

Fasting as a Family



By Kim Butts

Fasting might seem like a somewhat strange topic to introduce into the family setting. In many cultures today, the regular practice of fasting is virtually unheard of – even in the Christian community. However, if you carefully consider Scripture in light of its living and active message for our lives today, you will see how relevant fasting is as we mature in our walk with Christ. If your family will endeavor to learn about and begin to practice this vital spiritual discipline as the Holy Spirit leads you, the Lord will honor your obedience.

Fasting can be defined as abstaining from food – doing without that which is essential for life in order to pray and draw closer to God. Fasting is also defined as the period of time during which one does without food. It is very important to note that the act of fasting, if not done in humility for the purpose of prayer and intimacy with God, serves no purpose. More time should be spent focusing on the Father. Fasting must be accompanied with the action of prayer.

My husband likes to call fasting the STP of prayer. (STP is an additive to boost the performance of your car's engine). Who

wouldn't like an extra boost to achieve a deeper level of communication with the Father? After sharing some of the main reasons why fasting is a scriptural practice for today, I will share some practical ways for your family to enter into this discipline together.

Here are some of the reasons why Christians fast today based upon Scripture. I would suggest taking one at a time and teaching your family. Then, check below to find some practical applications to practice and learn together. Wouldn't it be God honoring and powerful to raise up this next generation to seek His face with prayer and fasting? Can you imagine how His power will be poured out upon His people as they honor and obey Him in this way?

We fast:

1. Because Jesus indicates that we should. In Matthew 6:16-17, Jesus says, *"When you fast..."* He does not say, "If," which would imply that we may decide for ourselves. He says, "When," which clearly suggests that He intends for us to fast. Interestingly enough, in this same passage of Scripture (Matthew 6:1-18), He speaks of three acts of righteousness: *"When you give...when you pray... when you fast."* A strong, clear connection between prayer, fasting and giving is made. We will speak more about this later on.

2. When we desire to humble ourselves before God in order to draw closer to Him. Scripture says, *"Come near to God and he will come near to you"* (James 4:8). What is the best way to draw closer to Him? Prayer! Again, James says, *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up"* (James 4:10). Doing without that which is essential for life to focus on prayer and intimacy with the Lord, will draw you into a powerful relationship with Him. It is basically saying to the Father, "I desire to know You more personally, and I am willing to give up what is essential in order to do it." Daniel is a good example of fasting to humble himself before

God: *"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in *sackcloth and ashes"* (Daniel 9:3). * Sackcloth and ashes were customarily worn by the Jews as a visible symbol of fasting, mourning, repentance, etc. Jesus, however, said about fasting: *"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"* (Matthew 6:16-18). He also says, *"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 6:1).

3. As an act of repentance. There are several good examples in Scripture when God's people recognized their sins and turned back to the Lord in confession and repentance. *"Then Samuel said, 'Assemble all Israel at Mizpah and I will intercede with the LORD for you.' When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, 'We have sinned against the LORD.' And Samuel was leader of Israel at Mizpah"* (1 Samuel 7:5-6). We have already visited Daniel 9:3 to see that Daniel was pleading with the Lord and fasting on behalf of the Israelites because they had sinned against God. Here is his prayer: *"I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: 'O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land'"* (Daniel 9:4-6). Nehemiah, upon hearing of the broken-down walls in Jerusalem and the condition of the people, said, *"When I heard these things, I sat down and wept.*

For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said: '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'" (Nehemiah 1:4-7).

Of course we can confess and repent without fasting; however, Christians should always be open to the gentle urging of the Holy Spirit if He is directing us to fast as we prayerfully lay down our sins at the feet of Jesus for His cleansing and forgiveness. Remember that our forgiveness doesn't depend upon our outward acts, but upon the blood of Jesus Christ.

4. When we are interceding on behalf of someone else. David fasted and pleaded with God for the life of his son: *"David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground"* (2 Samuel 12:16). Esther, as she prepared to go to the king on behalf of the Jews, fasted for three days. She asked the Jews to fast and pray for her. She was not going to casually come into the presence of the king when the penalty for doing so could mean her death. Instead, she gathered as much prayer support as she could behind her (intercessors), and prayed for favor with the king. *"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish"* (Esther 4:16). Sometimes we are called to pray for others who are facing difficult or seemingly impossible circumstances. There may be times when the Holy Spirit prompts us to fast so that our prayer effort on their

behalf is strengthened.

5. When we are seeking wisdom or direction. The early Church spent much time in prayer and fasting as they sought the Lord's direction. When the Lord revealed that Barnabas and Saul were to be set apart as missionaries, they obediently did so. *"In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'* So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:1-3). Sometimes, when facing a difficult decision, or an uncertainty in life, fasting and prayer will help us to focus more clearly so that we can more readily discern the will of the Father.

6. When serving God. Many Christians are called by God to spend many hours each day interceding for others. A good biblical example is Anna: *"There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying"* (Luke 2:36-37). Perhaps the very reason for her service was to pray for the coming of Jesus. Because of her faithful service, the Lord allowed her to proclaim the existence and presence of Jesus Christ in the temple where she had given so many years of her life: *"Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem"* (Luke 2:38).

The All-Powerful God has chosen, to a certain extent, to limit the working of His power to the prayers of His people. We can serve Him as we respond to the urging of the Holy Spirit to intercede on behalf of people and situations. Sometimes the

situation may call for us to fast for a period of time. If we desire to serve the Lord, we need to be good listeners, so that we can obediently do the work He has for us to do in prayer. If we have prepared our hearts and minds, and practiced the disciplines of prayer and fasting, we will be ready to serve.

