

Prayer Strategy for Ministry

By Dave Butts

All too often we look at prayer as a “quick fix” to a difficult situation. Have you ever said, “I’ve tried everything else—I might as well pray! Often we only have “time” to offer a few quick prayers hoping to bring God into the situation so that everything will be fine. Sometimes this proves to be the case (although probably more because of God’s great love for us than from the power of our prayers).

If you are involved in a work of God, and hopefully we are all active in a ministry of some sort. you need to look at prayer not as a quick petition, but rather as part of the longterm strategy for accomplishing the work that God has called you to. It involves a commitment to pray and work until you see completion. An illustration from the sports realm might be helpful. Many would liken prayer to a series of sprints while instead, we would be better served to see prayer as a long-distance runner would view the course before him.

Nehemiah saw prayer this way. In Nehemiah 1, we see that he had a difficult task ahead of him. After hearing a report of the poor condition of Jerusalem and its inhabitants he believed that God called him to travel to Jerusalem and take the lead in seeing the walls of the city rebuilt. As you look at this story, please note how prayer is an integral part of this mighty work of God . . . not as a quick fix. but as a continued dependence upon God for help and direction.

As an important government official in Babylon, Nehemiah received word of the demoralized Jewish remnant in Jerusalem and the sad condition of Jerusalem’s walls. His response was to weep and pray: “For some days I mourned and fasted and

prayed before the God of heaven” (Neh. 1:4). Out of this time of mourning comes this powerful prayer, recorded in Neh 1:5-11, “O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’

They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”

Nehemiah’s prayer was not an act of devotion wedged into an already busy schedule. He stopped what he was doing and gave himself fully to God in prayer. The task ahead was too daunting for anyone but God Himself. Nehemiah’s example reflects some important issues in prayer that we should follow when interceding:

RESPONDING IN OBEDIENCE

(Nehemiah 2:12). Although it is not mentioned in the passage from the first chapter of Nehemiah, we learn later on that God had placed the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls upon Nehemiah’s heart (“I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart

to do for Jerusalem"). Nehemiah simply was aware of what God desired to accomplish, and made himself available to be used in a powerful way to fulfill God's plan.

HAVING AN ATTITUDE OF WORSHIP

(Nehemiah 1:5). Nehemiah did not enter lightly into God's presence. He reverently acknowledged the awesomeness of the God of heaven, asking for His divine attention.

PERSISTING IN PRAYER

(Nehemiah 1:6). Nehemiah refers to the fact that he is praying day and night for this particular issue.

PRAYING IN HUMILITY

(Nehemiah 1:6-7). He approached God with humility, confessing his sin and the sin of his people. He repentantly accepted God's judgment upon them as right and just . . . no excuses . . . no whining! He simply humbled himself before God and stated his case.

CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES IN SCRIPTURE

(Nehemiah 1:8-9). Nehemiah recalled God's promises to Israel that if they fell through disobedience and were exiled, but would repent and turn back to Him, He would bring them back from the most distant places: "and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back." (Deuteronomy 30:2-4) Praying God's Word back to Him is powerful!

PRAYING WITH CONFIDENCE AND BOLDNESS

(Nehemiah 1:10-11). Knowing then, that what he was asking for was according to God's Word, Nehemiah prayed that God would

provide the necessary resources to restore the fortunes of Jerusalem.

PRAYING SPECIFICALLY

(Nehemiah 1:11; 2:4-5). The particular resource that Nehemiah wanted needed to come from King Artaxerxes. Therefore, he asked God for favor in the presence of the king as he went to make his request known. He didn't expect or ask for a mystical sort of provision. but instead asked specifically that God would give him favor with the man who could help. when the king asked him what he wanted, he prayed once again, and then very specifically said, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."

TAKING A STEP OF ACTION

(Nehemiah 2:1-9). Nehemiah knew that he was the man whom God expected to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. His strategy was prayer. He first asked God to prepare the way for him to receive favor from the king. But then, he knew that he must ASK the king for his help. Having confidence in the Lord's plan and provision, he did just that, even though he was afraid. How many of us pray, but then don't continue on in faith to be the answer to our own prayers? Do you wonder how many prayers God might have answered differently if we had just been obedient in our actions? Sometimes God desires (and requires) the next step beyond obedience to intercede, the obedience to act on behalf of the person or situation for whom or for which we are interceding. An interesting note; Nehemiah breathed a prayer to God just before responding to the king's question, "What is it you want?" (Neh. 2:4-5). He utilized the strategy of prayer for preparation and also to gain the wisdom to speak the words God wanted him to say ("Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king . . ."). Jesus tells us not to fear when we stand before kings and authorities on His behalf for He will give us the words to say

Luke 21:12-15). Nehemiah experienced this same promise from God.

