

Keys to All-Night Prayer That Releases God's Power

"Pray all night?" you ask. "How can anyone pray all night?"

It's easy. Bonnie and I discovered long ago that although prayer is the calling of God to all believers, it is our decision whether we respond or not. Once we make the commitment to seek God's face in prayer, He honors our decision by empowering us with a special outpouring of His grace, strength and physical stamina.

Prayer has always been a foundation of our ministry. Ever since the beginning, the Lord has impressed upon me the necessity to fast and pray on a regular basis.

As a result, I have witnessed God's miracle-working power operate in many nations. I have watched as masses of people were touched by God's healing power.

I have seen God break the powers of witchcraft and demonic forces, setting the oppressed free. On one occasion, I saw a child raised from the dead.

The secret to this ministry has always been the anointing of God that is released through prayer and fasting. To Bonnie and me, prayer has never been a duty but a precious privilege, allowing us to walk into the throne room of the King of kings and gain an audience with Him.

The Design of the Watch

For eight hours each Friday night we come before the Lord, fasting from food and sleep in order to focus on vital issues the Holy Spirit reveals to us to attack in prayer. The Lord often visits at night, as we see in Scripture and as Bonnie and I have seen in our lives.

We must mount an offensive attack at night because the enemy of our souls is busiest while most of us are sleeping. It is the night—the darkness—that has previously been Satan's prized possession.

Through what we call the "Watch of the Lord," we are taking back the night and claiming it on behalf of its Creator, the Lord Most High. The watch starts at 10 p.m. and ends at 6 a.m.

We fast from chitchat and socializing at the watch in order to give the Lord and His purposes our full attention. Those who come to pray with us are free to nap if necessary in order to complete the last few hours of the watch.

We always wait on the Lord to determine His agenda, then we praise and worship Him. Ministry usually begins around midnight with corporate intercession for global ministries and for the nations.

At one point watchmen lay hands on the American and Israeli flags, and we pray for God's land, Israel, and the nation in which we live. We pray for American and world leaders and the concerns reflected in the day's headlines.

The Holy Spirit quickens various Scriptures to us throughout the course of the watch. We receive a living word from God each week—the essence of what He appears to be saying to His corporate body at that given time.

As we pray and intercede, prayer requests we've received are passed out and prayed over. We pray for our staff, other ministries, our police force, the schools and other agencies. Toward the end of the watch we always celebrate communion.

Often the Holy Spirit moves in our midst, performing healings, releasing prophecy and touching His people in His deep and profound way. Always we take our direction from the Lord, the Captain of the watch.

A normal watch may find prayer warriors at the altar, some people fallen out around the altar under the power of God and others throughout the auditorium curled up in sleeping bags or with blankets and pillows. We are very informal during these all-night prayer vigils.

Our prayer focus is always the higher agenda of the kingdom of God rather than our own personal needs. After we have focused on and prayed for the things on God's heart, the Holy Spirit will normally minister to our personal needs.

We often have a time of personal ministry around 5 a.m. However, Bonnie and I have discovered that when we seek first the kingdom of God, our personal needs are met supernaturally!

The Fourth Watch of the Night

During the fourth watch (between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m.), the glory of God seems to increase in our midst. A lot of the miracles, healings and specific supernatural intelligence occurs during this time, even though it is the time when the fewest people are present.

There is a special excitement and an open heaven in the hours just before the light. When we are at our weakest physically, the Holy Spirit comes in His greatest strength with prayer, revelation and refreshing.

During a military campaign, the hours of the fourth watch are the most strategic hours of the night. They are the most difficult time frame in which to guard against the enemy's attack and yet the time the enemy is most likely to attack.

In times of war, about half an hour before both sunrise and sunset, a "stand-to" is conducted in the military. That means everyone is put on the alert, packed up and made ready to fight or move at a moment's notice.

When we worship, war and watch, the glory comes. And when the

glory comes, there is great grace for healing, ministry, miracles and the prophetic.