7. When facing a crisis. Many people have been fasting and praying lately for the United States. This nation is in moral and spiritual crisis. Therefore, large numbers of Christians have been led to fast and pray during various times – before elections, when Congress is voting on particular issues affecting morality, when major decisions are being considered by government leaders, for the Church to wake up and be revived, etc. There are many nations where this is the case, and the need for intercessors is great. As mentioned before, Esther faced a crisis when the Jews stood to be annihilated at the hands of King Xerxes. She determined to go to the king on behalf of the Jews, at the risk of death. Because she and the Jews had come before the Lord for three days of prayer and fasting, Esther was welcomed into the presence of the king to make her petition, and the Jews were saved. Perhaps your family, or people you know, are facing a crisis. Or, perhaps your nation is in a moral freefall. Christians all over the world are being martyred for their faith...this should grieve us into action. Is the Lord calling you to fasting and prayer?

8. When we need protection. *“There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, ‘The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.’ So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer”* (Ezra 8:21-23). These were the words of Ezra, who sought the Lord’s

protection for a large group of people.

A Word of Caution: Learn to Fast for the Right Reasons

The act of fasting can often lend itself to the very thing it is intended to guard against – pride. If an individual is not careful, the act of fasting can be used with and/or for the wrong intentions: to be seen by others, or to inflate one's own sense of "spirituality." If a person fasts, but carries on a life that is not pleasing to God while he does so, the Lord is not under any obligation to honor his prayers. In fact, He has some serious things to say about fasting for the wrong reasons: *"For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?"* (Isaiah 58:2-5)

Instead, God shares the fast that He prefers: *"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the*

LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail” (Isaiah 58:6-11).

Joel called for a rending of hearts and not of garments, such as the sackcloth and ashes that many Jews would dress in while fasting. *“Even now, declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly” (Joel 2:12-15).*

Wrong actions while fasting: prideful heart and attitude, fasting only to be seen by others (sackcloth and ashes, tearing clothes), harming or oppressing others, quarreling and strife, being unkind...doing anything that is opposite of what is mentioned below.

Right actions while fasting: fasting in secret, fasting with a humble heart, desiring to draw closer to God, spending the time in prayer, giving to others, serving, satisfying the needs of the oppressed, sharing food with the hungry, providing the homeless with shelter, clothing the naked, taking care of family, doing away with malicious talk.

Practical Ideas to Practice the Discipline of Fasting:

It is, first of all, important to know that God is not so concerned with the kind of fast you undertake, or the length of your fast, or by what you fast from (if it is different from food). Some people are unable to fast from food due to health reasons. Or, you may have young children in your family, who don't yet understand the purpose of fasting. The Lord is not a legalistic God – He is a loving Father. His only concern is that your heart is right before Him, and that your reasons for fasting are pure:

A. Drawing closer to God – as you fast, ask Him to reveal Himself to you in fresh, new ways. Spend time being quiet before Him. Worship the Lord with singing and the reading of Psalms. Ask Him to develop the fruit of the Spirit in your life...and then watch carefully to see how He works over the next several days and weeks. For example, if you asked Him to teach you patience...watch to see how your patience is tried. Or gentleness...see if He doesn't bring you opportunities to be more tender. After a time, come together as a family and talk about how you have come closer to God, and how He has drawn nearer to you.

B. Repentance – as you fast, confess to the Lord those things which you have done that are not pleasing to Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything that you might not have thought about. As you seek His forgiveness, be prepared also to receive His forgiveness.

C. Interceding for someone else – as you fast, bring before the Lord those people who have asked you to pray for them...or pray for the missionaries from your church...or for the children at school, or for a family who has lost their home due to a fire, etc. There are so many needs. Pray for a people group, for a nation, for your own nation, for your city, etc.

D. When you are seeking wisdom and direction – if you have a decision to make, or you need wisdom to make a correct choice, etc., try seeking the Lord's direction as you fast and

pray.

E. Serving God – Remember the right actions present in fasting? Maybe your family could help out a local ministry in some way. Volunteer together at a soup kitchen or food pantry to help feed the hungry. Write letters of encouragement or send cards to family members you haven't communicated with in a long time. Purchase or give away good used clothing for a homeless shelter. The list of needs is endless.

F. Facing a crisis – the next time there is a crisis in your family, or in someone else's...could you fast and pray for God to resolve the crisis?

G. Needing protection – from illness, from evil, from temptation? When one or more family members or someone else you know is in need of protection, are you willing to fast and pray?

ADDITIONAL IDEAS:

1. How much time does it take to prepare, eat and clean up after an average meal in your home? For example – if your family spends a collective time of 90 minutes for an average meal, try spending that same amount of time praying instead of eating. You will only be fasting from one meal, but you will have given yourselves a wonderful opportunity to draw near to God.

2. First Friday Fasts – this movement is sweeping the world. Thousands of Christians are fasting on the first Friday of every month for specific purposes. Perhaps you could choose to pray for missionaries, unsaved family and friends, or an unreached people group.

3. Has someone asked you to pray for them? Are you willing to give up a meal to do so?

4. Write down things that are very important to you – things

that could be “idols” in your lives. Could you do without those things for one day...one week...one month? Could you take the same amount of time you would have spent on television, or on golf, or on playing video games, etc. and spend that time in prayer? Fasting from “things” can be a very good spiritual discipline as well. This is also a good kind of “fast” for anyone in the family who has a medical condition which will not allow them to fast – or for very young children who have not yet grasped the significance of doing without food for spiritual reasons.