GIVING GOD THE GLORY AND THE CREDIT

(Nehemiah 2:8). Not only did the king grant Nehemiah's request for time off to rebuild Jerusalem he also wrote letters to governors for protection, and to obtain the timber Nehemiah needed. In addition, above and beyond what Nehemiah asked for, the king sent army officers and cavalry with him (Neh. 2:7-9). Nehemiah could have been puffed up with his own success, but instead he said, "And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests."

There is one more aspect of strategic prayer to look at in the story of Nehemiah. It came after his request was granted by the king and he traveled to Jerusalem with the king's protection and blessing to build the walls of Jerusalem. The Israelites in the city had responded favorably to Nehemiah's presence and had set themselves to the task of rebuilding the city walls under his leadership. But as so often happens in any work of God, it was not long before the enemy made his move. Opposition arose against the building of the wall.

Nehemiah's response?

WARFARE PRAYING

(Nehemiah 4:4-5). This prayer warrior moved to the attack mode of prayer: "Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders." The task was not going to be completed until there was some spiritual warfare prayer. Once again, Nehemiah did not pray and then sit back and do nothing. Prayer was primary strategy for rebuilding the walls . . . but not the whole strategy. He also called the people together and posted guards to protect the builders. He phrased it this way in Neh. 4:9, "But we prayed to our God and posted

a guard day and night to meet this threat.”

What a powerful combination of prayer and physical activity! Nehemiah understood clearly that prayer was as essential to the building of the wall as manual labor. In our plans and ministries, we must begin to see the strategic place that God has for prayer. With Nehemiah we saw that the project emerged out of prayer . . . continued in prayer . . . and was completed through prayer. Because of this biblical prayer warrior, we can see how this type of continuous emphasis on prayer can bring any work of God to completion in such a way that God is honored and His Kingdom advanced.

–Dave Butts (1953-2022) was the president of Harvest Prayer Ministries, and the author of multiple books, articles and resources on prayer. Some of his books are [Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God](#), [The Giving Church](#), and [Prayer Ministry Volunteer Handbook](#) co-authored with his wife, Kim.

The Prayer of Forgiveness

By Kim Butts

“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us” (Luke 11:4).

Scripture is very clear that sin is a hindrance to answered prayer. Isaiah 59:2 states, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” In Psalm 66:18 we read, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened”

One of the most pervasive, tenacious sins in the Christian culture today is unforgiveness. It is disobedience to Christ, and it renders our prayers ineffective and powerless. Many times, an unforgiving spirit comes from a heart filled with pride. We often feel justified in our unforgiveness because of the wrong done to us. Or, the sin against us was so grievous in our own mind and heart that we cannot possibly forgive.

Probably the most common stumbling block in this area is when we say that we have forgiven someone outwardly, while still harboring the resentment or anger in our hearts. Jesus effectively illustrates God's viewpoint on this matter in Matthew 18:23-35 when the king's servant, who had been forgiven his debt, turned around and refused to forgive the debt of a fellow servant. The king turned his anger towards the man, threw him in jail and ordered him to pay back all that he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Matthew 18:35).

If you are struggling with your prayer life, could an unforgiving spirit be one area that is keeping you from effectively touching the heart of God with your prayers? From time to time, each of us must take a deep look into the dark places of our hearts, asking the Lord to reveal our sin to us. We can find healing from the sin of unforgiveness in the Scripture, for when we truly understand how strongly God feels about forgiveness, we can seek to be more like Christ in our response to those we need to forgive.

Beth Moore, in her excellent book, *Praying God's Word*, has a chapter devoted to "Overcoming Unforgiveness." Using Scripture, she has a threefold way to become more like Christ in this area. First, she has an extensive section of scriptural prayers which ask God to do a deep work in us that we might forgive as He forgives us. Next, she recommends praying "about" the person or persons we need to forgive. In essence, she says, we are "tattling" on the person to God. We

express how we feel about what that person has done through venting our anger, our exasperation, etc. This was the very way that David dealt with those who were persecuting him. As you read through the Psalms, you will see clearly how David talked “about” those persons to God. He did not hold back from expressing his displeasure: “Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit” (Psalm 5:9).

“Two important things happen,” Moore states, “when we learn to pray honestly about the person who has hurt us: 1. We pour the hurt out rather than allowing it to remain and turn bitter. . . . 2. We articulate our own feelings, thereby placing them in view before our own eyes as well as God’s. This way, we also get a chance to see if something seems ridiculous, out of proportion, or right on target. Our prayers can sometimes help us gain a little insight into our own hearts.”

