of our prayers in order to force God to answer them! We can only pray (or prophesy) "in Jesus' name" if we know we have His authority and permission to do so!

9. According to His will. 1 John 5:14-15 (cf. Romans 8:26-27). When we are truly praying in the Spirit, we are praying according to the will of God, even though our minds may not know fully what that will is; the Spirit of God is praying through us, according to His will.

10. Abiding in Him. John 15:7. If we abide in Him and He abides in us, then He will reveal how we should pray, and we need to pray accordingly.

God cannot be forced into answering our prayers by our fulfilling certain conditions and then saying, "Now God, You have to answer". God is Sovereign and Lord; He knows what is best; we are His servants and we should gladly want what **He** wants.

Neither is God legalistic. He does not normally say "I've found one of My conditions that you have not fulfilled; now I don't have to answer your prayer". God loves us; He wants to answer our prayers; He wants to do what is best – and He has the wisdom, love and power to bring that about! But on occasions there may be lessons that He needs to teach us.

Matthew 7:9-11. A good Father only gives **good** things to His children – and He knows best!

Confidence

"... and this is the confidence we have in Him ..." (1 John 5:14). Isaiah 55:8-9. God is not legalistic; if He was then we would rarely receive anything! Let us have confidence in God.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Unanswered prayer builds character and patience; it purifies and tests our faith – is our faith truly in God, or only when He answers our prayers the way we want? See 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13.

One of the most amazing statements of faith in the Old Testament is in Job 13:15 (AV) when Job, after all he had suffered, could **still** say "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!"

Prayers that are answered are derived from knowing God: knowing Him, His ways, His will and His plans.

Prayer is neither fatalistic nor useless. Through answered prayer, unanswered prayer and delayed answers, we get to know God better – His character and His ways. If your prayer is not answered, or the answer is delayed, it is not a sin to ask (with the right attitude!) “Why, Lord?”

Through prayer we move the hand of God, and cooperate with Him in building up the Kingdom of God and His Church in the world today. We are “co-workers with Him” (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1).

“The effective, fervent prayer of the righteous avails much!” (James 5:16).

“Let us pray ...” – in faith and in dependence on our God.

QUESTIONS

1. Does God always wait until we have fulfilled all His conditions before He answers our prayers? Why or why not?
2. How can a person know when it is time to stop praying for something and when they should keep on asking?
3. If God knows our hearts and our needs, why do we need to pray for things?
4. What does it mean to “ask in Jesus’ Name”? (John 14:14).
5. If we need to pray “according to His will”, how can we know what is His will? (1 John 5:14).
6. What should be our attitude if God does not answer our prayers in the way we want Him to?

3

KNOWING GOD

1 John 5:14-15 says that “if we ask anything according to His will He hears us, and if we know that he hears us ... we know that we have obtained the requests made of Him”. It is thus important, when we pray, to know God’s will, and if we are to know God’s will then obviously we need to know God Himself.

One of the very important reasons why God has told us to pray is because, through prayer, we get to know God. In fact, eternal life itself is bound up with knowing God,

for Jesus said, “This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Who You have sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life is not bound up in doctrine, beliefs, or church membership – eternal life, in essence, is knowing the eternal God and His Son Jesus Christ. If we do not know Him, we do not have eternal life, no matter how much doctrine we might accept.

Levels of knowing God

There are four different levels on which we can know a person, and on which we can know God. We can:

1. **Know about God:** We may have heard of Him, we may know a little about Him; we may know *of* Him but we do not know *Him*. This is essentially the level at which most people “know” God; it is the level of the non-Christian or unbeliever.
2. **Know God as an Acquaintance:** Many people go to church on odd occasions and so become acquainted with God – they learn quite a bit about the Bible and the physical and historical aspects of Christ’s life; they are acquainted with Him but do not really know Him personally.
3. **Know God as a Friend:** True Christians know the Lord as a Friend. They have experienced Him in their lives from time to time and can really sing and mean the words “What a Friend we have in Jesus”. Nevertheless, while He is a Friend and they have experienced God’s goodness to them, there are many things they do not know about Him and rarely if ever do they sense God sharing things with them. Like the children of Israel, they see the outward acts of God but do not really know His ways as Moses did (Psalm 103:7).
4. **Know God intimately:** God longs for an intimate, personal relationship with each one of us, in which God can share things with us and we can share things with Him as a husband and wife share with each other, or as we may share with someone we really know and trust.

These four levels can be illustrated:

From the life of Christ. The unbelievers (Jews, Romans and Pharisees) only knew *about* Jesus. They heard and saw some of the things He said and did but never really understood. His followers, on the other hand, were *acquainted* with Him and knew Him at a deeper level. Yet from amongst these Jesus chose twelve disciples, and there was a group of women (e.g., Mary and Martha), who had *friendship* with Jesus and an insight into His life that other followers of Jesus did not have. Out of these, Jesus chose Peter, James and John who had a special *intimate* knowledge of our Lord and were with Him on special occasions.

By reference to the Temple. Knowing about God is like being in the outer court (the Gentile's court); being acquainted with God is like being in the inner court (where the Jews were allowed); knowing Jesus as a Friend is like being a priest in the holy place; and knowing Jesus intimately is like being the High Priest who enters into the Holy of Holies where the Shekinah (glory and presence) of God Himself dwells.

By Ezekiel's vision of the water flowing from the Temple (Ezekiel 47:1-12). Are we paddling in ankle deep water, stepping into knee deep water, up to our waist in the water, or carried along, borne by the mighty flowing water of God's Spirit?

In which way do we know God?

Some Greeks came to Philip and said, "We would see Jesus" (John 12:21). Hebrews 2:9 says "But we see Jesus ..." Do we long to see Jesus – to know Him more intimately? Can we really say, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, O God" (Psalm 42:1)?

It is recorded of the early Jews that "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered" *but* "they recognised they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). The secret of the success of the early disciples was that they had been with Jesus – they knew Him intimately.

In the first three verses of 1 John 1 we read these words: "heard, seen, looked upon, touched, manifest, saw, manifest, seen, heard". Nine times John emphasises that he is not talking about someone imaginary, some vague historical figure, some doctrinal concept, but Someone he knew at the most intimate and personal level. "That which we have seen and heard we also proclaim to you" (1 John 1:3).

As Christians we need to know God. As witnesses we need to know God. As intercessors we need to know God. Prayer is not so much a technique to be learned as a result of an intimate relationship with Christ. As we get to know God better, we will get to know His will better. As we get to know His will better, we will know how to pray better.

Daniel 11:32 says "The people who know their God shall be strong and do exploits". No wonder Paul's one desire was "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Philippians 3:10).

It is worth studying John's first epistle because in its five chapters John uses the word "know" 38 times, frequently in reference to knowing God. For example, what signs are there as to whether or not a person knows God? See 1 John 2:3-6; 4:2-3; 4:6-8.

So, if we are to be effective in our Christian lives, in our witness and in our intercession, then it is vitally important that we know God – not just knowing about Him, but **knowing God Himself**. Our goal as Christians should be to know God and to make Him known (but knowing God comes first!)

Personality and character

Personality is not the same as character. Personality is reflected in what a person says and does; character is what a person really is. It is easy to observe someone's personality by their outward words and actions, but this is only a small part of knowing their true character. (See for example, 1 Samuel 16:7). A person may have a strong personality but a weak character, or vice versa. Or, they may be strong or weak in both. What we see is simply part of a person's character revealed through their personality; to really know a person we must know their character.

Most people only know the characters of a few people who are really close to them, but we all observe many people's personalities.

We need to know God's character if we are really to know God. "God made known His ways (character) to Moses and His acts (personality) to the people of Israel" (Ps. 103:7). We can all see God's acts, but do we know God's ways?

When we get to know God in this way it will transform our lives – our praying, our worship, our thinking, our personal commitment and holiness will be revolutionised as we really get to know God.

Many of the wrong things in our lives are due to our lack of knowing God. Our sinfulness, disobedience, rebellion, lack of faith, stubbornness, etc., are the result of not knowing God. Knowing God's faithfulness leads us to faith; knowing God's wisdom and justice banishes our questionings and resentment; knowing His holiness helps us to abhor sin, and so on.

So often we seek guidance, we seek gifts, we seek answers to prayer, rather than seeking the God Who guides, gives and answers prayer! Which should we seek: the Giver or His gifts? The answer should be obvious!

Lack of understanding of the character of God (Who He is) is the basis of our lack of spiritual growth, whether we are newly converted Christians or "mature" Christians.

QUESTIONS

1. How should knowing God affect the way we pray and live?

2. How does a person progress from one level of knowing God to a higher level?
3. Why is the level at which most Christians know God, somewhat shallow?
4. What does it mean to “see Jesus” (Hebrews 2:9)?
5. Discuss the statement: “Prayer is not so much a technique to be learned as a result of an intimate relationship with Christ”.
6. What signs are there as to whether or not a person really knows God? (See 1 John 2:3-6; 3:6; 4:2-3; 4:6-8)

4

HOW DO WE GET TO KNOW GOD ?

On one occasion some people came to Philip and said, “We want to see Jesus” (John 12:21). Hebrews 2:9 says “But we see Jesus”. How can we “see Jesus” today? How can we get to know God?

There are several ways in which we get to know God; in which we can “see Jesus” and spend time with Him. The following are some of those ways.

1. Through God’s Word

The primary way in which God has revealed Himself to people since Jesus was on earth, is through the Bible. Before we read it, it is good to pray and ask God to reveal Himself to us through His Word. Do not simply read the Bible; do not merely seek to learn the Bible as an academic exercise or even use it simply as a way to get guidance. Seek the God Who inspired its writing. Get to know God through His Word. God’s Word is designed to reveal God to us and to draw us to Christ (John 5:39-40).

Study God’s nature and character as it is revealed in the Bible (some suggestions are given below).

The more we read about the Lord and what He said, the more we will become like Him, and the better we will get to know Him. Study the life, teachings and character of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels, and let His Spirit transform your life and make it like Christ’s.

2. Through prayer

True prayer is divine communication – talking with God – speaking to Him and listening to Him. True prayer is fellowship with God at an intimate, personal, deep level. Start seeking God. This will take time and effort, but it is well worthwhile (see Jeremiah 29:12-14a). It should not be hard to spend time in prayer when we remember that we are sharing with the One Who loves us and cares for us – our Heavenly Father!

3. Through revelation of the Holy Spirit

Read Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 1:16-23, and note especially the words "that God may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (v. 17). As you meditate on the Lord, as you worship and praise Him, pray and believe that the Holy Spirit will reveal the Lord to you.

God can speak Spirit to spirit – His Holy Spirit communicating to your spirit His will and His ways. He can bring revelation, insight, wisdom, understanding, and so on. Pray for this and believe for it. See Romans 8:26-27.

4. Through our experiences

We also learn about God through His dealings with us in our daily lives. Let us praise God for every lesson learnt, for each personal experience we have of Him and with Him.