5. As a family, write down special foods or treats that you especially enjoy. Could you give them up for a period of time? For example – if your family enjoys pizza one night a week – could you give it up? Could you fast that meal instead? Or eat something else? Maybe bread and water? Could you donate the money you didn’t spend on the pizza to a soup kitchen, or buy some canned goods for the local food bank?

6. Try a 24 hour fast. Here is a good one for stretching your family in the area of fasting: Have a meal together on Friday night (or whatever night you choose). Then, fast until the next night’s meal. You will only miss the morning meal and the noon meal, but you will have fasted for 24 hours. Spend some time together devotionally several times during that 24-hour period. Or, give each family member a devotional assignment to do individually.

7. When you fast, consider giving: In the second century, Hemas said that the real fast is living a good life, pleasing to the Lord. He also spoke of a fast in which only bread and water are eaten and the money which otherwise would be spent is saved to be spent on charity. Try eating only bread and water for a meal, or even for a day. Then, donate the money you would have spent on food as a family to a missionary, local ministry, your church, or anything else God may lay upon your hearts.

It is my prayer that your family will have a life-changing experience as you practice the discipline of fasting. Please do not succumb to guilt or legalism as you learn. The enemy will try to dissuade and confuse you. Stay firmly rooted and grounded in the Word. *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up”* (James 4:7-8, 10).

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Prayers for a Peaceful Family



By Kim Butts

If your family is like most, you have at least from time to time fallen prey to the frantic pace of busy lifestyles and the demands of work, home and even church activities. We live in unsettled times. Our children are bombarded from all sides with the realities of war, terrorism, school violence, immorality and confusion. Have you wondered if it is possible for your family to settle into a peaceful, joy-filled existence that honors the Lord and serves Him instead of submitting to the pressures of the world? The Father has a prayer plan to help you do just that! In His lovingkindness, He has enabled us to be victorious in the battle with the world. He has given us His powerful Word to ward off the temptations and torment of all that is not of Him: *“Take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...”* (Eph. 6:17-18). This is God’s exhortation that the battle is a spiritual one and can only be fought in His strength, depending upon His Word and prayer.

Below you will find scriptural prayers for a peaceful household. Some words of caution are necessary, however, before you determine that your home will never see strife again as the Lord hears and begins to answer. Remember that you *will* face trials, and there will still be times of struggle. God is completely in control, and because He is shaping and molding us increasingly into the image of His Son, there will be times when peace seems far from your household.

The key is how you face those trials and deal with your struggles as a family united in Christ Jesus. The worldly ones are watching to see if you will crumble, but what a victory for the Lord when you stand firm and walk through difficulty and discord with the calm assurance of a faith-filled life.

Maintaining peace in the midst of turmoil is possible as our faith level rises to meet the powerful possibilities of God, even when we cannot see into our future: *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”* (Heb. 11:1). Believing that God is able to reach into our circumstances and give victory as we call upon Him in prayer increases our ability to live peaceful, quiet lives in all godliness and holiness in the midst of troubling times.

Reflect on the following passage of Scripture: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, **he must believe and not doubt**, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does”* (Jas. 1:2-8).

We will not always know how we should pray, and at those times, it is always the best course to ask God for His wisdom and counsel in the situation. If you try to handle the tough times on your own, your strength will not be sufficient for you and your family to maintain peace. Teach your children that whenever they face difficulties or stress, they must go immediately to prayer, asking the Father for His wisdom in the situation. Trying to figure it out on their own will only add to their anxiety and bring tension into your family.

Remember always that you can have complete confidence in coming before the throne of the Lord Almighty: *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him"* (1 John 5:14-15). It is only possible to have full assurance in asking when you go to His Word, because that is where His perfect will is contained. If you can't find what you want to ask God in the pages of His Word, you need to consider that perhaps you are not asking according to His will.

"And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" (John 14:13). We should always ask in Jesus' name. His Name is powerful. We also need to check our motives, and the way we are asking. Always think about whether or not the answer to your request will bring honor to God, and that your request is not just a selfish appeal. Perhaps the Lord will answer in a way you do not expect, because whenever the Father answers a prayer, it is so that He will receive the glory rather than man. It is important that when you ask God to bring peace into your household you do not doubt that He will answer your request. The Lord considers doubting as being double-minded.

Don't let all of this instruction discourage you from prayer. It should, in fact, energize you and excite you about praying for peace in your household! For example: Jesus, in Your Name, we ask for the peace that transcends all understanding to fall upon our household, guarding our hearts and minds, so that You will receive glory when we do not fall in the midst of stressful times. We thank You for hearing and answering our prayer as we stand believing upon the promises of Your holy Word. (See Phil. 4:7).

Here are your battle plans for peace in your household:

- Have faith, believing and not doubting that God is able

to defeat Satan and bring peace into your home (Jas. 1:6-8).

- Determine to stand firm even in the midst of trials – persevere (Jas. 1:2-4).
- Put on and use the armor that God has given you, especially the sword, which is His holy Word (Eph. 6:10-18).
- Ask God for wisdom whenever you lack it (Jas. 1:5).
- Be faithful to obey all that He asks of you as you live by His holy Word.
- Have confidence to ask according to His will, knowing that you will have what you have asked of Him (1 John 5:14-15). If you pray His Word, you will always be praying in His will!
- Ask in the name of Jesus so that the Son may bring glory to the Father (John 14:13).
- Receive with thankfulness all that the Lord has for your family.