If we pour out our grievances to God, we won’t be as likely to pour them out to others, which could then cause them to stumble too. Praying “about” those who wrong us saves us from compounding our sin by turning it into gossip, or causing others to harbor the same resentments we do.

Moore says, “Envision your heart like a pitcher . . . Praying about the person we need to forgive is the means by which we tip that pitcher heavenward and slowly begin to pour our negative feelings and frustrations out to God. As we pour out, a wonderful thing happens: we make room for God to pour in. Our omniscient God knows that a heart heals when a heart changes. Until we make room for fresh contents that change our hearts, we will never be healed from the injury and subsequent feelings of unforgiveness.”

The third area of prayer is to pray “for” those whom we need to forgive. Most of us are already aware that we need to do this; however, we often stubbornly hang on to our “right” not

to. If we are to be like Christ, we relinquish our “rights” and take on humility, being obedient to the Lord, who says in Mark 11:25, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

If unforgiveness has been a hindrance to your prayer life in the past, remember that Satan will attack you in this area again—until your victory is firmly established in the strength of Christ Jesus. “If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:7-11).

Kim Butts is the co-founder of [Harvest Prayer Ministries](#) and the author of [The Praying Family](#).

Why the Devil Is Interested in Your Church

Why The Devil is Interested in Your Church

(Recognizing the Places of Spiritual Attack)

By Dave Butts

Several years ago I had the opportunity to write a book entitled [The Devil Goes To Church](#). It's been interesting to

watch the responses of people who see the title for the first time. Most of them say, "The devil sure does go to church... especially mine." Why this overwhelming awareness that Satan is somehow interested in what happens in churches? Maybe it's because we're seeing his hand at work in the church. This excerpt helps us understand why Satan is interested in your church and four ways that he attacks local congregations.

There is a very real reason why the devil goes to church. The Biblical worldview is of a great cosmic battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. Christians are those who have changed sides in the battle. Paul writes about this changing of sides in the second chapter of Ephesians: *"...in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved"* (vv. 2-5).

The enemy of our God has become our enemy. We are not in a neutral position. When Christians gather as the church, we become a real threat to Satan. We are there to worship, to pray, to teach and to encourage one another to live and proclaim the Kingdom of God and as such, proclaim the enemy's defeat. It is apparent that he will do all he can to prevent that from happening...

The real danger for us is being unaware of the enemy's schemes. We approach every difficulty in church as though it is just a natural thing. When churches divide over whether or not to use hymns or contemporary choruses, it is not natural. When the flock turns on the shepherd, it is not natural. When the saints, called to live in love, spend their time criticizing and accusing one another, it is not natural. The

devil has come to church!

...There is one obvious thing about Satan's attacks – he is consistent. He does basically the same thing over and over again in church after church, down through the ages. We might categorize them in these memorable ways: Doubt, Deceit, Discouragement, Division.

Doubt

Sowing doubt has been one of the enemy's weapons from the very beginning. In Eden, the serpent stirred up doubt in Eve, causing her to sin. He caused her (and Adam) to doubt God's word, asking the insidious question, "Has God said...?" You can almost hear the oily voice continuing, "You don't really believe that do you?" The same voice, the very same voice, is asking the same question today, causing Christians to begin to doubt God and His Word.

Doubt was the weapon Satan used against Jesus in the wilderness. Every temptation was preceded by the word, "if." *"IF You are the Son of God,"* the enemy whispers, attempting to instill doubt into Jesus. He still uses the same attack.

Doubt can come in many forms. Sometimes it is the frontal attack on the veracity of the Bible. There are many in church who simply do not believe that all of the Bible is truly God's inspired Word. But sometimes the most vicious attack comes on those who do believe in the Bible, but are then led into doubt as to the power of God's Word. "Will that really work?" people ask. Whole segments of Scripture are robbed of their power as Christians relegate them to some other day or time, and fail to appropriate them for themselves. Be careful when trying to explain away a clear meaning of Scripture. It may be that the enemy is raising doubts.

Doubt is also raised as to the nature of God. When tragedies come in life (and they do), even Christians find themselves

doubting the love or mercy of God. "How could a loving God cause (or allow) such a thing to happen?" The whispering enemy is again at work to cause God's people to doubt the goodness or power of their God. We're sometimes told that to doubt is natural. Not for those who have tasted of the goodness, mercy and power of God! Faith is the natural response to God. Look at Job and the almost inconceivable tragedy that changed his life. Though facing great loss and with tremendous grief, still he words one of the great faith responses in Scripture, "*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised*" (Job 1:21).