However, we do need to discern, at times, what God is doing in our lives. Sometimes He tests our faith. This doesn't necessarily mean that He is angry with us or punishing us – often it is to the contrary! He wants to expand our faith and trust in Him; He wants us to go on to greater things in Him and with Him. But there are also times when He may need to punish us because we have gone astray and will not listen to what He is saying. It is relatively easy to tell whether God is testing us or punishing us – ask Him! Pray the prayer David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24. Ask God to reveal anything and everything which He is not pleased with. Repent of it, confess it and ask His forgiveness. If, having done this, you honestly do not know of anything which might be causing His displeasure, but you are seeking to do His will, be obedient and lead a Godly life, then you can be assured that His dealings with you are a testing and trial which He is taking you through for some purpose, and not punishment for sin because you have not repented.

We need to let God's tests purify and perfect our faith (1 Peter 1:6-9; 4:12-14).

We also get to know the Lord as we see His nature expressed in the lives of other Godly Christians in their Christlike acts (Matthew 5:16).

5. Through love and obedience

While God is loving, forgiving, kind and patient we must be very careful that we do not presume on these things. We need to be obedient to what God shows us. Why should God continue to speak and reveal Himself to people who will not listen and obey, or who do nothing with what He has already shown them? God will not “waste His time” with people who are continually disobedient, in the sense that they will begin to lose contact with Him and their disobedience will deafen their ears to His words and close their eyes to what He wants to show them.

God has promised to show Himself to us if we obey His commands, and love God and other people. See John 14:15-21; 1 John 1:2-3; 2:3-6; 4:7-12.

Note: Out of the above five ways in which we get to know God, the objective way in which God reveals Himself to us is through the Bible. This is God’s eternal Word, written for our guidance and instruction. It is the objective touchstone by which we judge all the other ways. Experiences, what we think is revelation or God’s voice, etc., need to be judged by God’s Word and if they do not match up to Scripture then we may need to reject them, or at least “hang them on a hook” until we get further insight into the situation. Many, many people have gone astray, or been led astray, by forsaking God’s Word and going after “revelation” or experiences which are not of God. Most cults and false religions have begun this way.

What do we need to do?

First, if you have not already done so, invite Jesus Christ into your life (1 John 4:15). Then ask Him to reveal Himself to you. It will take time, effort and determination. It will require your life to change, but Paul called it “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death” (Philippians 3:8-10). The results make it well worthwhile: “People who know their God will be **strong** and do **exploits**” (Daniel 11:32).

“Let not the wise man glory in His wisdom ... but let him who glories glory in this, **that he understands and knows Me**, that I am the Lord”, God said (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

God’s character

By using a concordance, look up some of the following aspects of God’s character and study them in the Scriptures:

God is:

Faithful	Holy	Merciful	Tender
Forgiving	Jealous	Patient	True
Friendly	Just	Powerful	Trustworthy
Glorious	Kind	Pure	Understanding
Good	Patient	Righteous	Unfailing
Gracious	Loving	Steadfast	Wise
Great	Majestic	Perfect	

You might also like to think of some other aspects of God's character and look them up in the Bible, using a concordance if necessary. God is truly great!

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so very important that we read, study and learn the Bible?
2. What does it mean to get revelation through the Holy Spirit?
3. What is meant by saying that God's Word is an objective way of getting to know God while other methods are subjective?
4. These days there is a lot of emphasis on God's love, goodness and blessings. Why is it also important to balance this with an understanding of God's holiness, wrath and judgement?
5. How does knowing God help us to "be strong and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32)?
6. What would you say are the three most important aspects of God's character, to you?

5

OVERCOMING WANDERING THOUGHTS

A very common problem which all Christians have at some time or other is that, although they desire to pray, they find their thoughts wandering off onto other things while they are trying to pray.

Sometimes it comes as quite a shock to realize that you are supposed to be in prayer but in actual fact you are thinking about something totally different. This is even worse when you are in a prayer meeting and not just praying by yourself!

How can we overcome this problem of wandering thoughts (which is not just a problem of old age!) Here are some very practical suggestions.

1. Pray with others

Where it is possible, and convenient, pray with other people. Generally you will find it much easier to pray with others, and will find it easier to concentrate in prayer, when you pray with one or two other people, or in a small group, especially if each person's prayer is kept reasonably short and to the point (Matt. 18:19-20).

Even in a larger prayer group, try to avoid praying in a monotone, or a monotonous way. There is nothing like Holy Spirit inspired prayer to keep people awake!

2. Pray aloud

If you are praying by yourself, pray aloud, or at least semi-audibly, and listen to what you are saying. If you pray aloud, or quietly to yourself if it is not convenient to pray aloud, and if you listen to what you are saying, you will find it easier to concentrate your thoughts on what you are praying.

3. (a) Submit your thoughts to God

Give your thoughts, your desires and your mind to the Lord and let Him inspire your thinking and praying (Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2; 6:6-13).

(b) Resist the devil

The devil does not want you to pray and he will do all he can to distract you. Therefore, resist him! (James 4:7).

4. Pray about the thoughts which distract you

If you still find that you are thinking about other things when you should be praying (e.g., you are worried about something else), then pray about them and then leave them with the Lord (1 Peter 5:7).

5. Avoid distractions

If you are praying alone, keep your eyes closed so as to shut out anything that might distract you through what you see, and find a place which is as far away from distractions as possible – away from other people, the phone, noise, etc. (Matthew 6:6). Jesus spent much time alone in prayer – in the wilderness, on a mountain – away from people and distractions.

6. Pray short prayers, often

If you find it hard to pray for long periods of time, then “Pray constantly” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). That is, pray often, as things come to mind, even if the prayers are quite short. Very few people can concentrate for half an hour or more when they are praying by themselves. Be realistic and do not try to pray for such a long time that you get discouraged and condemned. The Lord’s Prayer takes less than one minute to pray slowly and thoughtfully!

7. Alternate your prayers with singing

Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Scripture choruses, etc.), and singing in the Spirit, are all part of prayer (1 Corinthians 14:14-15; Ephesians 5:19-20). While we don’t worship God just because it gives us a break from intercession, worship is a very valuable part of prayer in its own right. It is part of our communion and fellowship with God.

8. Ask God to help you pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in your weaknesses in prayer (Rom. 8:26-27). Ask Him to help you pray at all times in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20).

9. Write down prayer requests and answers

Keep a “Prayer and Praise” diary. On the left-hand page of an exercise book, write down the prayer requests, and the date first prayed, and on the right-hand page write down the answers to prayer and the date answered.

Reading the right-hand pages can be a great encouragement to continue praying in faith for prayers that are unanswered so far. Reading the left-hand page will give you a list of prayer topics. It is not necessarily unspiritual to have a list of prayer items and requests, but do not be bound to it or limit your prayers to those only; expect God to lay on your heart other things for prayer and intercession.

10. Prayer requires discipline and concentration

Sometimes we have to make a determined effort to pray and to concentrate on what we are praying. Discipline and effort are required because the flesh and the devil do not make it easy to pray. We are in a spiritual battle! It becomes easier when we know, by revelation of the Spirit, the Person to Whom we are praying! As we get to know God, and to love Him, we will find it easier to talk with Him. After all, it should be a delight to talk with a loving, caring, understanding, wise Father (Heb. 4:14-16).

How long should I pray?

The length of time you pray is not nearly as important as some other factors. It is not necessarily “super-spiritual” to spend hours in prayer, or to spend all night in prayer, or to have a day of prayer. If God leads us to do this, then of course we must obey, but prayer is not meant to be an endurance test! Our spirituality and even our effectiveness in prayer is not just measured by the length of time we spend in prayer. The following are all just as important as how long we spend in prayer:

- **Sincerity:** Our prayers must be sincere – we must not only worship God in Spirit but also in Truth. We are wasting our time praying if we are not sincere and genuine in what we are saying (John 4:23-24; Jeremiah 29:13-14a).
- **Without hypocrisy:** Hypocritical prayer is an insult to God (Matthew 6:5-8; Mark 12:38-40).
- **Fervency:** Our prayer should be fervent and earnest, with our whole heart (not half-hearted!) and desire (James 5:16; Jeremiah 29:13-14a)
- **Without sin:** If there is unconfessed sin, or sin that has not been repented of (including rebellion against what He has told us to do), then we need not bother praying at all because God will not hear us until that has first been dealt with (Psalm 66:18; James 5:16).
- **Faith:** We must pray in faith, believing that God will hear us and grant our requests (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; 1 John 5:14-15).

QUESTIONS

1. Why are wandering thoughts such a problem during prayer?
2. How can a person overcome shyness, fear, etc., in order to pray with others?
3. What does Romans 8:26-27 mean? How does “the Spirit intercede for us with unutterable groanings”?
4. What does it mean to “pray in the Holy Spirit”? (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20).
5. “Every time I feel the Spirit moving in my heart I will pray”, an old Negro song says. Should a person only pray when they “feel the Spirit moving in their heart”?
6. What attitudes of heart are important when we pray?

6

PRAYER FOR HEALING THE MEMORIES

“Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors ... For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:12-15; 18:23-35).

It is one thing to ask God to forgive us – it is quite another thing to *really* forgive others. This is especially true when people have been deeply hurt in the past and feel unable to forgive and forget. Whether or not the fault was totally the other person’s, there is a deep bitterness which they cannot get rid of, and this has led to an unforgiving spirit which can seriously affect a person’s spiritual growth (Hebrews 12:15). Forgiveness and deliverance from this are essential if a person is to lead a normal, Spirit-filled life and know the joy of the Lord.

God wants us to be whole – whole in body, soul (mind, emotions, will) and spirit (Mark 5:34 AV), and so God heals our emotions, bodies and minds as well as healing us spiritually.

How hurts may come into our lives

1. Conception: Through an illegitimate birth, through fornication or adultery (Deuteronomy 23:2).

2. Pregnancy and birth trauma: Rejection of an “unwanted” baby, attempted abortion, fear, etc.

3. Inherited: Sins and weaknesses passed on to the children to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5-6; 34:6-7) but which can be broken by repentance and following the Lord. Some people might want to explain this as genetic or the influence of upbringing and parental example, but nevertheless some things which pass down through the generations need divine healing.

4. Upbringing:

- (a) Rejection by one or both parents.
- (b) Words spoken by parents. E.g., “I hate him. I wish he had never been born. I could kill him.”
- (c) Violence.
- (d) Sexual assault or abuse.
- (e) Fear, as a result of almost drowning, accident, fire, traumatic experience, etc.
- (f) Occult practices, curses, demon possession.

(g) Bitter disappointment, deception, betrayal.

5. **Sin** of a persistent or serious nature (e.g., abortion, infanticide, rape).

But Hallelujah! Jesus can set us free (Luke 4:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

How can a person be set free?