Pray the Blessings and the Promises of Peace Over Your Family Blessings

Mark 10:16 says, *“And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.”* Parents, if this is the example of Jesus, we should all be gathering our children to us and praying blessings into their lives daily! Here are some blessings of peace to pray over your family:

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24-26).

May your ways be pleasing to the Lord, so that even your enemies will live at peace with you (Prov. 16:7).

May you lie down and sleep in peace, for the Lord alone makes you dwell in safety (Psa. 4:8).

May the God of Peace crush the enemy under your feet and the

grace of Jesus be with you (Rom. 16:20).

May you stand firm with the belt of God's truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of the Lord's righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace – God's holy Word (Eph. 6:14-15).

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20-21).

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Pet. 1:2).

Prayers of Promise

Lord, we receive into our household the strength You give to Your people. Thank You for blessing us with Your peace (Psa. 29:11).

Father, help this family to turn from evil and do good. Enable us to seek peace and to pursue it always (Psa. 34:14).

Holy One, we love Your Word and claim Your promise that we will have great peace, and that nothing can make us stumble (Psa. 119:165).

King of Kings, thank You that You have left Your peace in our hearts, and that this is not the world's idea of peace. Because of You, our hearts will not be troubled, and we will not be afraid (John 14:27).

Lord Almighty, we know that in this world there will be trouble, but we give You thanks that we can take heart in knowing that You have overcome the world so that we may have peace in the midst of it (John 16:33).

Holy Spirit, we submit our minds to Your control, so that You will give life and peace (Rom. 8:6).

Lord of Lords, give us strength to make every effort to do the things that lead to peace and to the building up of our family (Rom. 14:19).

God of Hope, fill us with joy and peace as we trust in You, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

Father, help us, as a family, to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

Lord, please give us strength not to be anxious about anything. Help us to remember in every circumstance to pray with thanksgiving so that Your peace, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Help us to keep our focus only upon whatever is lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy. As a family, we want to do only the things we learn, receive and hear from You so that Your peace will be with us (Phil. 4:6-9).

Gracious God, give us the ability to allow only the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, because we know that as members of Your body we are called to peace. Help us to be a thankful family (Col. 3:15).

Father, give us a deep desire to make requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. We know that this is good and pleases You, Lord Jesus, because You want all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

Lord, purify my children's hearts as they call upon You. Give them courage to flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace (2 Tim. 2:22).

Righteous Father, thank You for the promise that the discipline we must impose upon our children will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace for them if they will receive the training. So we also ask that our children will, with willing hearts, receive discipline without taking offense, recognizing the opportunity to learn and grow from it (Heb. 12:11).

Father, Your Word says that peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness and that discord cannot produce conduct that pleases You. Help us to be a peacemaking family (Jas. 3:18).

Lord, Your Word promises that we can look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. Since we are looking forward to this, help us to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with You (2 Pet. 3:13-14).

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Being Still in a Busy House



By Kim Butts

If your home is like most, life can be hectic. You often wonder, "What did I accomplish today?" Perhaps there were constant interruptions which kept you from things you were determined to complete, and your "to do" list got longer instead of shorter. Or, it could be that you spent much of your time chasing after little ones, or driving children from activity to activity. Maybe you are determined at the end of each day that you will spend your time more wisely so that you can accomplish more tomorrow. If this sounds familiar, then take a minute to stop and reflect on these questions:

- Did my activities today accomplish anything for the Lord?
- Did my striving today please the Father?
- Did anything I focused on today draw me closer to the heart of God?
- Did I become more like Jesus today than I was yesterday?
- Was I a good representative of Jesus Christ today? Did I reflect His character to my family, or to my co-workers?
- Was I obedient to do the things I know He wants me to be doing?

Have the other members of your family answer these questions also. If you are honest, this list probably caused you to stop and think. If your answer to any or all of these questions

was, "No," then it is time to re-evaluate what is important.

If in "doing" you are not accomplishing the plans and purposes of God, perhaps you are not spending enough time "being" the person He wants you to be. If our personal lives and the lives of our families do not reflect His glory through peace and joy, then we are out of balance spiritually, and most likely emotionally and physically as well. What would it take for your family to be different enough from the culture to live out who you are in Jesus Christ the way He has instructed us so clearly in His Word?

I want you to know that I'm writing this knowing that change must take place in my own life too. I'm too busy to be still, and yet, I must learn to "be" in the presence of Christ. My striving is separating me from His Presence – the one thing I desire most. So, together, let's examine how we might wrestle our busyness to the ground and hold it down until it quits struggling to "do" more! We must learn to "be" more for Christ. Then all of our activity will flow naturally out of the overflow of our peace-filled, joyful, holy and blessed lives. Oh, how I long to function from the heart of Jesus and not from the drivenness of "doing" things for His kingdom. I believe we will all do more to advance the cause of Jesus by sitting at His feet rather than careening through life striving to accomplish more and more. How the enemy must be sitting back laughing in glee at God's people surging through life rather than walking in constant awareness of Christ in us, "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

If we wish to live the way of Jesus Christ, then we must reflect upon the fact that nowhere in Scripture do we see Jesus in a hurry. The Son of God did not rush around. He did not look for more things to do. His example was one of patiently waiting upon the Father in prayer so that He could get His instructions for every step He took and every word He spoke. Is that how you and your family members live your lives? My guess is that if I were to live as Jesus did,

focused upon His Word and connected to the Lord continually in the two-way love relationship that is prayer, I would accomplish more in less time, and be more contented. How about you?