Doubt also comes to the individual believer regarding his/her position in Christ. The enemy continually works at trying to separate us from Christ. He doesn't have the power to actually do that, but he tries to instill doubt in us as to who we are in Christ. The best way to counter that is with the truth of God's Word. Christian author, Neil Anderson has written much on this topic and has prepared a wonderful list of scriptures that affirm who we are in Christ:

- John 1:12 – I am God's child.
 - John 15:15 – I am Christ's friend.
 - Rom. 5:1 – I have been justified.
 - 1 Cor. 6:17 – I am united with the Lord and one with Him in spirit.
 - 1 Cor. 6:20 – I have been bought with a price; I belong to God.
 - 1 Cor. 12:27 – I am a member of Christ's Body.
 - Eph. 1:1 – I am a saint.
 - Eph. 1:5 – I have been adopted as God's child.
 - Eph. 2:18 – I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
 - Col. 1:14 – I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
 - Col. 2:10 – I am complete in Christ.

Deceit

A second weapon that Satan uses against the Church is deceit. This should not surprise us since Jesus Himself described Satan as a liar. Satan delights in twisting the truth, confusing people and leading them into error. That's rather obvious when you look at the condition of Christian doctrine, both within and without the Church. It may be as subtle as the lack of understanding concerning Christian grace or as obvious as those who deny the inspiration of the Bible.

The Apostle Paul speaks of difficult times for the Church in the last days, especially in regard to truth. We are warned of those who are *"always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth, men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected"* (2 Timothy 3:7-8).

Like what you are reading? This article is a part of the text from the course "The Devil Goes to Church" at [PrayerU.com](https://www.prayeru.com), the digital learning site of Harvest Prayer Ministries. [For more information on this course, click here.](#)

This passage is so clearly being lived out in the Church today, that we can easily see the enemy's handiwork. There is no shortage of Bible studies in our churches. But we debate the meaning rather than living out the intent of God's Word. We have fallen into the trap that James warned us about: *"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"* (James 1:22). Studying Scripture without doing it is one of Satan's great deceits.

This deception concerning the Word of God leaves the Church powerless and unable to function as God has intended. George Otis, Jr. delivers a scathing indictment of this powerlessness as follows:

"If ever there was a moment for the Church to stand up and be counted, that moment is now. Unfortunately, American

Christendom is in the midst of a low, debilitated spiritual state. At almost every turn, supernatural power and insight have given way to religious inertia. Fellowships are growing numerically, but members are not maturing in character. There are programs aplenty, but little fear of God. Most ominously, modern believers seem oblivious to their own unhealthy condition. Having succumbed to the Laodicean Syndrome (see Revelation 3:14-17), they view their compromised state as normal – even blessed.

“A troubling, if predictable, consequence of this spiritual self-deception is that the Church has found itself unable to speak into the current crisis with any clarity or consistency. Burdened political leaders seeking direction from Christian clergy and prayer networks report receiving advice that ‘wanders all over the map.’ Needing wise men with keen understanding, these national decision makers are finding instead blind guides and flesh-clouded counsel” (George Otis, Jr. “Fading Light,” January 2003).

Discouragement

One of the main passages of Scripture that we often use to hit people over the head with to get them to attend church is Hebrews 10:25: *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* The focus of the passage however is not merely attending a meeting, but in the process, encouraging one another.

One of the very practical reasons for this scriptural command is to counter the enemy’s strategy of discouraging the believers. Many faithful Christians who have withstood the more frontal attacks of Satan in the area of morality, truth and righteous living, have found themselves blind-sided by discouragement. A few words of criticism here and there, a “down” day, a little loss of fresh vision, a program that

didn't go according to plan, and suddenly we find ourselves discouraged and wondering if we can go on.

Many great women and men of God have had severe bouts with discouragement and depression. Perhaps the clearest example is that of Elijah following his great victory over the prophets of Baal. In the wake of that victory, Queen Jezebel ordered his execution. In fear, Elijah ran and ended up in this situation in 1 Kings 19:4: *"He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, LORD,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'"* Now that is serious discouragement from a great man of God. It took the intervention of the Lord Himself to bring Elijah out of that depressed mood.

You may not have sat under a tree with a desire to die, but discouragement can hit us all. The great word of God to the Church in this case is that we are called to be an encouragement to one another. We are to build one another up in our faith. Our gatherings need to be times of great encouragement. The church that is a place of support and edification is a place where the enemy's plans have been thwarted.