1. Acknowledge that bitterness, an unforgiving spirit and cherishing past hurts, are sins. Pray for God's forgiveness (even if you were in the right at the time it happened); pray for God's grace to be able to forgive. Pray that God will cleanse your mind and heal your memories.

2. Pray for, and receive by faith, a renewed mind. "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). See also Ephesians 4:22-24; 2 Timothy 1:7 AV.

3. Refuse to dwell on the past and to live in the past. If God has forgiven you and the other person, then you *must* forgive them and forgive yourself too. It is essential that you forgive other people and that you are delivered from all bitterness. If possible, go and put things right with the other person or people concerned (Matthew 5:23-26; 18:15-17). Be reconciled to one another.

A teenage girl who had been told that her father died when she was a baby, but had recently discovered that she was really illegitimate, cried out to God and said, "Lord, I forgive my mother for deceiving me all these years, and wherever my father is, I want You to tell him that I love him." That's forgiveness! That's healing!

4. If necessary, when you find it hard to really forgive and love someone, pray for divine love for them; ask God to fill you with His love for them and then bless them. Pray for them; ask for God's very best for them. Love them in and through Jesus, Who first loved us – "while we were yet sinners!" (Romans 5:8).

5. If memories come back, refuse to dwell on them. Ask God to take them away. Apply James 4:7 "Submit yourself [including your mind, thinking, emotions, feelings] to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Turn your mind onto something else; for example, sing praises to God. Asking God to heal hurtful memories does not necessarily mean blotting out or forgetting those memories, but they will lose their sting; you will be delivered from the fear, anxiety, guilt, hate, bitterness, etc., associated with those memories.

6. Remember what Romans 8:1-6 says: "There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has

set me free from the law of sin and death ... who walk, not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit ...”

7. In some cases it may be desirable or even necessary for someone else to pray with you, with the ministry of laying on of hands. Though this is not always essential, it can be of real blessing and help to many people, especially those who have allowed a “root of bitterness” to grow in their lives so that they cannot get free themselves (Hebrews 12:15). The silly thing about refusing to forgive other people is that in the end it is **us** who get hurt the most! Even some physical diseases we may suffer can have their roots in our unforgiving spirit.

“The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your *hearts and minds* in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-8).

We must also receive God’s forgiveness

We must accept God’s forgiveness when we have repented. Look at what God does with our sins when we repent:

- They are removed from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:10-12).
- They are cast behind God’s back (Isaiah 38:17).
- They are forgiven, and God remembers them no more (Jeremiah 31:34).
- They are trodden under God’s feet; they are cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).
- We are cleansed from all sin (1 John 1:7, 9).

Hallelujah! Once we *repent* and *confess* our sin it is washed away by the Blood of Christ, never to be remembered any more.

If God has done all this for us, who are we to still hold our sins against ourselves?

QUESTIONS

1. Does everyone need prayer for healing past memories?
2. How does a person know when they need prayer for healing memories?
3. Why lay on hands? Under what circumstances should this be done, and by whom?
4. What does James 5:16 mean? (“Confess your faults to one another ...”)
5. What if I have been hurt so deeply that I don’t want to forgive?

6. What if the other person won't forgive me or accept my apologies?

7

LAYING ON OF HANDS IN PRAYER

The word "hand" is sometimes used to symbolize power (e.g., 1 Samuel 5:6-7), especially where the expression "right hand" is used to mean power and strength, or even omnipotence, when used in reference to God (Exodus 15:6; Psalm 20:6; 44:3).

The laying on of hands

There are a number of situations in which people in the Bible laid hands on someone and prayed. The following are some of them:

1. For blessing. E.g., Israel blessing his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:14-20). Jesus laid hands on, and blessed, young children (Matthew 19:13-15) and God also lays His hands on our lives, both for blessing or, if need be, for judgment (Psalm 139:5; Ezekiel 39:21; Revelation 1:17).

2. As identification. Hands were laid on the head of an animal to be sacrificed, identifying it with the sins of the people (Leviticus chapters 3 and 4; 16:21-22). In laying on of hands we thus identify ourselves with the person being prayed for, and show our unity and oneness in our desire to see the prayer answered (Matthew 18:18-20).

3. In ordination, consecration or commissioning. Moses laid hands on Joshua in ordination, to continue in Moses' authority and leadership after he died (Numbers 27:18-23).

Hands were also to be laid on the Levites when consecrating them for their priestly ministry (Numbers 8:10).

This was also practised by the early Church in appointing deacons (Acts 6:6) and apostles (Acts 13:3).

4. For healing. Frequently hands were laid on people for healing – especially is this true in Jesus' ministry; in fact people came to Jesus and asked Him to lay hands on the sick (e.g., Matthew 9:18; Luke 4:40).

Jesus said that those who believed would lay their hands on the sick and they would be healed (Mark 16:17-20). The early Church did this and people were healed (Acts 28:8).

5. For the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In some cases, but not all of them, hands were laid on people when praying that they would be filled with the Spirit (e.g., Acts 8:14-19; 9:17; 19:6).

6. To impart spiritual gifts. Joshua received a spirit of wisdom as a result of Moses laying his hands on him (Deuteronomy 34:9).

Timothy received a gift of the Spirit when Paul and other elders laid hands on him (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Likewise Paul longed to visit the Christians in Rome so that he might impart some spiritual gift to them (Romans 1:11).

7. For deliverance? There appears to be little, if any, Scriptural basis for laying hands when praying for deliverance. There is no Biblical example of this being done, and in fact while hands were laid on people for healing, deliverance was by casting out the demons “with a word” (see, for example, Matthew 8:16; Luke 4:40-41; Acts 16:16-18). We have authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal in Jesus’ name, and the assurance that nothing of this nature will hurt us (Matthew 10:1; Mark 16:17-18; Luke 10:19), but we must be in a right relationship with the Lord (Acts 19:13-16).

Note:

1. We need clean, holy hands (Psalm 24:3-5; 1 Timothy 2:8)
2. Do not lay hands suddenly on anyone (1 Timothy 5:22); that is, not thoughtlessly nor hastily, especially for ordination.
3. Laying on of hands is an “elementary, foundation doctrine” (Hebrews 6:1-2) so all Christians should know its meaning and significance, and practice it as the Lord leads.
4. In the laying on of hands, we act as channels through whom God pours blessings to others. Those who lay on hands should thus prepare themselves through prayer, sometimes with fasting, seeking God’s leading. They should first make sure that there is no unconfessed sin in their lives, before laying on hands (1 Timothy 5:22).

Anointing with oil in prayer

Sometimes, during prayer for a person, they are anointed with oil and hands are laid on them. Why? Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and a symbol of healing power. Thus anointing with oil is associated with two principle acts: ordination or consecration for spiritual ministry, and prayer for healing. See Acts 10:38.

Some examples are:

1. **Anointing kings.** Kings were anointed with oil as part of their ordination (1 Samuel 16:1-13).
2. **Anointing priests.** Priests were consecrated by anointing with oil (Leviticus 8:12).
3. **Ordination for spiritual ministry.** The setting apart for spiritual ministry was done by anointing with oil (Exodus 28:41).
4. **Prayer for healing.** People who are sick should call for the elders who will anoint with oil and pray for the sick person (James 5:13-16). The Good Samaritan used wine and oil (both symbols of healing and the Holy Spirit) for healing the wounded man (Luke 10:34).

In Psalm 133:2 it says that unity is like anointing oil: it comes from the Holy Spirit and brings spiritual healing and health to the whole body.

Psalm 45:7 and Isaiah 61:3 both speak of the “oil of gladness” – oil also being a symbol of joy. Oil and wine are also symbols of prosperity and blessing (Joel 1:10; 2:19, 24; Revelation 6:6).

Two of the miracles in the Bible involved creating oil (1 Kings 17:8-16) and wine (John 2:1-11).

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Paul say, “Lay hands suddenly on no-one”? (1 Timothy 5:22).
2. When is the laying on of hands desirable during a time of prayer?
3. When is it better not to lay hands?
4. Should a person lay hands when praying for deliverance? Why or why not?
5. Who has the authority to lay hands on other people?
6. When should a person be anointed with oil as well as having hands laid on them?

8

UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL REALM

One thing which it is very important for Christians (especially intercessors) to understand is the difference between the physical realm and the spiritual realm. Paul says, ***“First the physical, then the spiritual”*** (see 1 Corinthians 15:42-49).

Examples

1. In the passage above, Paul talks about the physical body and the spiritual body. He talks about the “first man” (Adam) and the “last man” (Christ). First the physical, then the spiritual.
2. The Old Testament law emphasised the need for purity in physical ways. The New Testament emphasises not just outward purity but purity of “heart” or spirit (Matthew 5:8).
3. The Old Testament speaks of physical circumcision – the cutting off of the flesh. The New Testament talks of circumcision of the heart – the cutting off of sin (Romans 2:28-29).
4. The Old Testament law was given on tablets of stone. Jeremiah prophesied that the days would come when the law would be written on people’s hearts – there would be an inner desire to do what was right, not merely an external compulsion to do what was right! (Jeremiah 31:33-34).
5. The parables were physical stories, but with spiritual meanings. Most of the people only heard and understood the physical story, but Jesus revealed the spiritual truths behind the parables to His disciples (Matthew 13:10-17).

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see and believe without the veil being removed, through prayer. Even many Christians are unaware, often, of the spiritual battle they are involved in! We wonder why things go wrong, why prayers are not answered, why things don’t go the way we feel they should, and we often fail to see the works of the enemy behind these frustrations.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

The weapons of our warfare are **not** worldly. For example, the battle for Israel today is not physical, as it was in Joshua's or David's time, but spiritual! Until Israel and the Christian world realise this, the battle will not be won either with weapons or diplomacy! We need spiritual weapons for spiritual warfare!

Ephesians 6:10-20

This passage speaks of the "armour of God". It uses the illustration of physical warfare and weapons, and brings out their spiritual parallels:

- The belt of truth
- The breastplate of righteousness
- The helmet of salvation
- The shoes of the Gospel
- The shield of faith
- The sword of the Spirit (the Word of God)

The seventh "weapon" of spiritual warfare has no earthly counterpart, for it is "prayer in the Spirit" – the Christian's secret, powerful weapon against the enemy!

So physical weapons have their spiritual counterparts – and we need to use them!

The origin of Satan

The Bible doesn't say a great deal about the origin of Satan. However the following passages do give us glimpses into the heavenly realm: Revelation 12; Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Luke 10:17-19.

It appears that when God created the angels, He set three "archangels" over them. These are the only three angels mentioned by name in the Bible, namely, Gabriel, Michael and Lucifer. The name "Lucifer" means "light-bearer" – the angel of light. It appears that because of pride, Lucifer and a third of the angels under him, rebelled against God, and Lucifer especially tried to make himself equal with God. Because of this sin and rebellion, Lucifer and the third of the angels who also sinned with him, were cast out of Heaven (the place where God dwells) onto the earth. And so Satan, the fallen angel Lucifer, appears in the Garden of Eden and tries (successfully, unfortunately!) to persuade Eve (and, through her, Adam) also to rebel and sin against God. Synonymous names for Lucifer are Satan, the great red dragon, the ancient serpent, and the devil. The word "Satan" means "adversary". Just as Satan opposed God in Heaven, so his determined aim today is to set the world against God.