Learning from Mary

We've all heard the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42, but let's take a closer look at the activities of these two sisters during this dinner gathering. Martha definitely had the gift of hospitality. She opened her home to Jesus and His entourage, then cooked and served a meal for all of them. However, Scripture says that Martha was "distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." She came to Jesus with the complaint, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Most of us are sympathetic toward the cause of Martha rather than aspiring to live our lives more like her sister, who sat at Jesus' feet with her eyes fixed upon His face – taking in every word He spoke. When Martha objected to what she perceived as laziness on Mary's part, Jesus gently rebuked her and said, "Martha, Martha...you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Ouch! Like Martha, I am often distracted by all of the things that need to be done. Like Martha, I am continually worried and upset about many things! Sitting at the Lord's feet sounds wonderful. It also sounds like something that should be done when one has time left over, and yet Jesus told Martha that just being in His presence was better than cooking in the kitchen, even if she was doing it for Him.

Interestingly, a little over a week before the crucifixion, a similar dinner party took place. The location was once again at the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha in honor of Jesus. You can read the full account in John 12:1-8. Scripture states that Martha once more was the one to serve the meal while Lazarus reclined at the table with Jesus and the disciples.

However, this time Mary's role was different: "Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume" (John 12:3).

Let's look at the significance of Mary's simple act of devotion:

- **It was an extravagant act** – worth a year's wages, according to Judas Iscariot, who voiced objection to what he viewed as a waste of money on Mary's part. He asserted that the money should have been spent on the poor instead.
- **It was an unusual act** – Mary poured the perfume on Jesus' feet rather than His head, which was the usual custom. She also wiped His feet with her hair. Respectable women did not take down their hair in public.
- **It was a humble act** – generally, servants attended to the feet of visitors.
- **It was an obedient act** – Mary most likely had other plans for her expensive perfume; however, she felt compelled to offer this act of service. Her motivation could have been from gratitude. Jesus had recently raised her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. However, Jesus' response to Judas indicates that she was acting out of simple obedience to the Lord's purposes: "Leave her alone...It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of My burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me" (John 12:7-8).

Mary had no way of knowing that the crucifixion was just a few days away, and yet she acted as the Lord intended her to. She could have selfishly clung to her perfume, or she could have had a servant pour it on Jesus' feet. However, Mary did not refuse God because she had been spending time getting to know the character of her Messiah. Mary wasn't so busy "doing" that she missed the importance of "being."

King David understood this well. He wrote, "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple" (Psalm 27:4). He understood the importance of being. I often ask the Lord for strength to keep doing more and more for Him. Rarely do I humble myself before Him and truly seek His beautiful heart just for the sake of knowing Him more deeply. I am a busy kind of person. It's against my nature to sit still for too long of a time. And yet, my Lord says it is the most important discipline of all. So, I am determined to learn Mary's lesson of quieting my spirit, ceasing my busyness and just breathing in His loveliness.

Be Still

Being still does not require any activity on our part. Stillness is enjoying the presence of the Father without asking Him for anything. It is quieting our spirits, our minds and our emotions and simply resting.

- "But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Psalm 131:2). A little child walks trustingly beside his mother, knowing that she will take care of all of his needs. This is the kind of trust we need to place in the Lord, casting all of our cares upon Him and being filled with peace.
- "Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7a). Is it difficult for you to quiet your spirit...to just sit and soak in His beautiful presence?
- "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10). Cease your striving and acknowledge the God who has conquered through His Son, Jesus Christ. He is King of heaven and of earth. Worship Him!
- "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still"

(Exodus 14:14). You may ask, "What if I have lots to do – deadlines and responsibilities? How can I take time to just sit and do nothing?" You can take time if it is "divine" nothing. When the Israelites were being pursued by Pharaoh's army they allowed themselves to be overwhelmed by their circumstance instead of filled with faith. They panicked and blamed their situation upon Moses. Although he must have been greatly irritated at their lack of faith, Moses calmed their fears and told them to set aside their fear. He urged them to let God deal with what seemed to be an impossible situation. Do you have an impossible situation to set aside today? Be still and let the Lord fight for you.

- "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). Does peace characterize the climate of your home today? Trust the Father without doubt or wavering and watch Him transform your family.

- "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, He is my fortress, I will never be shaken...Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him" (Psalm 62:1-2, 5).

Listen and Obey What You Hear

It is impossible to do what the Lord desires unless we take time to listen to Him. We can only do this by being still and ceasing our busy activity-filled lives. Sometimes all God wants to speak to us are words of love and affirmation. Many times He may require nothing of you but to sit and enjoy His company. However, it is a very clear command from God that we are to listen to His Son: "Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!'" (Mark 9:7). It is implied that listening involves obeying. Truly hearing God is to be obedient to what He says: "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22).

Jesus expressed confidence that those who will be still before

Him will live lives that are filled with divine “doing” that is birthed out of divine “being”: “My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27-28). Your children are watching how you live your life. Are they learning the lifestyle of Martha...or Mary? “...Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42).