There is an old story about discouragement called, "The Devil's Tool Sale":

"It was advertised that the devil was putting his tools up for sale. On that date the tools were laid out for public inspection. They had prices on them, and there were a lot of treacherous instruments: hatred, envy, jealousy, deceit, pride, lying, and so on. Laid apart from the rest of the devil's tools was a harmless-looking tool, worn more than any of the others and priced very high.

"'What's the name of this tool?' asked one of the customers.

"'That,' the devil replied, 'is discouragement.'

“‘Why have you priced it so high?’

“‘Because discouragement is more useful to me than all the others. I can pry open and get inside a man’s heart with that when I cannot get near him with any other tools. It’s badly worn because I use it on almost everyone, since so few people know it belongs to me.’”

When we begin to understand that discouragement is of the enemy, we can begin to counter it using the weapons of our warfare. It is not natural for a Spirit-filled child of God to walk around discouraged. This is an attack of Satan to put us on the sidelines.

Division

Francis Frangipane writes, “If there ever was a false doctrine that was so widespread, so accepted in the Body of Christ, yet so contrary to the heart and teachings of Christ, it is the tradition of division within the Church” (*Becoming the Answer to Christ’s Prayer*, p. 2).

One of the most effective strategies of Satan has been to bring about division in the Body of Christ. It makes sense that the enemy would push for a splintered, divided Church, since Jesus desired exactly the opposite. The main focus of Jesus’ great high priestly prayer of John 17 was that His followers would be united. A strong, united Church is a testimony to the world of the love of God. Satan is doing all he can to destroy that testimony.

One of the main weapons we have against this attack is awareness of the enemy’s schemes. If we are unaware of the satanic nature of division, there is a greater tendency toward excusing it or just assuming that this is one of those things that happens occasionally in the church. When we see clearly though, that we as a church are under attack, then we will determine at all costs to guard against division. Members of a congregation are well-prepared to resist the enemy when,

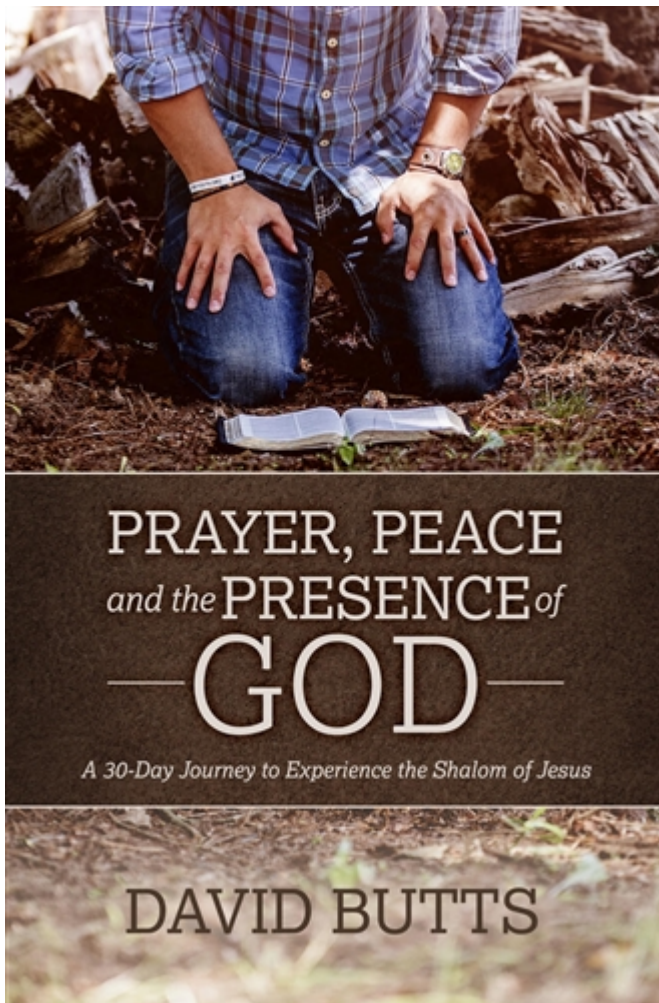
finding themselves in times of conflict, they begin to ask the question, "What is the enemy trying to do here?" Then, turning to the Lord, they ask the most important question, "Lord, how do we counter the attacks of the enemy against Your people?"

When a church finds itself facing issues that bring division, the prayer meeting is far more effective than the board meeting. Division always has a spiritual issue at its root and the enemy is always involved. It is heartfelt, heaven-sent prayer by the Body of Christ that will rout the devil and deal with the issues that are at hand.