Ways in which Satan appears

Roaring lion: 1 Peter 5:8. A roaring lion is very obvious to everyone! This is when the enemy comes in an undisguised, blatant way and tempts people to do things which are obviously wrong. There is no deception here – it is as obvious as a roaring, prowling lion seeking to devour someone!

Wolf in sheep's clothing: Matthew 7:15 (in the context of false prophets). Just as there are true prophets, there are also false prophets. But sometimes it is hard to tell the false from the true. They are “clothed” with sheep's clothing. But under close inspection, as we test what is said and done, we can tell what is of God and what is not.

Thief: John 10:10. Satan's aim has always been to steal what does not rightfully belong to him. Just as he tried to steal or usurp God's authority in Heaven, and to kill (just as sin leads to death), and to destroy what is good, so he still tries to steal, kill and destroy, today.

Liar: John 8:44. When Satan first approached Eve in the Garden of Eden, he started by asking, “Has God said ...?” That was all right, in the sense that it was a question. But then he directly lied by saying that Eve would not die if she disobeyed God. Satan is a liar and the father (author) of lies! Don't listen to him! Listen to God, and use God's Word to defeat him, as Jesus did when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

Angel of light: 2 Corinthians 11:14. Remember, Lucifer means light-bearer. Here, Satan appears to be a true angel, an angel of light, but inside he is filled with darkness. Only the gift of discernment of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10) will reveal to us that what appears (at least on the outside) to be good and pure and true may, in fact, be a work of Satan.

Don't fear!

It is very important to maintain a balance between ignoring the enemy and all his ways, on the one hand, and becoming obsessed with the enemy and spiritual warfare, on the other hand. We need to know and be aware of his tactics, but there is no room for fear (one of the enemy's weapons) because “greater is He (the Spirit of God) Who is in you, than he (Satan) who is in the world”. See 1 John 4:4; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20; 2 Timothy 1:7. Renounce all fear in Jesus' Name, and ask Him for His Spirit of power, love and a sound mind. Also, avoid becoming too pre-occupied with the enemy; our focus should primarily be on the Lord our God!

How Jesus defeated Satan

Jesus faced the attacks of Satan especially in His 40 days' temptation in the wilderness. Notice how Jesus, by rejecting everything Satan offered and by using the Word of God, triumphed over the enemy. Jesus also died to **self** (in the temptation to use His power to turn stones into bread); He died to **pride** (in the temptation to jump from the top of the Temple and not be harmed) and to **compromise** (when He was tempted to gain the kingdoms of the world by worshipping Satan – something Satan had desired since he first rebelled against God in Heaven). Instead, Jesus triumphed over Satan on the cross – far from being defeated on the cross, Jesus won! See Colossians 2:13-15.

Five defeats of Satan

In the past:

- Satan was defeated in Heaven (Revelation 12:7-12)
- Satan was defeated by Jesus on the cross (Revelation 1:17-18)

In the present:

- Satan is defeated by the redeemed (Revelation 12:11; cf. Luke 10:17-20)

In the future:

- Satan will be defeated by one of God's angels (Revelation 20:1-3)
- Satan will be defeated forever, for the last time, by God Himself (Revelation 20:7-10)

Satan is forever defeated! Hallelujah!

Some examples of spiritual warfare

There are many examples in the Bible of battles which, while at first appearing to be physical battles are, underneath, spiritual battles. The following are some examples:

- Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:1-30)
- Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
- Daniel (Daniel ch. 10, 11)
- Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 9:28-29)
- The disciples (Luke 9:1-2; 10:17-20)
- The early Church (Acts 16:16-28; 19:11-20)

Note that in almost all of the above cases, fasting was an important element in the spiritual battle for victory. See also Matthew 9:14-15.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so important that Christians understand the spiritual world?

2. What is “the armour of God” and how do we “put it on”?
3. If Satan is a defeated enemy, why does he appear so powerful and successful at times?
4. Give some examples of where you have come across Satan appearing as: a roaring lion, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a thief, a liar and an angel of light.
5. How do we find the balance between knowing about and recognising the works of the enemy, yet not being afraid of him or preoccupied with satanic things?
6. How can we defeat the enemy today?

9

KNOW YOUR ENEMY!

If we, as Christians, are to be successful in overcoming temptation, the powers of darkness and the wiles of the devil, then it is important that we know who our enemy is. However, overemphasis on the ways of the devil can be just as harmful and dangerous as ignorance of his ways. It is important, therefore, that the Christian maintains a balance on this subject. We need to know about our enemy – his ways, his weaknesses, how to overcome him and be victorious – then we can be sure of victory!

The origin of Satan

Not much is said in the Bible about the origin of Satan, although Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-15 and Revelation 12:7-12 seem to indicate that he was a leader of God’s created angels who, through pride and rebellion, tried to make himself equal with God, and as a result was cast out of Heaven onto the earth, and took one third of the angels who fell with him. These are the fallen angels, devils or demons mentioned in the Scriptures. Few Christians would have direct confrontation with Satan himself, but we are all attacked and tempted by devils (demons) that are his followers and servants.

His nature

The enemy comes in three different ways:

1. **As a roaring lion** (1 Peter 5:8). When he attacks in an open, undisguised, blatant way he is coming as a roaring lion. His attack, or temptation to sin, is not

covered up in any way and is therefore obvious even to young Christians. As a roaring lion he will try to cause us to fear and to be intimidated. The answer to this is found in Matthew 26:41.

2. As a wolf in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). In this case he is disguised, appearing to be a sheep (harmless and innocent) but in fact being a wolf. By his fruits he is known (Matthew 7:16), especially by the fact that his aim is to steal, to kill and to destroy that which is good and of God (John 10:10). To the new Christian it may seem hard to see the wolf behind the sheep's clothing. Some occult and spiritist practices come in this category.

3. As an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). In this way, he is now totally hidden beneath his disguise as an angel of light, and apart from discernment of spirits it may not be realised that he is not of God. He will come with subtle deception and lies (John 8:44), and even with weights (hindrances) that will hinder our Christian walk (Hebrews 12:1). Three particular ways in which he attacks our prayer-life are through distractions, busyness ("I'm too busy to pray"), and convincing us that "prayer is not all that important".

The armies

1. Captain: Jesus, the Lord of lords, King of kings, and Lord of hosts.
Angels: Two thirds; God's holy angels (messengers).
Soldiers: All born again children of God.
2. Captain: Satan.
Angels: One third; fallen angels (Revelation 12:4).
Soldiers: Non-Christians (1 John 5:19).

The battle

This is not a physical battle but a *spiritual* battle. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal (physical), but are ones that have divine power (2 Corinthians 10:3-6); they are the "armour of God" described in Ephesians 6:10-18a, as follows:

"wiles of the devil": The devil is very cunning, sometimes appearing in an obvious way, like a roaring lion; sometimes in a much less obvious way, as a wolf in sheep's clothing; other times he appears disguised as an angel of light.

"principalities": These are areas which are ruled over by princes. E.g., The prince of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:1), the chief prince of Meshech (Ezekiel 38:2; 39:1), and the prince of Persia (Daniel 10:13, 20). In the two passages referring to the fall of Satan, he is referred to as the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4, 12-15) and the king of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:12-17). In Daniel 10:10-14, 18-21 we are told that the prince of

Persia and the prince of Greece oppose God's messengers, but the archangel Michael fights against them in answer to Daniel's prayers.

“powers”: These are the powerful authorities set over nations and cities.

“world rulers”: These are the evil spirits who rule over different regions of the earth.

“spiritual hosts”: These are armies of evil spirits.

We are to *stand against* and be *victorious over* all these powers of darkness. We must never over-estimate their power or authority, but at the same time we are not to revile them (Jude 8-10). We are to battle against them, but not mock them.

The armour

Put on the *whole* armour. Satan cannot harm us where we are protected by armour, but if even one piece is missing, that is where he is sure to attack!

1. The girdle (belt) of truth: This prevents stumbling caused by an inconsistent life – a hypocritical life. We cannot fight the devil if we give him a foothold by living a lie. All our thoughts, words and deeds must be true. We must be free from all hindrances and stumbling blocks in our Christian lives.

2. The breastplate of righteousness: This guards the heart and emotions.

3. The shoes of the Gospel of peace: Our feet take the Gospel (the true, good news) out to people – the shoes are not the Gospel but they are the means of taking it to the lost (Isaiah 52:7). The best means of defence is attack – so march out with the Gospel shoes!

4. The shield of faith: Faith protects us from the fiery darts of doubt and fear (Luke 22:31-32).

5. The helmet of salvation: This protects the mind from oppression and depression.

6. The sword of the Spirit: This is a weapon of attack. We must know the Word before we can use it. Quote it (as Jesus did in Matthew 4:1-11), and remind the devil of the truth – e.g., that Satan is defeated (Luke 10:17-19; John 12:31; Colossians 2:15); Jesus has destroyed the works of the devil (1 John 3:8b); we have the power to bind and loose (Matthew 16:19); we have the victory (Philippians 4:13; 1 John 4:4; Revelation 12:11). Remind Satan of these truths and watch him flee! (James 4:7).

7. Prayer in the Spirit: This is the secret weapon of attack! Praying powerfully with the inspiration, discernment and direction of the Holy Spirit.

How to fight

We fight ...

- In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:18).
- Through the Power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).
- Covered and protected by the Blood of Christ (1 John 1:7-9; Exodus 12:12-13)
- Using the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).
- Praying in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18).

Submit yourself to God and resist the devil (James 4:7). Bind the enemy and break his power in Jesus' Name (Matthew 12:29; 16:18-19; Luke 4:18-19). Command him to go (Acts 16:16-18). Praise God for the victory (Psalm 44:1-8). Confess victory with your lips, believe it in your heart, and receive it into your life!

Who will win?

The devil will always take as much as we allow him: he cannot take more, and he will not take less. So resist him! He only has the authority and power over us that we allow him to have. Do not let him deceive you into believing otherwise.

Jesus has already disarmed the principalities and powers through the Cross (Colossians 2:13-15). He is the Victor, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:13-14; 19:11-16). When we receive the Spirit of Christ into our lives, then "greater is He Who is in us, than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We have authority and power over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall hurt us (Luke 10:19).

Do not under-estimate the devil's power, but do not over-estimate it either. Beware of reviling the enemy; rather, resist him and say, "The Lord rebuke you" (Jude 8-10).

Satan is a fallen angel, a defeated enemy, doomed to eternal destruction. We need not fear him because his end is as certain as God's Word is true (Revelation 20:10). See also Matthew 18:18; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:11. "Thanks be to God Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear comes from faith in the devil, faith in yourself, or faith in some

other person. When we have faith in God there is no room for fear; therefore, “Fear not!”