Kim Butts is the co-founder and Executive Director of Harvest Prayer Ministries. She has authored several books, some with husband, Dave (1953-2022), including: [The Praying Family](#) and [Pray Like the King](#)

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**Are You Ready to Be the
Answer to the Prayers You
Pray?**



By Kim Butts

It happens to all of us! We see a homeless person, come upon the scene of an accident...or hear of a family in financial need. Immediately, we may think to pray in each of these situations, "Lord, please help that person. Send someone to meet that need!" What if God wants to use you and your family to be the answer to your prayer? Are you prepared to back up your prayers with action if the Lord directs? I believe that our Father wants us to learn how to be the hands and feet of His Son to hurting or lost people.

Since Jesus lives in us we should consider as we pray what He would do to meet this need or help this person if He were physically present – because He is! He is physically present in the midst of every situation because He is incarnate – in us! Could this thought and realization change the way you respond to the prayers that you pray? Instead of thinking that you have done the right thing by praying and then moving along to the next activity of your day...do you need to take your prayer to the next level by listening to what the voice of the Spirit speaks to your heart? How many opportunities have we missed because we have not acted in response to the impulse of the Spirit urging us to make Jesus known in the midst of lives or situations?

I believe that many prayers we pray can be answered quickly and with amazing results if we become better listeners to the voice of the Holy Spirit. If we could learn to change our

mindset as we pray, I believe we would be used of God in mighty ways to be His agents of transformation. Can you imagine how fulfilling and exciting your lives would be if your family would continually wait upon the Lord to see how He may want to use you to be the answer to prayers that you pray?

Let me give you an example of the first time this amazing reality became a part of my prayer life. When I was a new Christian, everything about the Lord was a wonderful surprise. Fortunately, that hasn't changed over the years! I remember being in a small group of women studying the Word together and learning to pray. One young woman had three small boys and a husband who was working in another state to support them. He only made it home for a weekend every few months. There was very little money, but Bertie was always joyful. Her prayer one evening (we met in her home, as she couldn't afford childcare) was for her husband to be able to come home for Christmas, and that they could have a wonderful celebration together as a family. We prayed for the Lord's provision and for this husband and father to be able to come home in time to celebrate with his family.

As we were praying I had an overwhelming sense that I was supposed to do something for this family. I shared my thoughts with another friend, Nancy, and we decided that between us we could help in this situation and began to make some plans. The first thing we felt led to do was to leave our friend, Bertie, some money, so we left an anonymous envelope on the seat of her car. We had a strong sense that we weren't to reveal to her who had left this gift. She tearfully told our small group during the next meeting about how she had been worried about not having enough grocery money for the week. Imagine her surprise and joy to find the envelope, which amazingly (but not to the all-knowing God) had the exact amount of money she needed! She made the statement, "God knew exactly what I needed and He provided it!" Nancy and I were astonished that not only had God used us to be givers in response to our

prayers for her, but He had arranged it so that we would meet her need *exactly*! We were now hooked into the fact that the Lord could use us to do something we had been praying about.

The story doesn't stop there! When we heard that Bertie wanted to go visit her husband for a weekend in case he was unable to come home over Christmas, the two of us quickly offered to take turns staying at her house to take care of the boys. While she was gone, we took them to get a Christmas tree. After it was set up in their house, we found out that they had no ornaments or other decorations, so we got paper, markers, glitter and glue and the five of us started decorating and singing Christmas carols. Paper snowflakes were hung all over the house and popcorn strings with homemade ornaments adorned the tree. The boys had a wonderful time and were so excited for their mother to come home. We prayed with them for their father to be able to come home too. Imagine the surprised faces when *both* of their parents came through the door! What a wonderful reunion this family had, and a very special Christmas! My heart was full, and I determined to spend my life listening to the voice of the Spirit instructing me how to help people. Every act of obedience has been profoundly life-transforming for me.

This is a very simple example, and you may say, "We don't need to pray before we help people." Very true, but we are often in a hurry and may miss opportunities as the Lord puts them in our paths. May I suggest a short prayer that your family can lift up each and every day? "Lord, show us the people You want us to help or encourage today. Lead us to those who are hurting or in need and we will trust you for the means to do something about it." I can promise you that your loving Father will answer if you will listen and obey. He will trust you with small things first and then He will stretch you to be obedient in His bigger plans and purposes.

Being the answer to the prayers of others is one way to be used by God. Being the answer to our own prayers is an

astonishingly powerful privilege. There may be situations in the lives of people you know, or perhaps He will choose to use your prayer to work in the lives of those you may never meet. Prayer is a great mystery, but God has chosen to use us to be His agents of answered prayer. Knowing this makes prayer such an honor. It encourages us to pray more and to listen better! We should always be ready to stand in the gap when the Lord places a burden or need on our hearts. He may not always use you in certain situations, but because of your prayers, He may have touched the heart of others to respond. A good prayer when those you are praying for are far away is, "Lord, would you put one of Your willing servants into the path of this person today who can be a blessing to them?" The family of God is extensive and worldwide. He will use every heart that is willing to listen to His voice.

An Example from Scripture

Nehemiah is probably one of the best examples of someone who was intimately connected to the Lord through prayer, and who was used to be the answer to the prayers he prayed. You can read his entire story in the book of Nehemiah. He paid attention to what was going on around him, and knew how to pray what was on the heart of God. He was humble, always giving God the credit for the work he was given to do on behalf of the nation of Israel. Nehemiah was obedient to the things God called him to do. Twice, in the book of Nehemiah, he refers to what the Lord had "put" on his heart: *"I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem"* (Nehemiah 2:12a). *"So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families"* (Nehemiah 7:5).