I'll never forget a church where I taught a prayer seminar in central Indiana. I'm so grateful I got there early that Sunday morning. As I walked into the church sanctuary, I was amazed to see about a dozen men walking around the room praying. They were laying hands on the pews and walking to the four corners of the room, praying for a new awareness of the Lord's presence, a fresh moving of His Spirit, and for protection from the attacks of the enemy. What a powerful way for a group of Christian leaders to go on the offensive against Satan and to keep the devil from their local congregation.

How will you take your stand against the enemy?

Excerpted from [*The Devil Goes to Church: Combating the Everyday Attacks of Satan*](#) by David Butts, Harvest Prayer Ministries



PRAYER, PEACE, and the PRESENCE of GOD by David Butts

As believers, we are supposed to walk in the peace of Christ, yet we all have stressful issues and circumstances that rob us of this peace. Subtitled “A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus,” *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* powerfully encourages the reader on how to hold onto that peace in any circumstance.

When author, David Butts (1953-2022), first started writing this book, he got word ten days into the project that he was in stage 4 with a rare form of lymphoma. God not only allowed him to complete the book, but to live for five more full-strength years. His 30-day devotional will encourage, inspire and challenge you to walk in the peace of Jesus no matter what situations or struggles you are walking through.

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9 Ways to Be a Prayer Missionary

By Kim Butts

For those of you who have never heard this term, a prayer missionary is someone who takes on (or adopts) a country, a geographical area, or a specific unreached people group and starts praying on a daily and systematic basis. A prayer missionary does not physically go to the mission field (except

if he or she goes on a prayer journey or a short term missions trip), but performs the work of prayer from his or her home or place of work. In this way the prayer missionary can prepare the harvest field so that the seed sown by missionaries will fall on good soil. A prayer missionary is part of God's fighting team in the struggle against the kingdom of the darkness. He is a co-worker with missionaries, because without those who pray, missionaries cannot be effective.

According to Bennie Mostert, "The advantage of being a prayer missionary is that one manages to get into places and countries where the preaching of the gospel is prohibited. No one can prevent the prayers of the prayer missionary from having an effect across the borders of countries or over large distances." Mostert, in his book, *Change Your World through Prayer*, gives several guidelines to anyone who wishes to become a prayer missionary:

1. A prayer missionary may be any believer who sees his way open to do the work of prayer as commissioned by the Lord. Just as a missionary commits to one term or a lifetime of service, you will need to make a commitment to pray – one year, three years or as long as it takes for your nation or people group to be reached for Christ.
2. Ask God to show you which country he would like you to do your mission work in. Having a copy of *Operation World* by Jason Mandryk would be a good resource. Pray for different countries each day until you gradually develop affection for one or more nation and/or its people. Perhaps God will lay it upon your heart to pray for Muslims, or for one particular people group within a country, etc.
3. Begin to do research on your country or people group, watching the paper, news, magazines, etc. Find out the leaders of the nation and what religion(s) are practiced there. Begin keeping a file of information that will

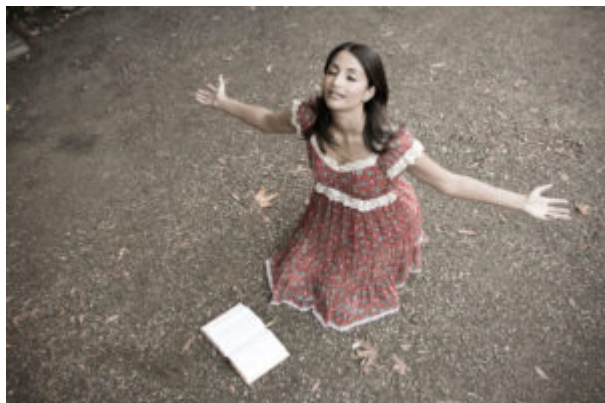
help you pray in an informed, specific way.

4. Pray for the leaders of that nation – for their conversion and that they will govern wisely and with mercy.
5. Pray for missionaries, pastors and church leaders in that nation, and for the firm establishment and growth of Christ's Church in their midst.
6. Pray for the unsaved, as well as for the believers and new converts.
7. Pray for revival in the church in that nation.
8. Pray for unity in the body of Christ
9. Pray for open doors so that the Word may be spread rapidly and thoroughly.

Remember to thank God continually as He works!