Goliath had faith in himself and his army, and the Israelites had faith in him too (so they feared!) But David had faith in God, and so was fearless and victorious. Let us, too, put our faith in the Lord God Almighty, and in Him be fearless and victorious!

QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between demon-possession and demonic oppression or depression? How can you tell the difference, and how can a person be set free from these?
2. What is the difference between “works of the flesh” and “works of the devil”? How can you tell if some sin or evil habit is demonic or of the flesh?
3. How can you “test the spirits”? (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1-3).
4. In practical terms, how do you “put on the whole armour of God”?
5. Christ disarmed the principalities and powers through the Cross (Colossians 2:13-15). What does this mean?
6. If Satan is defeated, how is it that he seems to be so powerful?

10

SPIRITUAL MAPPING

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2 NRSV).

Some years ago, a “*Transformations*” video demonstrated the power of fervent, prevailing prayer as God visited communities and transformed both the lives of individuals and the community as a whole. It showed God at work in three very diverse communities – in the Arctic Circle of Northwest Canada, the Hebrides Islands off Scotland, and Uganda. It challenged all Christians who earnestly desire to see God move in revival in their community and nation.

In every case the key is a supernatural outpouring of God's Spirit in answer to the fervent, persevering, prevailing prayer of God's people, together with people's willingness to unashamedly share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with their community, whatever the cost may be.

In many cases there have been years and years of preparation before God finally pours out His Spirit. People have called on God to visit their people. Days and nights have been spent seeking the face of God, calling upon Him, inviting Him into their presence. ***Then God came ... !***

Two of the ways we can begin to "prepare the way of the Lord" is by praying for our communities, and sharing our faith openly and unashamedly with those people God leads us to.

"Spiritual Mapping" is one of the ways in which some Christians have sought to be more specific and effective in praying for their community. Probably most people who are involved in intercession and spiritual warfare have heard the term "spiritual mapping", although many may not really know what it means.

What is spiritual mapping?

Spiritual mapping is seeking to discern the spiritual forces ("principalities and powers" or "rulers and authorities") at work in a given area (city, region or nation) in order to pray more specifically and effectively against the powers of darkness, in order to see the area set free to become more Godly, and to see people open up to receive the Gospel. Its ultimate aim is to see people come to Christ and to see righteousness, instead of sin, prevail in the community.

It involves studying the city, town or area for the purposes of discerning its historical and present-day characteristics, so that more effective prayer and evangelism can be done in, and for, the area.

Why is it called "spiritual mapping"?

Because a spiritual map of the area can be built up, including places of evil influence and places of good influence. The good can be encouraged through prayer and in other ways, and the evil can be prayed against and discouraged.

What are the purposes of spiritual mapping?

- More effective **prayer** for the area (being able to pray towards more specific targets).
- More effective **evangelism**, by breaking down spiritual strongholds over the area.

- So that the community becomes “transformed” in the sense of becoming more Godly (more pleasing to God and glorifying to God) – a better place to live!

Is spiritual mapping Scriptural?

A question which arises is: Is spiritual mapping Scriptural? That is, does it occur in the Bible, or is there any Biblical justification for it?

The term “spiritual mapping” is not used in the Bible, but in Biblical times people knew much more about their roots, heritage, history, customs, etc., than we often know today. And no doubt they prayed accordingly!

Besides, anything which will increase the effectiveness of our prayer lives and evangelism, and brings glory to God in doing so, is to be encouraged! Whether or not it is called “spiritual mapping” doesn’t really matter.

Even though the term “spiritual mapping” does not occur in the Bible, its principles are very similar to those for Christian counselling, except on a wider scale.

If a person comes to a counsellor for help, the counsellor tries to discern what are the problems and what has caused them, and then deal with those issues. Essentially, there are three ways in which a counsellor may get some leading:

1. Asking questions about the present situation

What appears to be the problem? What are the symptoms? Of course, the root or causes of the problems may be far deeper than the apparent problems and symptoms. In fact, often what initially presents itself as the problem is only a superficial manifestation of the real needs, or may even be unrelated!

2. Asking questions about the past

In order to discern the causes of the problems, it is necessary to dig deeper and get some ideas from what has happened in the past. Traumatic experiences, especially, can leave long-lasting wounds in a person’s life that may continue to manifest themselves many years later. A counsellor will therefore seek to discover what has happened in the past in order to explain what is happening in the present.

3. Seeking divine wisdom and discernment

The Christian counsellor, as distinct from a secular counsellor, will also rely on revelation that God gives, in order to discern the problems, their roots, and how to deal with them. Some of the gifts of the spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 are knowledge, wisdom and discernment of spirits. Supernatural revelation, of course, supercedes the previous two ways of asking questions, but God does not always immediately give supernatural revelation.

Spiritual mapping

Spiritual mapping is very similar to the above, except that the above deals with the personal counselling of an individual, whereas spiritual mapping has to do with a community as a whole.

Let's look at parallels to the above three aspects of counselling:

1. Asking questions about the present situation

What are the symptoms of the problems in our community? What is the current situation like – morally, socially, economically, politically, racially, etc.? These are equivalent to the sociological “**soul**” of the community.

2. Asking questions about the past

What significant things happened in the past? What major historical events took place, that may have a bearing on the present situation? Wars, broken promises or treaties, rebellion, idolatry, murder and violence, gross deception, etc. These are equivalent to the physical “**body**” of the community; what makes it like it is today.

3. Seeking divine wisdom and discernment

What is the current spiritual climate like? Is there widespread apathy towards Christian things; is there active opposition? Are there strong influences from other religions, or the occult, etc.? The answers to the above two paragraphs, and the discernment of spirits over the community, after prayer, fasting and waiting on God, will show us how to pray for our community. This is equivalent to dealing with the “**spirit**” of the community.

Obviously, different people will come up with different ideas and insights because God is not expecting any one individual to deal with all of the problems in society by themselves! We are all part of a body and as the various members of the body function, each with their various gifts, the whole Body coming together can best discern the mind of the Lord in praying for, and dealing with, the major problems in the community. Hence the importance of churches and Christian groups coming together to tackle the region's needs.

Identifying specific places of good and evil

What has been said above deals with a community (a suburb, town, city, region or nation) from a very broad perspective. One aspect of spiritual mapping is to look at the community in finer detail and identify local evil places. These may be places of prostitution, perversion, drunkenness, drug syndicates, gangs, idolatry, witchcraft, altars and temples to false gods, etc. These places can be specifically prayed for, by name and by need.

Conversely, as well as praying against evil, we should also be praying for those places which have a good influence on society: churches, Christian homes, Christian organisations, welfare agencies, etc. In Jeremiah 1:10 God says not only to pluck up, pull down, destroy and overthrow what is evil, but also to build and plant that which is good and Godly.

In the above ways we can build up a picture or map of the society in which we live. These good and evil places can be marked on a map of the town or city; hence the term “spiritual mapping”. But the ultimate aim is to pray more effectively and more specifically for our community, encouraging all that is good and of God, and discouraging and coming against all that which is harmful and detrimental to our society. Christians should be the best possible citizens in a community, and this partly comes through praying and doing all we can to encourage the good, and discourage the bad.

Why are these things not in the Bible?

In a broad sense, they are in the Bible!

For example, Moses sent out 12 spies into the Promised Land (Numbers 13). God’s promises to Joshua (Joshua 1:1-11). Joshua marching round Jericho (Joshua 6).

While the word “mapping” is not in the Bible, we are told to be the “light” and “salt” of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Light and salt are to bring light (exposure) into areas of darkness; and to bring out what is best in society and preserve it from evil and corruption. We are told to “pray for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1-4). We are told to obey, respect and uphold those people in positions of authority, whose job it is to encourage what is good and suppress what is evil (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

Why didn’t Paul and the early disciples practice spiritual mapping?

Perhaps they did! In the days of the early Church, people knew their local history far better than most of us do today. Society was much simpler and there were far fewer people. Towns and cities were very much smaller than they are today. People did

not shift from home to home as frequently as we do today. People knew their past history and knew their present community much more intimately than we do. We need to search out our past and present; they probably already knew it. Besides, Paul's journeys were to key cities and regions, and so were his letters to churches in these areas. He was also led by the Spirit as to where he went. (e.g., Acts 15:35 to 16:12).

The early Church knew God's Word concerning His blessings or punishment on a nation, for its obedience or disobedience respectively (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

So when the early Church prayed, they did so already knowing and discerning the current situation. For example:

When Paul went to **Athens** he discerned the idolatry there (Acts 17:16). He saw that idolatry was a major problem in Athens. He saw that they were "extremely religious ... in every way" (v. 22). He had observed their object of worship "to an unknown god" (v. 23) and he used that as a starting point to preach Christ to them.

When Paul went to **Ephesus**, God worked powerfully through him. The city of Ephesus was known as the "temple keeper of the great [goddess] Artemis [or Diana], and of the image which fell from the sky". Many of the Ephesians had been practicing magic, and when they were saved, they burned their artifacts (Acts 19:11-19). Paul saw the idolatry in Ephesus and preached against it (v. 24-27). He knew what he was up against!

Corinth was known for its sexual immorality and perversion – hence Paul's two letters to the Corinthian Christians to keep themselves pure and to reject what was immoral (e.g., 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 and 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1)

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 God brought revelation concerning the true heart and spirit (both good and bad) of seven churches in different areas of **Turkey**.

Spiritual mapping, then, is discerning the "principalities and powers"; the physical, social and spiritual attributes of an area; and using this to pray more effectively for the society in which we live. As Jeremiah 29:7 says, "*Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you ... and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will find your welfare*".

How is spiritual mapping done?

- By researching the history (both secular and spiritual) of the area.
- By studying the present-day characteristics, both good and bad, of the area.

- By seeking God for revelation concerning anything else that might be relevant.

Some questions to ask

History: What happened, where, who was involved? E.g., violence, murder, wars, bloodshed, demonic activity, deception, idolatry; and blessings, Godly heritage and foundations. Has any confession of sin or reconciliation already been made, or are these still necessary?

Present-day: What are the characteristics of the area, socially, economically and spiritually – both good and bad? Is it peaceful, violent, immoral, ungodly, divided, etc.?

- Identify special places: hospitals, old people’s homes, schools, businesses, memorials, pubs and hotels, gang head-quarters, brothels, jails, etc.
- Identify spiritual places: churches, temples, mosques, centres of witchcraft or idolatry, etc.
- Identify places of authority: Government, Councils, Courts, Police, etc.

Future hopes and aspirations: Are there any special future hopes, aspirations, goals and visions? What are they? Are they good or bad?

Spiritual events and spirituality: What “spiritual rulers and authorities” (Ephesians 6:12) are there over the area? What influence do Christian churches have in the area? Is the Church generally supported, ignored or opposed? What other spiritual forces are at work in the area?

