

Thy Kingdom Come: the Ministry of Prayer

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Introduction

Prayer is an honor and one of the highest privileges God has given to humankind. Through prayer, God has invited us to participate with Him in establishing His kingdom here in the earth. John Wesley has said, "God does nothing except in answer to prayer."

We must understand the promises of God contained in Scripture not to be guarantees but invitations! The promises of God are invitations to partner with God in making the kingdom of this world become the kingdom of God. We partner with God through consistent and fervent prayers grounded in the Word of God. And, as Isaiah 62:6-7 tell us, we are never to stop praying until we see the answers to our prayers:

*I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem;
they will never be silent day or night.
You who call on the LORD,
give yourselves no rest,
and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem
and makes her the praise of the earth.*

Our responsibility as the Body of Christ is to prepare for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ through prayer. Creation itself groans in anticipation of our rising up as the righteous remnant to pray with power until heaven comes down and glory fills our souls.

In this handout, you will find some questions to wrestle with and, hopefully, some inspiration to prime the pump of your prayer ministry. Congregations I have served and I have been richly blessed as we journey into the heart of God through prayer and fasting. I have included information about fasting which I pray will bless you too.

The Call to Prayer Ministry

Are you called to a ministry of prayer?

- Do you ever feel like something is missing?
- Do you have the feeling in your belly that there is MORE?
- Are you realizing there must be more than going to church to "get a Word" and to "get your praise on"?
- Have you been thinking that church has gotten more "me" focused and less "God" focused?
- Have you gotten tired of trying to create a feeling that just really is not there?
- Ever get tired of trying to draw a happy face on a dissatisfying situation?
- Have you realized that your "personal salvation" is not so "personal" after all?
- Are people in your life asking for more but you feel like you have nothing left to give?
- Could you stand to have more of these Powerful 7 in your life? LOVE – WONDER – JOY – MYSTERY – PEACE – POWER – LAUGHTER

Prayer is the answer. We need a Prayer Revival.

Prayer is the most powerful activity in which you can engage. To pray is to know and celebrate that we are spiritual beings. Prayer is what nurtures the spiritual life as food does the physical life. But we must remember that God is the object of prayer, He is our conversation partner.

The Jewish Theologian Abraham Heschel uses the illustration of a pianist who performs a concert for the promise of pay but while in the midst of the performance no thought of pay enters her mind because were her mind to go to the money her fingers might slip and strike the wrong key. So, he argues, it is with those who pray. Some desired outcome may be the impetus for prayer but when we actually begin to pray, God becomes our desire and focus.

Our sole desire and purpose in prayer must be intimacy with the Father. This worship and communion with the Father brings power, peace, love and joy into your life. This worship and communion brings us into a life of His Presence, a life of complete and perfect spiritual abundance. Taking care of the Spirit-life is priority. For the health of our spirits determines our ultimate health. Our inner life will manifest in our outer life.

In prayer we learn that it is not always about answers. In prayer we learn to live into the wonder and mystery of God. It is in prayer that we stop our petty search for mere happiness and begin to embody the joy of the Lord. We move beyond our fickle dependence on our moment-to-moment circumstances and stretch out into the Eternal Mystery. It is faith in the Unseen. It is here, in the great dance of doubt and faith, that our prayer-legs gain immeasurable strength. It is in prayer that we really learn to be honest with God and with ourselves.

So, we must spend a lot of time in prayer. Prayer is our life. We need not have to make time for prayer. Prayer IS our life. Prayer is our priority. We cannot be too busy to pray; we are too busy not to pray. Our lives must be ordered around prayer for it is our communion with and worship of the Father.

So, the call of God has gone out for those who will commit to a life of prayer and fasting. Those who answer the call are committing to pray for others and for the world in which we live. But, our prayer is *for* God, to be closer to Him, to live in more fully in Him and that He will live more fully in us.

Prayer isn't hard...