(c) Harvest Prayer Ministries

Reaching Out by Reaching Up



The Power of Prayer Evangelism

By Alvin VanderGriend

A pastor in California led his family to pray for yet-to-be-followers of Christ who lived in five neighboring homes. Within the first eight weeks of prayer, one of their neighbors began asking faith questions and ended up committing her life to Christ. Another neighbor wanted to give up drug dealing and asked for prayer help. A non-churched couple living next door asked the pastor to start a neighborhood Bible study.

The family continued to pray.

By the six-month mark the couple who asked for a Bible study had given their lives to Christ. A Buddhist family who lived across the street was coming to church regularly, and one member of the family had become a Christ-follower. The children of both families were involved in the church's education classes.

This pastor's family discovered the power of prayer evangelism.

What Is Prayer Evangelism?

Prayer evangelism is a form of evangelism in which God moves in the hearts and lives of yet-to-be-followers of Christ in response to the earnest prayers of believers. Intercessors,

with access to the throne of God, plead with the Father on behalf of those who lack that access.

And then, believers with access to prayed-for persons who do not know Christ, now stand ready to share the good news with those who are prepared to hear.

Why Pray for the Unsaved?

God wants us to pray for unsaved persons. Christ modeled prayer for yet-to-be-believers. The day before He was crucified, He said to the Father, “. . . I pray also for those who will believe in me through [the disciples’] message” (John 17:20). Paul was moved to pray for his fellow countrymen: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites, is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1).

God’s Word urges us to make “requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving . . . for everyone,” with the awareness that, “God our Savior . . . wants all [persons] to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:1–4). Prayer for unsaved persons is a high priority.

Prayer is the way Christ chooses to work in the world today. When the disciples worried they would fail if Jesus left them, He assured them that they would do “even greater things” than He had done, “because” He said, “I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name. . .” (John 14:12-13).

When Christ acts in response to our prayers, people get saved.

Why Prayer Evangelism Works

Not only is prayer evangelism biblical—it is also powerful! There are several reasons why combining prayer with evangelistic efforts produces great results.

Praying for others changes the person praying. Praying for others changed me. To be effective for God I needed to become more deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of others,

more aware of God's heart for them. What I found was that the more I prayed for yet-to-be-followers of Christ, the more I cared. The more I cared, the harder I prayed. The harder I prayed, the more I wanted God's best for them and the more effective I was in reaching out to them.

Prayer doesn't just change things. It changes people—especially the people who pray.

Prayer for others builds relationships. Most people who come to Christ come because they have a relationship with a bona fide Christian—a relationship in which the love of Christ is not only communicated but demonstrated. Intercession builds relational bridges—bridges of love that connect us to the persons we pray for and connect the persons we pray for to Christ.

Prayer gains access where hearts are closed. People may refuse to open a Bible. They may turn a blind eye to what can clearly be seen in the things God has made. They may brush off the testimony of believers and spurn the church. They may close their hearts and minds to the gospel. But they can't keep the Spirit from moving in their hearts—the Spirit who moves when God's people pray.

The unknown author of *Kneeling Christian* said it best, "Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers."

Prayer evangelism is simple, flexible, and do-able. I can pray for yet-to-be-followers of Christ whether I am alone, with my family, with a small group, or with my whole church. My prayers can focus on friends, family members, neighbors, or coworkers. I can pray at home, in a restaurant, at my workplace, or on the move. Prayer evangelism is simply a matter of talking to God about the "lost sheep" who are all around us, lost sheep that Christ wants to bring home. No

one can honestly say, "I don't know when, where, or how to pray." Opportunities are everywhere.

What Prayer Evangelism Requires

Prayer evangelism requires a burdened heart. Burden is one of our strongest motivations to pray for unsaved persons. Jesus' call to pray for harvesters arose out of His burden for "harassed and helpless" sheep. Paul's fervent prayer for fellow Israelites sprang from his "heart's desire . . . that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). Prayers without burden are lifeless and perfunctory.

When Salvation Army workers reported their failure to win souls, their leader William Booth proposed a two-word solution: "Try tears." Burdened hearts love the lost. Burdened hearts weep. Burdened hearts pray fervently and powerfully.

Prayer evangelism requires perseverance. Jesus applauded the shameless perseverance of the man who went to his neighbor to plead for bread to give his friend who had come at midnight. I am sure that he also applauded the persevering evangelistic prayers of George Mueller. Mueller began in 1844 to pray daily for five individuals who did not know the Lord. One by one they came to the Lord as Mueller persisted in prayer. The last of the five came to faith shortly after Mueller's death, more than 63 years after he first began to pray.

Mueller understood perseverance. He just didn't quit.