Revelation: God may confirm things which are otherwise unknown or suspected about the area; or He may reveal things that cannot be known humanly by study and research. We need to seek God for such revelation.

It might be helpful to fill in a chart as follows:

	Physical or secular		Spiritual	
	Good	Bad	Good	Bad
History and past events				
Present characteristics				
Future vision and goals				

QUESTIONS

1. What do Christians mean by the term “spiritual mapping”?
2. How can Christians spiritually map an area?
3. Is it necessary to spiritually map an area? Why or why not?
4. What might spiritual mapping achieve?
5. Was spiritual mapping done in Biblical times? If not, why not?
6. What can past events tell us about the present state of an area?

11

PRAYER WALKING

The Lord said to Joshua, “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you” ... Joshua said to his people, “Go in and take possession of the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess” (Joshua 1:3, 11).

It is always helpful to know what you are praying for(!) and hence the usefulness of spiritual mapping before going out to pray for an area. There are also benefits of walking through an area as you pray, although this is not, of course, essential. Praise God we can pray **for** anywhere, **from** anywhere!

The aim of spiritual mapping is to ascertain the physical, social and spiritual needs of a community by looking at its past and present. Prayer walking is done to “break up the fallow ground”, to prepare for sowing righteousness (Hosea 10:12). The ultimate aim of the two together is to see transformed communities by “preparing the way of the Lord”. See, for example, how Jesus send out 72 of His followers: “The Lord appointed 72 others [as well as the 12 disciples] and sent them on ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to come” (Luke 10:1-2). Later He had strong words to say against the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum because of their lack of repentance and pride (Luke 10:13-15); against Nazareth because of its unbelief (Matthew 13:54-58); and Jerusalem because of their refusal to come to Him (Matthew 23:37).

May God grant us discernment as to how to pray, and the grace to go out and pray for our communities until they are transformed by His power.

SPIRITUAL MAPPING QUESTIONS

Spiritual mapping looks at past and present issues, both secular and spiritual, good and bad, in order to discern how best to pray for a suburb, town, city, region or country.

A. NON-CHRISTIAN FACTORS AFFECTING THE AREA

1. What are the major characteristics of the area, both good and bad? e.g., greed, materialism, pride, immorality, violence, addictions, rebellious. Serving, friendly, hospitable, Godly, generous, clean, safe?
2. What high places are there in the area: altars, temples, monuments or buildings associated with witchcraft, the occult, satanism, other religions, etc.?
3. What sites of pagan worship from the past (even before the city was founded) are there?
4. What cultural centres contain art, artifacts or idols connected with pagan worship?
5. Have any city leaders dedicated themselves, or the city, to a pagan god or principality? If so, who, when, what and how was it done?
6. Were any curses placed by the original inhabitants on the land or people who founded the city? If so, what were they, when were they pronounced and by whom?
7. What “sister city” ties are there to other cities in other countries, and what are the characteristics of those cities?

B. CHRISTIAN FACTORS AFFECTING THE AREA

1. How have God’s people, and visiting Christians, been received by the city? e.g., largely ignored, ridiculed, accepted, tolerated, welcomed.
2. Has evangelism been easy or hard?
3. What proportion of the churches would be: (a) live, charismatic churches; (b) evangelical, Bible believing churches; (c) traditional churches; (d) liberal?
4. How healthy are the churches in the city? Are they growing, static or declining?
5. Who are the Christian leaders you would consider to be “elders of the city”?
6. Is it easy to pray in all parts of the city?
7. What is the unity like, between Christian leaders, and across ethnic and denominational lines?
8. What is the view of city leaders towards Christian morality?
9. What is God saying to mature, recognized intercessors, prophets and church leaders concerning the city?

PRAYER WALKING

All over the country God is calling Christians to pray – to pray for revival in the Church, to pray for the salvation of those people who are not yet Christians, and to

pray for the healing of our land. One of the ways we can do this is by what may be called 'Prayer Walking'.

What is Prayer Walking?

Prayer walking is walking through the streets of your suburb, city, town or area where you live, praying for the people who live in that area: praying for God's blessing, for the salvation of the unsaved, for a moving of God's Holy Spirit, and praying against evil powers in and over that area.

The Lord said to Joshua "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you" (Joshua 1:3).

Joshua said to his people "Go in and take possession of the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess" (Joshua 1:11).

Note, however, that battles still had to be fought and won!

God says, "Ask Me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalm 2:8).

Why Prayer Walk?

We can, of course, pray by ourselves at home for our neighbourhood, but most of us don't! Prayer walking is an organized way of encouraging Christians to actually get out and pray! It also encourages Christians – even from different churches and denominations – to pray together! We can see what we are praying for, and then look for the results.

Prayer walking is a systematic way of praying for **every** home and family, church, business, school, etc., in your area.

Is prayer walking Biblical?

- Four times the Gospels say Jesus went up a mountain to pray (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:28). Why? Because He could look over the area for which He was praying!

- Three of the Gospels say Jesus went up the Mount of Olives to pray (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39 – the latter verse says **this was His custom**). Why? So He could look over Jerusalem as He prayed for it!
- Jesus told His disciples to “wait in the city (Jerusalem) until they were endued with power from on High” (Luke 24:49). Why? Because God had a strategy for Pentecost and beyond, and they needed to be in Jerusalem praying!

It's not that we **can't** pray elsewhere, but that usually we **don't** – certainly not for as long or as specifically.

Location can help to inspire and guide us in our prayer – to see and feel what to pray for. For example, we can sit at home and pray for the poor, the street people and the alcoholics, but it is far easier to pray passionately for them when you are in the streets where they are!

“On site with insight!”

Revelation 21:10 A strategic vantage spot to see the city!

Isaiah 40:9 “Go up a high mountain, herald of good news to Zion! Lift up your voice with strength, herald of good news to Jerusalem! Lift up your voice; do not be afraid. Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’ ”

We **can** sit at home and pray silently, but most of us find it far easier, more stimulating and worthwhile to pray on site with insight!

How can I organize a Prayer Walk?

Prayer walking is simple!

- Get a few interested friends and a map of the area.
- Divide up the streets between pairs of pray-ers.
- Walk down the streets, praying as the Lord leads, for the homes and places you pass.
- Bless the good places (churches, schools, hospitals, businesses, etc.) and pray against the demonic powers behind places of evil.

Prayer actions

Some of the following “prayer actions” might be appropriate, as the Lord leads:

- Walking around an area, praying as you go (cf. Joshua and Jericho)

- Pouring out oil (for blessing and healing) or salt (for cleansing) cf. Genesis 28:18; 35:14; 2 Kings 2:19-22.
- Planting a stick or stone with appropriate Scriptures written on it.
- Making divinely-inspired, prophetic proclamations or declaring Scriptures over the area.
- Taking communion in the area.

In essence, spiritual mapping and prayer walking is **informed praying: *Praying on sight, with insight!***

May we see the power of God released as we prayer walk, and **PRAY FOR THE NATION!**

QUESTIONS

1. Is prayer walking Scriptural? If not, why prayer walk?
2. What do you do in order to prayer walk an area?
3. In what ways are spiritual mapping and prayer walking – “on site with insight” – helpful when praying for cities and towns?
4. Do you think that people, in Biblical times, generally knew a lot more about their history than we know about ours, thus helping them to pray more specifically and effectively?
5. Explain the purpose of each of the five bullet points in the “**Prayer actions**” paragraph above.
6. What are the ultimate purposes of spiritual mapping and prayer walking?

12

PRAYING FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY

Who is the ultimate authority? The Lord God Almighty!

When we think of the leaders over us, the decisions they make, the power and authority they exercise, let us never forget that the Lord rules over all. Jesus said, “All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (Matthew 28:18).

Bearing in mind, therefore, that God is in ultimate control of all things, that He is the “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 19:6), the Ruler over rulers (Psalm 22:28; 103:19), Paul says that “there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (see Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17). We must therefore be subject to our governing authorities, **and pray for them!**

Pray for all who are in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

v.1 We are urged, first of all, to pray, intercede and give thanks for everyone.

v.2 We are especially urged to intercede for kings and all who are in high positions (positions of authority). How should we intercede? So that we may lead:

- (a) quiet lives, free from strife, unrest, disturbance, rebellion, violence, etc.
- (b) peaceable lives, free from wars, disasters, etc.
- (c) Godly lives, pure, righteous lives which exalt a nation and bring glory to God
– see Proverbs 14:34 and Matthew 5:16.
- (d) honest lives, respectful, respectable, dignified lives.

v.3 This is good and acceptable in God’s eyes. God wants us to have good leaders, so pray that we will and believe that we will!

v.4 In this way people will come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved.

The Christian and politics

Some Christians believe that Christians should have nothing at all to do with politics, but if we leave politics to the ungodly and to non-Christians, then we may well get what we deserve when they rule over us!

We can be non-political in the sense of not trying to promote one political party or another, but surely if we are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16) then we need *at least* to be prayerfully concerned for our leadership; and by our examples, demonstrate the light and salt we are called to be. People who are not yet Christians can only vote; Christians can not only vote, they can also pray to the God Who rules over all.

To a certain extent we get the leadership which Christians deserve, because we have been told to pray for good leadership. It is God Who removes kings and sets up kings (Daniel 2:21; Romans 13:1), so we need to pray regularly and intelligently for our government and leaders.

Leadership will either work for our good, or God may use it as an instrument for punishment. Wars, calamities, economic depressions, plagues, bad rulers, natural disasters, etc., are used by God to punish nations for disobedience, but God will

heal our land if we will humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face and turn from our evil ways (2 Chronicles 7:13-14). In this sense, then, we get the kind of government we deserve! See Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 6:10-15; 8:11-20; 28:1-68.

How should we pray?

1. Pray that God will over-rule in the choice of leadership and government, and for His choice of leadership so that we will live quiet, peaceable, good, decent lives.
2. Pray for individual leaders, by name if possible, and also according to their situations (needs, problems, etc.)
3. Pray for those leaders who are Christians, that they will seek God's wisdom, guidance and help in all that they do. Pray that they will be given divine strength and wisdom to stand up for Christian principles and uphold God's standards, in spite of all opposition. Pray that they and their families will honour God and not bring His Name into disrepute through sin or scandals.
4. Pray for the salvation of those leaders who are not yet Christians. Even if they are not yet Christians, pray that they will be given wisdom and guidance in the decisions they make and that they will submit to God's standards and His will. If they continue to oppose the Lord and His ways, pray that they will be replaced by good leaders.
5. Pray for leaders who will "rule justly over people, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Samuel 23:3-4). An unbeliever who rules justly and fears God is a better ruler than a professing Christian who is unjust or who does not fear God.

What if ... ?

The Bible says that "Rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad". They are "God's servants for your good ... to execute God's wrath on the wrongdoer ... to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right" (Romans 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:14). But what if the rulers over us are *not* like this?

