

3 Crucial Alignments to Pray Effectively for Breakthrough

Editor's Note: This is part 1 of a two-part series.

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much" (James 5:16b).

"Prayer is so much more than handing a list of requests to God. If you want earth-shaking results, you will be required to travail until heaven's plan becomes a reality on earth.

"If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that our prayers frequently degenerate into little more than religious incantations and shallow platitudes spoken out of a sense of religious duty. Yet, the Bible compares prayer with the travail of childbirth. It is, in essence, a passionate activity." (Excerpt from article "Pray Until Something Happens" by Doug Stringer, published in *Charisma* magazine, March 1999)

Today, more than ever, we need to be a people who pray effectively. As our cities, our nation and our world face crisis and disaster, we must be a church who can pray to bring breakthrough. We need breakthrough for our own lives, for the lives of those around us and for the lost in our cities.

Hitting the Mark

Effective prayer is prayer that hits its mark. As a praying people, we want to be like archers who shoot out their arrows and hit the bullseye. But how do we become effective in prayer? A lot of people pray, but is all prayer effective? Do our prayers avail much, as the Scripture says? Let's face it: Sometimes when we pray, it feels as though our prayers hit a brick wall.

James 5:17-18 says, "Elijah was a man subject to natural

passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.”

Sounds like pretty effective prayer! What is it that the Lord is trying to tell us in these passages?

The message to us here is that we are no different than Elijah. Elijah was a man with a nature just like ours, and we have a nature just like his. Elijah was anointed and appointed by God. We, too, have an anointed and appointed calling from God. But how many of us believe this? How many of us recognize this fact and walk in it, praying the prayer of faith accordingly? When we begin to recognize who we are and our place within the body of Christ, we can begin to function in the realm of effective prayer.

Proper Alignment

A few years ago, I wrote a commentary called “godly alignment” for a new Bible released by Thomas Nelson Publishers called The Maximized Living Bible, which includes commentaries from Dr. Ben Lerner and other Christian leaders on subjects such as spiritual fitness, physical fitness, health, nutrition, financial fitness and stress management.

Later, as I was seeking the Lord at the close of 2006 and trying to get a sense for the coming year, I kept hearing that same word over and over again: Alignment, alignment, alignment.

I believe three areas of alignment are of utmost importance in our lives: Kingdom Alignment, Personal Alignment, and Body Alignment.

1. The first, kingdom alignment, is about proper alignment to the kingdom of God and its principles. God’s kingdom should be our first priority. Matthew 6:33 says, “But

seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you." The most important thing is not the building of our own kingdoms, but the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. As I always say, "While men reached for thrones to build their own kingdoms, Jesus reached for a towel to wash men's feet." It's not about our own agendas, but about proper alignment to God's kingdom. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He taught them to focus on the kingdom. "Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Proper kingdom alignment is essential for effective prayer.

2. Personal alignment is getting in right order with the Father, connecting spirit to spirit with our Creator. Our hearts must be right before Him. David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). When our hearts are rightly aligned to God, we will begin to have spiritual authority in our prayers. We will be able to pray effectively and see God move on our behalf. Sin in our lives will keep our prayers from being effective. Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear." That feeling of hitting a brick wall with our prayers often occurs because we need to do business with God and get our hearts in a right position before Him, confessing our sins and experiencing His forgiveness.
3. Finally, proper body alignment is essential. Ephesians 4:16 tells us that when each part of the body is rightly fit together, the whole body functions better. The King James Version calls it "the effectual working" of each part. Each of us has a function and a gifting within the body of Christ. When we are in proper alignment within the body, everything works as it should. I have seen this lesson in action when I go to visit the

chiropractor. At times, I have problems with my knee. My knee problems cause my hip to get out of place, and pretty soon, I feel chronic pain in my back. At that point, I need to go in for an alignment. When I get my spine back in alignment, it causes everything else to feel liberated. The same is true in the body of Christ. When one part is out of alignment, the whole body is affected. It takes the whole body being rightly fit together for the effectual working of each part. When we are functioning in unity, we see great breakthrough for the kingdom of God! {eoa}

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