Some practical ways to prepare

God works through His prepared servants. Here are some ways (many inspired by Nehemiah) to teach your family how to yield

themselves to the Lord's plans and purposes as they pray – individually and corporately:

- **Learn how to pray God's heart:** Praying just for the sake of making a religious noise, is not God's intent for prayer. Praying to get something from God is also not God's plan. Studying the Word and paying attention to the world around you is a key. See what God is busy doing and what He desires us to do as His people. As we pray those things that are close to His heart, He is pleased to answer! We know He wants us to love Him with all of our hearts, and to love others as we love ourselves. He wants us to pray for the lost and that His people will experience revival. We know that He wants unity in the body of Christ...and you and your family can probably add many others to this list.
- **Humbly expect and be willing for God to use you to be the answer to your prayers:** If your heart never expects God to answer, there is literally no point in praying. James states, *"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man [or woman, or child] should not think he will receive anything from the Lord..."* (James 1:6-7). When you pray in the Name of Jesus, believing that He has heard and will answer, you will see Him do amazing things – sometimes in and through you! Always remember that the ultimate goal of answered prayer is to bring glory to the Lord: *"And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father"* (John 14:13).
- **Be a good listener:** It is important to spend time being quiet before the Lord. If we are doing all of the talking, we won't be able to hear Him speak. *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth"* (Psalm 46:10). I wonder how many instructions and promptings we miss because we don't take the time to learn to distinguish

the voice of the Shepherd! *“My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me”* (John 10:27).

- **Be obedient:** When you sense that you have a word from the Lord and it agrees with the Bible, act upon it. God is not going to give us more than we can handle, and He will likely start us out slowly. As you are faithful in the small things, He will trust you with bigger issues. Maybe He will impress upon your heart to write a note to someone, or to make an encouraging phone call. If you didn't actually hear directly from the Lord, you are still doing something that is like the character of Jesus living within you.

Encourage and mentor others to be willing to be the answer to the prayers they pray. Help your children and others to learn how to be the hands and feet of Jesus. People need to be stretched a bit sometimes.

If your family will determine to make a lifestyle of listening to the Lord as you pray together so that He can use you to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the lives of others, you will experience blessing upon blessing. God has blessed you so that you might be a blessing to others, as He used Abraham in a similar manner (see Genesis 12:1-3). As your family prayer life grows, continue to remember that Jesus, who lives in you, will show you how to be the answer to many of the prayers you pray.

Kim Butts is the co-founder and Executive Director of Harvest Prayer Ministries. She has authored several books, some with husband, Dave (1953-2022), including: [The Praying Family](#) and [Pray Like the King](#)

Prepare Your Heart for His Coming (A Scriptural Prayer Guide for December)

By Kim Butts

Sometimes, in the rush of the Christmas season, we do not always focus our thoughts, our hearts and our minds on Christ, the very reason we celebrate. As you, your family and your church look toward the celebration of the birth of Christ (the first advent—His first coming), take time each day to focus on the One we long to see face to face. Set apart a time of devotion alone or together in community, to anticipate and await with delight the coming of the Christ Child—God’s own Son! Don’t allow Him to get lost in the shuffle of activity—even as you physically prepare to celebrate.

Take time to prepare your heart for His coming . . . what is He calling you to do . . . how is He calling you to live for Him? These daily Scriptural prayers will help you to remain focused on Christ, and deepen your celebration—far beyond physical gifts, delicious food, or decorations. Instead, adorn your hearts with adoration. Take the time to prepare for His coming through Christmas and then to celebrate His Coming through the end of the month as you prepare to step into a new year!

[Click here to receive a FREE PDF version of this December](#)

[Prayer Guide!](#)

DECEMBER 1

“Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem” (Zephaniah 3:14)!

Lord, prepare our hearts to rejoice! We want to be glad today, and to rejoice with all of our hearts. May we be filled with joy because we seek You and because You have saved us. Help us to sing and give You thanks as we wait for the coming of the Christ child. (See also: Psalm 13:5; 1 Chronicles 16:10; Psalm 28:7b)

DECEMBER 2

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:1).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be set on things above because we have been raised with Jesus! We have new life because He came here as a baby, lived a sinless life, died on the cross and rose again!

Help us to set our hearts on things above as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 3

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

Lord, prepare our hearts to seek You! You have promised that we will find You when we seek after You with all of our

hearts. We seek after You today, Lord, as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Deuteronomy 4:29; Psalm 27:8, 119:10, 58)

DECEMBER 4

“But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you” (1 Samuel 12:24).

Lord, prepare our hearts to serve You. Help us to consider the great things You have done for us. We want to do everything for You alone, and do it faithfully as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Colossians 3:23-24).

DECEMBER 5

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6).

Lord, prepare our hearts to have a spirit of unity with other believers. Help us to have a spirit of unity so that we might glorify You and share everything we have with others. We want to glorify You, Father, in our family and in the Body as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Acts 4:32)

DECEMBER 6

“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him” (2 Chronicles 16:9a).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be fully committed to You! May we be completely focused upon You so that You can strengthen us as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: 1 Kings 8:61)

DECEMBER 7

"I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders" (Psalm 9:1).

"I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever" (Psalm 86:12).

Lord, prepare our hearts to praise You! You are worthy of all of our praise. May we tell of Your wonders and glorify Your name as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 8

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be pure. Help us to run away from sinful desires. Give us the ability to call on You out of a pure heart that seeks after faith, love and peace. Keep us from foolish arguing. Help us to desire pure hearts as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Psalm 51:10; Proverbs 22:11; 2 Timothy 2:22-23)

DECEMBER 9

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be humble. Help us to learn from You because Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light. May others see Your gentleness and humility in us as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 10

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6)!