Most people criticise the government and those in authority over them; few pray for them. The Bible says, "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people" (Acts 23:5; Exodus 22:28; 1 Chronicles 16:22). If our leaders are not doing what is right, we should pray about it – God can convict them, change their ideas or remove them!

There is nothing wrong with disagreeing or arguing against bad policies and decisions, but we must be careful to honour, respect and not slander those whom God has allowed to be in positions of authority.

Nevertheless, if leaders **actively oppose God and forbid what God has told us to do**, then we have Biblical precedence for disobedience: “we must obey God rather than man” (see Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29).

When the righteous are in authority ...

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked rule, the people groan” (Proverbs 29:2).

Let us pray for good, Godly, wise leaders who will lead well and bring pleasure to God and the people!

See Derek Prince’s books “*Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting*”, and “*Praying for the Government*”.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the ultimate authority who we must always obey? (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29)
2. How can a Christian know who to vote for?
3. What should a Christian do when a leader is definitely ungodly and is being used by the devil to do things contrary to God’s Word?
4. Should a Christian get involved in politics and political issues, and, if so, how far should they get involved?
5. To what extent should every Christian be involved in political matters?
6. To what extent do Christians get the leaders they deserve?

13

THE POWER OF POSITIVE CONFESSION

Few people realise the power there is in what we say: power for good or power for evil; positive confessions which enable God to move, or negative confessions which bring about (or come from) unbelief and allow the works of the enemy to flourish.

Jesus said that it is out of the abundance of our *hearts* that the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45) – in other words, what we say reveals the way we think and feel in our hearts; it shows what is inside (see Proverbs 23:7 AV).

Hence there is a very real need, even in Christian circles, to watch what we say. See James' warning in James 3:1-12.

Our prayers, which should be prayed in *faith*, can be totally negated by negative confessions. Worse than that, some of our exclamations are actually curses that should never be uttered. For example, "Bother you" means "May you be bothered". "Damn you" means "May you be damned (condemned to hell)", and "Darn you" means the same thing! The Bible teaches us to *bless* one another, not put curses on them, and that we are to bless even those who persecute us (Romans 12:14) – that's a hard one!

After great "praying in faith" for a crippled lady, she was miraculously and instantly healed, and one of the group who had prayed, "believing" that God would heal, after seeing the miraculous healing said, "I can't believe it! I can't believe it!"

If our confessions are negative then there is little, if any, faith. And if we cannot pray in faith, there is little point in praying. "Whatever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). "Whatever you ask for in prayer, *believing* (with faith), you will receive" (Matthew 21:22).

If we are bound by a negative spirit, if we are "naturally" pessimistic, we may need someone to pray for us to be set free. Certainly we need to watch out for negative thoughts and confessions, to resist them and pray for the gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 12:9).

What does "confess" mean?

To confess means to publicly acknowledge, declare or admit to be true, something we believe; to speak out and confirm it.

What should we confess?

1. **Confess "Jesus is Lord"**. Salvation comes through confessing openly, publicly and freely with our lips that "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:8-10). Water baptism of a believer is one such occasion when this is done. See also Matthew 10:32-33 (cf. John 12:42); Philippians 2:9-11; 1 John 2:22-23; 4:2-3, 15.

2. **Confess your sins**. The only way to be forgiven and to be cleansed from all sin and unrighteousness is to confess our sins to God (1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5). Sometimes, when we have wronged other people, we must confess our wrongdoing to them too, and make restitution wherever possible (James 5:16). As we admit (confess) that we are guilty, we can receive their forgiveness as well as God's.

3. **Confess the truth.** Truth is like a lion – it does not have to be defended; let it out and it will defend itself! We need to preach and confess the truth of the Gospel, so that people will hear, believe and be saved (Romans 10:17; John 1:20). “Confess the faith” (1 Timothy 6:12-13). It should go without saying that Christians should not be liars. If we lie at times (perhaps to cover our sin or shortcomings) then how will people know when we are telling the truth? Christians need to be known as honest, trustworthy and reliable people. Other people may not necessarily agree with or believe what we confess, but the words on our lips must always be true.

4. **Confess what God has done for you.** We can conquer satan by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of our [positive] testimony (Revelation 12:11). “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy” (Psalm 107:2). Let us positively confess and share the good things God has done in our lives – this is part of our testimony, and it gives glory to God.

5. **Confess your faith in God.** Jesus knew that blind Bartimaeus needed healing for his eyes, but He wanted him to confess his need and his faith by asking. *Then* Jesus healed him (Mark 10:46-52; Matthew 21:22). “According to your faith may it be done to you” – either positive or negative, according to your faith or unbelief (Matthew 9:29). “Whoever shall say ... and shall not doubt ... shall have whatever he says” (Mark 11:23).

Jesus is the High Priest of our confession (Hebrews 3:1). He takes the confessions we offer to God, and presents them to the Father. Let us first make a *good* confession and then hold fast to our confession (Hebrews 4:14; 10:23. Note: “confession”, not “profession” as in AV).

We can thank and praise God by our confessions. The words translated “confess” in Romans 14:11 and 15:9 can also be translated “praise”. In Luke 10:21 Jesus said, “I thank You, O Father”, which means “I gladly acknowledge (or confess), O Father”.

“The sacrifice of praise ... giving thanks to His Name” in Hebrews 13:15 is literally “confessing His Name”.

Positive, God-honouring confessions thus express gratitude, thanks and praise to God. (Negative ones do the opposite!)

A *false* confession is indicated by wrong deeds (Titus 1:16), and in particular does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7), or that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (1 John 4:15). See also Matthew 7:15-20.

We can overcome temptation, depression and satan by positive confession. Think positively; speak positively; pray positively. Especially learn and quote God’s Word.

Resist the devil (James 4:7); renounce the devil and all his works; resist all evil (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Look to God and submit to Him!

Some confessions

Confess that by the Blood of the Lamb:

1. I am redeemed (Ephesians 1:7)
2. I am forgiven (Ephesians 1:7)
3. I am cleansed (1 John 1:7)
4. I have peace (Colossians 1:20)
5. I am reconciled (Colossians 1:20)
6. I am justified (Romans 5:9)
7. I am sanctified (Hebrews 13:12)
8. I have overcome satan (Revelation 12:11)
9. I have victory (1 Corinthians 15:57)
10. I am healed and made whole (Isaiah 53:5)

*"I am redeemed, by the Blood of the Lamb,
I am redeemed, and I know I am.
I am redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,
Saved from sin – and I know I am,
All my sins are taken away
Praise the Lord!"*

See also Matthew 12:36-37.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it wrong to swear, blaspheme and curse?
2. What can we do if we constantly think negatively, and always seem to be pessimistic?
3. What are some positive confessions you can make when you are:
 - (a) sick
 - (b) depressed
 - (c) unsure of (or doubting) your salvation
 - (d) feeling condemned
 - (e) full of joyGive Scripture references for each of these confessions.

4. What are the sources (or causes) of sickness, sin, depression, unbelief, fear, etc.? How can these sources or causes be dealt with?
5. How can doubts and unbelief be dealt with, when praying?
6. Make some positive confessions *now* (along the lines mentioned in the study above).

14

THE PRAYER OF FAITH

The importance of faith

Jesus said, “Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith” (Matthew 21:22). This verse shows us the importance of praying in faith. Conversely, Romans 14:23 says, “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin”.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him”. (See also Jeremiah 29:12-14).

James 5:15 tells us that the prayer of faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will raise them up, and if they have committed sins, they will be forgiven.

1 John 5:15 tells us that if we know (by faith) that God has heard our prayers, then we know (by faith) that we have obtained the requests which we asked from Him.

See also Matthew 9:29; 13:58; 17:20; 21:21-22; Mark 9:23; 11:24.

The above verses, together with other similar ones throughout the Bible, show us the importance of faith when praying.

What is faith?

The Greek word for faith (*pistis*) means a firm persuasion; a conviction based on hearing. It is similar to the Greek word *peitho* which means “to persuaded”.

But faith in the Biblical sense means not only being firmly convinced, but to act on that conviction. Faith thus involves two very important aspects: a firm conviction and action based on that conviction.

True Biblical faith must involve both aspects: conviction, based on a word from God, followed by action consistent with that conviction. To be convinced without acting is disobedience and sin; to act without conviction may be presumption or perhaps “hope”, but it is not faith!

Hope, in the normal sense of the word, is a strong desire that something will happen; faith knows that something will happen because God has said so. Hope implies a certain measure of doubt; faith excludes doubt. “Faith is the reality (assurance or substance) of things hoped for, the proof (conviction or evidence) of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). What proof have we that there is a God? Faith! How do I know I am saved? Faith! Faith is my assurance, my conviction, my evidence, my proof.

Faith is a gift of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9); it is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22); it is one of the three abiding qualities (1 Corinthians 13:13); it is absolutely essential for salvation (Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 11:6).

Three types of faith

The Bible talks of three principal kinds of faith. In Ephesians 4:5 each “one” is a compound unity formed from three parts; our “one faith” also comprises three parts:

1. **Saving faith:** We are saved and justified by faith (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:8). No-one can be saved without this faith.
2. **Daily life of faith:** We must not only exercise faith in order to be saved, but we must constantly, day by day, live by faith (Galatians 2:20). It is our shield and protection against the attacks of the enemy (Ephesians 6:16).
3. **Spiritual gift of supernatural faith:** God gives the supernatural gift of faith to some of His children. Through this gift of faith other gifts are also exercised (e.g., miracles, healing, prophecy, etc. See 1 Corinthians 12:8-11). We need faith to exercise spiritual gifts!

Faith is a gift from God

Ephesians 2:8-9 and 1 Corinthians 12:9 both talk of faith as a gift, and God has promised to give good gifts to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11). The gift of faith is for the asking! Read what God has promised, trust Him to fulfil His promises, ask and receive faith!

Faith comes by hearing

How do I receive faith? We have already said that we must ask. The Bible also says that “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (*rhema*) of God” (Romans 10:17). Having asked God for faith, we must then read His Word and listen to His voice. Is God a liar? No! (Numbers 23:19). Therefore, if God speaks to you or gives you a promise, you can guarantee, without a shadow of a doubt, that it will come true. (Note: There may be conditions attached to what He says!)

Faith is based on a word from God, either written (*logos*) or spoken (*rhema*), but in either case quickened by the Spirit to us. Psalm 119:50 says, “Your word has quickened me”. Faith is knowing God has spoken to us personally, and acting on this word from the Lord. I cannot have faith for myself, in a promise God has given to someone else – my faith must be based on God’s word to me.

“Claiming” promises

When “claiming” promises from the Bible we need to ask ourselves these questions:

1. **Has God given this promise to me?** The Bible contains God’s general word to everyone in all generations. It also contains specific promises to specific people in specific circumstances. Not all promises will necessarily apply to me. The important question to ask is “Has God spoken this to me?” For example, Luke 18:22 contains Jesus’ promise, “Sell all you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven”. Very few people have literally done this. Why? Because Jesus has not specifically given this command and promise to most Christians.
2. **Have I considered *all* the relevant promises and conditions?** Not all the relevant conditions are necessarily contained in one verse. There are a number of reasons, given in different parts of the Bible, why our prayers may not be answered. One verse in isolation is not always enough.
3. **Have I fulfilled all the conditions?** It is useless claiming a promise and neglecting God’s conditions!