Prayer is the life's work of the Christian. All that we do must flow out of prayer. When we study the life of Jesus, we see that Jesus did not pray between his periods of work and ministry, Jesus worked and ministered between His times of prayer. Prayer must be the first priority for the Christian. It is through prayer that we strengthen our relationship with God and access the power of God for our living.

*O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pains we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.*

We've got to pray openly and honestly. Admit to God when you don't feel like it or when the tv or someone is pulling you in another direction. Hey, we all have that wandering inclination and God is big enough to handle it. Just ask for more strength and discipline to be constant in prayer.

Remember, this is a practice. Just because it is the right thing to do doesn't mean that it will happen for us overnight. Just keep being committed to the practice of prayer.

God's faithfulness to us is our shield and armor! (Psalm 91:4) God knows we can be wishy-washy. That's what grace is for!

So, take it easy on yourself. God loves you and wants you to reach where you're trying to go... in Him.

FASTING (don't fight it!)

Prayer needs fasting for its full growth. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible. Fasting is the other hand, the one with which we let go of the visible.

– Andrew Murray

Fasting is abstaining from food with a spiritual purpose in mind. Jesus teaches us that fasting and prayer are a powerful combination. While fasting is not explicitly commanded by Jesus in the Gospels, it seems that it is assumed that fasting would be a part of the life of the believer: “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:16-18).

Remember, the Fast should change your routine. If you are going about your regular routine merely with a change in diet, you are not fasting, you are on a diet! Fasting *must* change our routine. The Fast is to refocus us on the things of God. We should expect to be different when this time of fasting is over and not just physically...

- By the time the fast is over, we should have created an atmosphere in our lives, our homes, our churches in which God is pleased to dwell.
- By the time the Fast is over, we should have created such an atmosphere in prayer that miracles become daily events in our lives.
- By the time the Fast is over, we should have prayed the yoke of bondage off of our sisters and brothers.

Yes, by the time a Fast concludes, we should have walked through the doorway of Kingdom Living! All this is accomplished through prayer and fasting. So, commit to a fast and do not grow weary nor take lightly the fast you commit to God. Divine opportunities are waiting all around for us to seize them in fasting and in prayer. God moves in powerful ways during sincere fasts (see 2 Chronicles 20:1-23).

Remember, the fast is to the Lord. The fast should cause us to redirect our focus, our attention. It should more regularly direct us to our prayer closets because fasting and prayer go hand in hand. Prayer is our Priority! And not just during the course of this Lenten fast, but in life. We've got to make every effort to ensure we add more and more time with God in prayer and meditation each and everyday for this is where we find LOVE, JOY and PEACE! God honors it when we deny the flesh and sow to the spirit. This is consistent with what we learn in Galatians 5:16-25 and in Colossians 3:1-17. Fasting is to honor the life of our spirits. Be assured, to nurture and to refine the spirit-life has eternal significance.

Remember, fasting is to abstain from food with spiritual purposes in mind. Our purposes are many:

- we are seeking to grow even closer to God
- to see the Gifts of the Holy Spirit fully operating in the Body of Christ
- to experience the Fruit of the Holy Spirit being borne out in the lives of the people of God
- to break the power of the enemy over our lives and the lives of those around us
- to scatter the plans of the enemy
- to gain more spiritual power
- to wrestle ourselves away from unhealthy attachments
- to see the Kingdom of God grow exponentially
- to experience good physical, mental and spiritual health
- to walk in miracles

- to transform our minds
- ultimately, to live our lives in ways pleasing to God

All our purposes will be fulfilled by the Power of God through fasting and prayer! Don't waiver in unbelief. God is true to His Word! **AND DON'T STOP PRAYING BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE ANSWER OR BECAUSE YOU DON'T FEEL ANYTHING.** God moves in God's time. And, be assured, whether you feel anything or not, God is listening!

The promise of God in Christ Jesus is this: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7 - but read the whole passage). This is an amazing promise, but what is "abiding"?