Lord, prepare our hearts to trust in You. We rejoice in You

because we trust in Your holy name. May we always lean on Your understanding instead of our own so that our hearts will not be troubled. Help us to acknowledge You in all of our ways so that You will make our paths straight. You are our strength and shield as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Psalm 28:7a, 33:21; John 14:1)

DECEMBER 11

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be sincere. Thank You for cleansing us from sin so that we can draw near to You. Help us to truly desire to know You better, and deepen our faith as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 12

“He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD” (Psalm 112:7).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be steadfast. Even in hard times, help us to trust You without question. Because our hearts can stand firm, we will sing and make music to You as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Psalm 57:7, 108:1)

DECEMBER 13

“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (Psalm 62:8).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be prayerful. We call upon You, Father, because You are our refuge—our place of safety. Sometimes we don't even know what to pray, but You have given us the Holy Spirit to help us. Teach us to listen to You, and to pray the things that are on Your heart. Give us a spirit of prayer as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See

also: Psalm 119:145; Romans 8:26-27)

DECEMBER 14

“Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name” (Psalm 86:11).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be undivided so that we will fear Your name. Father, would You put a new spirit in us? Remove our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh. We will be Your people and You will be our God as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Ezekiel 11:18-20)

DECEMBER 15

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be wise. We want to learn from You. Help us to listen to Your instruction so that all of our days will be pleasing to You as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Proverbs 16:23, 23:12, 15, 19, 26, 24:32)

DECEMBER 16

“Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart” (Psalm 119:34).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be obedient. We ask for understanding so that we can obey You. Help us to learn Your Word so well that we will not sin against You. We want to obey You as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Psalm 119:11)

DECEMBER 17

“May my heart be blameless toward your decrees, that I may not be put to shame” (Psalm 119:80).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be blameless in our Christian walk. Help others to see that we follow You in all of the circumstances of life as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 18

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Proverbs 139:23-24).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be searchable. Father, may we always be willing to have You look closely at our lives. We need Your help to get rid of anything offensive. We need Your help to replace our anxious thoughts with thoughts that are pleasing to You. Lead us in the way everlasting as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 19

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” (Colossians 3:15).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be peaceful. Your peace goes beyond anything we can understand because You do not give like the world gives. Thank You for allowing our hearts to be at peace because of the power of the One You sent to us—the Counselor, the Holy Spirit. May our anxious thoughts be replaced by peaceful ones as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Proverbs 14:30; John 14:25-27; Philippians 4:6-7)

DECEMBER 20

“My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart” (Psalm 7:10).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be upright. You have said that light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in

heart. May Your light shine upon us as we rejoice in You! We take refuge in You because You are our shield. You are God Most High. May we be counted among those whose hearts are upright as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Psalm 125:4, 97:11, 32:11, 36:10, 64:10)

DECEMBER 21

“My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end” (Psalm 119:112).

Lord, prepare our hearts to keep Your decrees. We want to walk in all Your ways. Help us to keep Your commands by seeking after You only! Turn our hearts toward You, Father, as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Psalm 119:2, 36; 1 Kings 8:58)

DECEMBER 22

“All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast” (Proverbs 15:15).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be cheerful. May we always find our joy in You, even in the midst of difficult times. Father, help our hearts to have a continual feast as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Proverbs 17:22)

DECEMBER 23

“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well” (Luke 12:29-31).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be free from worry. We know that worry will take our minds off of You, so help us to seek Your kingdom for all that we need. You are our provider as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Ecclesiastes 11:10)

DECEMBER 24

“He answered: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be loving. There is no other like You. Your Word says that to love You with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind is the most important thing. We are also to love one another deeply, from our hearts. Father, help us to love our neighbors as ourselves as we wait for the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Matthew 22:37-38; Mark 12:32-33; 1 Peter 1:22-23)

DECEMBER 25

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Lord, prepare our hearts to shine Your light just as You have come to shine among us! You have given us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God! May our hearts shine brightly in a dark world as we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 26

“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” (Galatians 4:6-7).

Lord, prepare our hearts to reflect the Spirit of Your Son. We can call You our Abba Father, because of Jesus. We belong to You as sons and daughters, not slaves. May we reflect the Spirit of Jesus to everyone we meet, as we celebrate the

coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 27

“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 3:3).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be faithful. Strengthen us out of Your glorious riches with power through Your Spirit so that Jesus will dwell in our hearts through faith. May love and faithfulness never leave us as we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: Ephesians 3:14-19)

DECEMBER 28

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

Lord, prepare our hearts to tell others about You! There are so many hungry people out there asking questions. Give us boldness to tell others what You have done in our lives. Help us to always be prepared to reach people for Jesus as we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 29

“Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts” (Isaiah 26:8).

Lord, prepare our hearts to desire You. We wait for You, as we walk in Your ways. We will continually desire Your name as we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.

DECEMBER 30

“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless

and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones” (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be strong. We want to be blameless and holy in Your presence when Jesus returns. Please encourage us and strengthen us in every good deed and word as we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child. (See also: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; Psalm 27:14)

DECEMBER 31

“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

Lord, prepare our hearts to be turned toward family. Will You draw us together as a family (in our homes and in our churches) so that we will become a people prepared for You? Help us to be clean and pure before You as we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child and as we step into a new year of service in Your kingdom!

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

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