Examples of men and women of faith

Read the whole of Hebrews chapter 11. God has given us this list of men and women to inspire our faith. Read and study the Biblical accounts of their lives of faith (e.g., Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Esther, Peter, Mary, Stephen, Paul, Barnabas, etc.) Look at the life of Christ and see the supernatural gifts of faith and miracles at work in His life.

Read the biographies and autobiographies of men and women of the past and today, who lived lives full of faith and accomplished much for God.

Notice, too, that great faith needs to be accompanied by great humility – those who are great in the eyes of the world are not necessarily great in God’s eyes. The two people whose faith Jesus marvelled at were both people of great humility – they made no great display of their faith. They were the centurion (Matthew 8:5-13) and the Canaanite woman to whom Jesus said, “Great is your faith!” (Matthew 15:21-28).

It is not hard to have faith in God if we are absolutely convinced that He never lies, but is always true to His word.

QUESTIONS

1. If faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8), how do we acquire it?
2. What is the difference between faith and hope? (1 Corinthians 13:13). How does Christian hope differ from worldly hope?
3. Is positive thinking the same as faith? Can it be a substitute for faith in God?
4. What is the difference between the quickened word of God (*rhema*) and the written Word of God (*logos*)?
5. What would you say to a person who “claimed” a promise and it was not fulfilled?
6. The opposite of faith is, of course, unbelief. What does the Bible have to say about unbelief? (Matthew 13:58; 17:19-20; James 1:6-8).

15

THE REST OF FAITH

Read Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. The Old Testament references are to Numbers 14 and Psalm 95.

“There remains a rest for the people of God, for whoever enters God’s rest also ceases from his labours as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:9-11).

In the Christian life, and in our prayer lives, there is the need to rest in faith, in God. Anxiety, worry, striving in the flesh, and unbelief should have no part in our prayer

lives or in our daily living. We need to enter into God's rest. In Psalm 37:1-9, three times we are told to "fret not"; seven times we are told to wait, trust and be still.

What is rest?

The word for "rest" in Hebrews 4:9 is the word "sabbath", which means cessation from work. The word for "rest" in the other verses is the word "katapausis" which means a place of rest.

The rest of faith in prayer is to have such a confidence in God that, having committed the situation into His hands, there is no more worry or anxiety, but rather a certainty that God has heard and will answer (Philippians 4:6-7; 1 John 5:14-15).

When our inner turmoil ceases and we have given the whole situation over to the Lord, we have entered into the rest of faith.

Two hindrances to the rest of faith

"To whom did He swear that they should never enter His rest, but to those who were **disobedient**. So we see they were unable to enter [into the Promised Land, the land of rest and peace] because of **unbelief**" (Hebrews 3:18-19).

Two great hindrances to entering into the rest of faith are:

1. Disobedience (rebellion or sin). If we disobey God and consciously, deliberately sin against Him and do not put it right, then we have no grounds whatever for claiming God's promises or expecting His help. In fact, the contrary is the case: "God disciplines (chastises) those who He loves" (Hebrews 12:4-11). Therefore we cannot enter into the rest of faith if there is unconfessed sin in our lives. The Israelites who left Egypt under Moses wandered for 40 years in the wilderness and all of them over the age of 20 died (except Joshua and Caleb) without entering into the Promised Land of rest and blessing, because of their disobedience.

2. Unbelief. As long as there is unbelief in our hearts we cannot really rest. Rest only comes when we have complete faith in God, and hence peace of mind and in our hearts. *Unbelief is sin!* In a sense, unbelief is blasphemy because unbelief says, "I do not believe God is as great, as good and as wise as He claims to be; or that He always keeps His promises". Fear can be defined as "faith in the devil" (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear hears a knock at the door; faith opens the door – and finds no-one there! How true this often is! True faith in God leads us into a place of rest in Him.

Three things we really need to know

1. **God has all wisdom**, so He knows what is best for our lives.
2. **God has all power**, so He is able to bring it to pass.
3. **God has all love**, so he longs to bring about what is best for us.

Surely it is not hard to trust, love and submit to the Lordship of a God Who has all wisdom, all power and all love! Faith in such a God should be natural!

In the natural we rest when our labour is done. Spiritually we rest when we recognise that *He* has done it all for us.

HE ...	THAT WE MIGHT ...
died	have life
became poor	be rich
bore our sicknesses	be healed
was forsaken by God	be accepted
humbled Himself	be seated in glory
was bound	be set free
descended into Hell	ascend into Heaven
emptied Himself	be filled with His Spirit
became sin	be sinless
lived	follow in His steps

Faith as small as a grain of mustard seed

See Matthew 17:20. It is not the greatness of our faith that is important, but the greatness of the God in Whom we put our faith! A cheque for \$1 can be written on the same paper as a cheque for \$1,000,000 but the bank balance determines its worth! How big is your God?

A little faith in a strong bridge will get you safely to the other side, but great faith in a weak bridge will land you in the river. It is the strength of the Bridge, not the faith, that is crucial. As we get to know God and His greatness better, our faith will also grow stronger.

Because our rest is a rest of faith and not of works, we do not have to whip up faith or feelings – we simply have to take God at His Word.

“Today”

Five times in this passage the word “today” occurs (Hebrews 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7). It is very easy to relegate God’s Word and His promises to the past, or to

dispensationalize them into the future (cf. John 11:21-27). But God says “Today”. If we fail to believe His promises are for today, we will not see them today. But if we believe that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, *today* and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) and that God is not a respecter of persons (that is, He does not favour certain people and not others – Acts 10:34) then we can believe and receive His promises today. We need to enter into God’s rest *now – today!*

“when you hear His voice” (Hebrews 4:7)

Obedience, faith and rest can only come after we have heard God speak to us – otherwise it is merely presumption or hope, but not faith. Faith needs to be based on a word (*rhema*) from God (Romans 10:17).

“don’t harden your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7)

Both disobedience and unbelief can cause our hearts to be hardened, and thus prevent us from entering into all that God has for us (Hebrews 3:18-19; Mark 9:23; James 1:6-8). After all the miracles the Israelites had seen in Egypt and in the wilderness, they still did not believe that God could get them into the Promised Land (Numbers 14). As a result they did not enter it. God expects us to learn to trust Him more and more as we grow in the Christian life, think on His past blessings, and get to know Him better.

The consequences of disobedience and unbelief (Hebrews 3:12-13)

Is unbelief sin? This verse says that an “evil, unbelieving heart” can lead us to fall away from the living God. Let us believe, and trust in, all that God has said and be obedient to all that He has told us to do.

We need to confess our faith positively (Matthew 9:29). Do not harbour negative doubts – cast them out! (James 4:7). A Christian cannot enter into his full inheritance apart from faith. Faith is of fundamental importance because it differentiates the carnal, unspiritual and unregenerate person from the true believer.

What should we do? (Hebrews 4:11)

“Let us strive to enter that rest”. Faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8), therefore receive it and act upon it. Unbelief is from the devil (Romans 14:23), therefore reject it.

Resist all temptation to disobedience, and trust the Almighty God to be true to His Word. A knowledge of Who God is, and what He has promised us in His Word, are the two greatest aids to faith.

How can we do this?

1. Come to the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 4:14-16)

2. Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you (Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Peter 5:6-9)
3. Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). You cannot be truly filled with God's Spirit and at the same time be knowingly disobedient or unbelieving.
4. Be positive in your thinking and confessions. Give praise and thanks to God.
5. Enter into your inheritance – the rest of faith – as a child of God.

God will constantly test our faith – in fact, the further we go in the Christian faith, the greater will be the testing (e.g., Abraham, Joseph, Moses). Faith is not like a rubber band that stretches to meet a certain situation; it is like a muscle that grows stronger through use.

Finally, remember that God knows what He is doing. He is on the throne; He is in control – and He can never fail – *never!* (Hebrews 13:5)

QUESTIONS

1. How should a Christian face worry and anxiety?
2. What are some aspects of God's character which enable us to trust Him?
3. What does it mean to "walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7) and "walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25)?
4. How does the rest of faith apply to intercession and spiritual warfare?
5. Why can we not rest in faith if there is unconfessed sin in our lives?
6. Discuss the statement: "We enter into the rest of faith when we know and practice the Lordship of Christ".

AM I AN INTERCESSOR?

God said, "I looked for a person ... to stand in the gap ..." – Ezekiel 22:30

There are three levels at which we can look at the subject of **THE INTERCESSOR**.

First, there are some people who have the specific calling of God to what may be termed the "ministry of intercession". These are people who may spend much time each day in earnest prayer and intercession – people for whom this is their main

spiritual ministry. Such people may spend hours waiting on God; in agony of spirit, and in spiritual warfare, battling against the principalities and powers of darkness, “storming the gates of Heaven”, “destroying the gates of Hell”, praying “fervent, effectual prayers” and seeing mighty things accomplished through such prayer and fasting. There may not be many Christians who are called to such a lifetime of sustained prayer and intercession (indeed, this is not the calling of most Christians), but they are certainly needed!

Second, there will be other Christians who God has not called primarily to the ministry of intercession, at least as their main spiritual ministry – Christians whose calling, ministry, talents or gifts, and service, lies mainly in other fields – but who nevertheless realize the importance of intercession and who have a real concern for their nation. They may not pray so long or so fervently, but they are still intercessors.

Third, there will be many other Christians who, perhaps infrequently, will intercede for our land and the needs of other people. In fact, *all* Christians are intercessors, at least in this third sense, for whoever prays on behalf of another person or group of people is interceding at that time, even though this may not be their main calling or area of concern.

We must all seek God as to what is His calling on our lives, and whatever that calling or those callings may be, we must seek to fulfil them to His glory; not envying or being jealous of one another’s ministry, nor being proud of our own. As Jesus said to Peter, when he wanted to know what John’s ministry was to be, “... what is that to you? Follow Me!” (John 21:20-22). In other words “Mind your own business! And get on with the work I have called *you* to do!”

Whether your ministry is the ministry of intercession, or you have a deep concern for your country and desire to intercede for it, or simply that from time to time you want to be informed of prayer needs and will intercede as and when you are led, you are welcome to be part of **PRAY FOR THE NATION** (also known as **INTERCESSORS FOR NEW ZEALAND**)

God’s call through *Pray for the Nation* is to Christians who are concerned to intercede for revival and evangelism in our land. These intercessors pray for the Church, the Government, and the Nation. Social, moral, economic and spiritual matters are all brought before the Throne of Grace in prayer.

Will you ‘Pray for the Nation’ – whichever nation you live in, or were born in, for example?