Our best evangelistic prayers are Scripture prayers. Since "no one can come to [Jesus] unless the Father . . . draws him," Scripture prayer means praying that the Father will draw them (John 6:44). Since the evil one snatches away gospel seed sown in the hearts of people, Scripture prayer means praying that they will "hear the word and understand it" (Matt. 13:23). Since the "god of this age" blinds the minds of unbelievers, it also means praying that they will be unblinded and will "see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor.

4:4). God loves to hear us pray His purposes back to Him.

Prayer evangelism is spiritual warfare. Satan—the strong man—is determined to keep his captives bound. Christ, who is able to bind the strong man, wants them set free. Warfare prayer, according to Wesley Duewel is, “joining Christ in driving out and defeating Satan and in setting his captives free” (Touch the World through Prayer, p. 208). We do the praying. Christ does the freeing. It’s not prayer that defeats Satan. It’s Christ who defeats Satan in response to our prayers. He binds the strong man and sets captives free.

Prayer evangelism requires the Word of God. It’s not enough just to pray. If there is to be a spiritual harvest, people need to hear the Word of God. “Faith comes by hearing” said Paul, and “hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). People can’t “hear” the word unless the Holy Spirit opens their ears and their hearts. Our prayers move the Spirit to do just that. And that word, God decrees, “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire” (Isa. 55:11). That’s a promise—God’s promise!

Where Prayer Evangelism Works

It works person to person. Norm began praying regularly for John, an annoying neighbor, who he didn’t like very much. The first thing God did as Norm prayed was to change his own heart. He began to feel genuine concern for John. In a “chance” meeting John reported that he had started going to church, and Norm responded, “Great! I want you to know that I have been praying for you.”

Next, John asked Norm to suggest a Christian book for him to read. Norm gave him More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell. Then, to Norm’s surprise, John accepted the Lord, joined the church, and was reunited with his divorced wife who had also come to know the Lord. Norm’s reaction: “I am grateful that through prayer God not only changed John’s life for eternity,

but He also changed me.”

It works family to family. A family placed the names of each of their neighbors in a jar. Each day at dinner they pulled out a name and prayed as a family for that neighbor. One week they pulled out the same neighbor’s name three days in a row. Wondering if God was sending them a message, they visited this home and found that the father had abandoned the family three days earlier. With this new awareness they prayed fervently for the needs of the abandoned family. Not long afterward the father returned home and reunited with his family. Prayer can change families.

It works in small groups. A prayer triplet is a small group in which each person presents the names of three persons he or she knows who have yet to follow Christ. The triplet members pray daily on their own for the nine persons named and come together once a week for mutual prayer. Any existing small group can choose to use prayer triplets. Group members agree to pray faithfully for those named, to report progress to each other, and to plan activities that might appeal to those being prayed for. God is pleased to hear our “agreeing” prayers.

It works in neighborhoods. A church in Bakersfield, CA, planted eight prayer cells in high-need apartment complexes near the church. As prayers mounted up, things began to change. Residents of the complexes began helping each other. An out-of-control boy got turned around. Drug dealers moved out. A prostitute was converted and gave up her lifestyle. Several of the residents started going to church. Eighteen young people became involved in the church’s youth ministries. A couple of new Bible studies started in the complexes. Ten persons made commitments to Christ. Crime rates came down so dramatically that the police asked the church to consider planting prayer cells in other neighborhoods.

It works in whole churches. A 1,200-member church in southern

California challenged its members to pray for family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers who were not yet followers of Christ. The church provided prayer guides and regularly encouraged outreach prayer in their worship services. As a result the church began to see a steady stream of new converts. At the end of one full year of outreach prayer they had recorded 430 new commitments to Christ. Most of them had been prayed for by name by church members. Their prayers were the key to effective evangelism.

It works in whole denominations. Some years ago the Evangelical Covenant Church, a fellowship of about 110,000 members, initiated a denomination-wide emphasis to pray by name for yet-to-be-followers of Christ. At the denomination's annual conference, members submitted the names of 394,000 persons who were being prayed for. One year later the denomination reported 11,600 decisions for Christ, which represents 11 new faith commitments for every 100 members. That is a conversion rate approximately seven times greater than the average in America. Prayer paved the way.

Rapid and Fearless Pace

Something happens when people pray for unsaved persons in their spheres of influence—something that wouldn't have happened if they hadn't prayed. I think E. M. Bounds had it right when he said, "The gospel moves at slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early, long, and late."

If that is true, then wouldn't it also be true to say that the gospel will move at rapid and fearless pace when God's people are at their prayers early, long, and late? I think so!

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