- Abiding is to dwell constantly in the secret place of the Most High (Psalm 91:1).
- Abiding is to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- Abiding is to have a song in your heart to God at all times (Ephesians 5:19)
- Abiding is to write the Word of God on the tablet of your heart (Proverbs 7:2-3; Psalm 119:16)
- Abiding is learning and strengthening ourselves through fasting and prayer.

The Fast is not to be an event that will pass, nor an experience that we will merely have; but, it is an entrance into a life of continual abiding in God, a pathway into the deeper things of God, a seat in the Presence of God.

God's Promises to You Concerning Your Health

Exodus 15:26 - *I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.*

2 Chronicles 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.*

Psalms 84:11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Psalms 91:1&16 *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High will abide under the shadow of the Almighty... "With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation."*

Psalms 107:19-20 *Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*

Isaiah 53:5 *He was wounded for our rebellious acts. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so that we could have peace, and we received healing from his wounds.*

Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

Matthew 9:35 *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

Mark 16:17-18 *And these signs shall follow those who believe: in My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*

Luke 6:17-19 *...and a great throng of people... who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.*

John 10:10 *...I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*

John 14:12 *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.*

2 Corinthians 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.*

James 5:13-18 *If any of you are having trouble, pray. If you are happy, sing psalms. If you are sick, call for the church leaders. Have them pray for you and anoint you with olive oil in the name of the Lord. (Prayers offered in faith will save those who are sick, and the Lord will cure them.) If you have sinned, you will be forgiven. So admit your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you will be healed. Prayers offered by those who*

have God's approval are effective. Elijah was human like us. Yet, when he prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell on the ground for three-and-a-half years. Then he prayed again. It rained, and the ground produced crops.

Scriptures to Build You Up in the Faith

Mark 11:22-24 Jesus said to them, "Have faith in God! I can guarantee this truth: This is what will be done for someone who doesn't doubt but believes what he says will happen: He can say to this mountain, 'Be uprooted and thrown into the sea,' and it will be done for him. That's why I tell you to have faith that you have already received whatever you pray for, and it will be yours.

Matthew 17:20 And he saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

James 1:6-8 When you ask for something, don't have any doubts. A person who has doubts is like a wave that is blown by the wind and tossed by the sea. A person who has doubts shouldn't expect to receive anything from the Lord. A person who has doubts is thinking about two different things at the same time and can't make up his mind about anything.

Romans 4:17-21 Abraham believed when he stood in the presence of the God who gives life to dead people and calls into existence nations that don't even exist. When there was nothing left to hope for, Abraham still hoped and believed. As a result, he became a father of many nations, as he had been told: "That is how many descendants you will have." Abraham didn't weaken. Through faith he regarded the facts: His body was already as good as dead now that he was about a hundred years old, and Sarah was unable to have children. He didn't doubt God's promise out of a lack of faith (did not stagger in unbelief). Instead, giving honor to God for the promise, he became strong because of faith and was absolutely confident that God would do what he promised.

Mark 13:58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

*Only believe. Only believe.
All things are possible only believe.*

Suggestions for cultivating a life of prayer in the local congregation:

- Pray to hear the Voice of God more clearly: 1 Samuel 3; John 10:1-10; John 12:49-50.
- Develop focused prayer lists for the particular needs of the congregation, community, nation and world and publish in the bulletin weekly.
- Train and develop a prayer team.
- Make “Prayer” central to the teachings of the congregation.
- Pray for the life and ministry of the local church
- Pray for your pastor
- Pray for jobs to be created; for foreclosures to cease; for men and women to have power to make a living wage. Deuteronomy 8:18
- Begin each day with “Morning Glory” – an opportunity for members to gather at the church for prayer.
- Have a Prayer Conference Call at the end of each day (Compline).
- Use the church website and social media to gather prayer requests.
- Have a daily/weekly Prayer Conference Call specific to ministries in the church (e.g. Men’s/Women’s Ministry).
- Keep a Prayer Quilt in the sanctuary to receive prayer requests.
- Create a Prayer and Fasting year round Calendar with daily rotation of members.
- Have a 24-hour Prayer Vigil