When the presence of the Lord comes, there is clarity of vision. Watchmen are able to have a greater vantage point in the realm of the Spirit, so they can see what's coming and can warn the rest of the body of Christ of any trouble or turbulence ahead.

In His Presence

Eight hours of intense corporate prayer really do pass quickly. The power of God is demonstrated again and again, and all too soon, it's over—until the following week when we gather again to watch on the wall in prayer.

We encourage people not to stay away just because they think they will fall asleep. We tell them to get in His presence, and be there when His visitation comes.

I will admit that at the end, we're a little punchy from the lack of sleep. But the Lord makes it up to us.

When Jesus went into the temple with all the buying, selling and taking care of business, He took one look and said, "I don't live here." He declared that His house would be "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17, NIV).

Jesus didn't say the church would be a house of doctrine or teaching or a house of wisdom or prophecy. He didn't even say it was going to be a house of miracles!

As we pray together corporately, seven things combine into a wonderful mix that, when led by the Holy Spirit, create an atmosphere conducive to drawing near to God and being with Him:

- Praise
- Worship
- Thanksgiving

- Supplication
- Intercession
- Prophecy
- Proclamation

It's not as if we deliberately try to attend to all these priorities during any given watch. Only in looking back do we discover that we have spent time on each of these aspects of prayer.

Answered Prayer

Of course, some of the greatest rewards of the watch are answered prayers. As we carry the burden of the Lord in our hearts, standing in the gap for the earth, the anointing accomplishes the will of God while the watchman carries away the spoils!

During one of our Friday night watches, we were intensely urged by the Holy Spirit to intercede specifically for the safety of our children. The next evening one of the couples who had been at the watch received a call that their daughter, who was visiting a friend in Colorado, had been thrown from a horse and struck her head on a rock.

The physician examining her said she had lost the vision in her left eye and was suffering from temporary amnesia due to a concussion. This couple continued to trust God for their daughter's healing, mobilizing additional prayer support as CAT scans and further tests were ordered.

The following day, a call from the physician indicated great surprise on his part. "The eye that I examined immediately following the accident does not appear to be the same eye that I am now observing," he said.

The physician, a born-again Christian continued, "Your daughter has been miraculously touched by God! Her vision is restored."

We have also seen our prayers answered on a global scale. During April 1999 we were praying for three American prisoners of the war with Yugoslavia to be released.

On Friday night, April 30, we again held them up in prayer, specifically by name. We asked the Lord to cause Yugoslav President Milosevic to release them from prison.

That same day, Friday, President Milosevic had said no to an interfaith delegation of American religious leaders negotiating in Belgrade for the soldiers' release. But on Saturday, May 1, the day after our watch, President Milosevic did a complete turnaround and agreed to release the soldiers!

We are thrilled to have joined with other intercessors around the country and perhaps the world who were praying for their release.

The Global Vision

The watch draws those from far and near. Bonnie and I are never quite sure whom we'll find there to pray with us when we arrive.

People have heard of the miraculous answers to prayer that have resulted from these all-night prayer meetings, and those who are in desperate need of a touch from the Lord just show up. When the time is right, we pray for them.

Our all-night prayer meetings, which began in Charlotte, North Carolina, are now being held in various cities and in other nations. Prayer warriors from all parts of the globe communicate with us via telephone, mail, fax and the Internet. We're all crying out to God for an outpouring of His Spirit.

As we commit to pray in a corporate manner, we will usher in a revival that will spread out from our cities into the nations, maybe leading to restoration and perhaps even reformation. Sustained, concerted, corporate, concentrated prayer will lead

to sustained, glorious, spreading, strong, citywide, nationwide, worldwide revival.

That's what Bonnie and I are committed to seeing on the earth today. Our vision for the Watch of the Lord is bigger than a simple all-night prayer meeting in Charlotte, it is as big as the world.

It's not a heavy yoke. It's a thrilling experience to be watchmen on the wall of prayer.

Read a companion devotional.

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Rewards of the Watch

We fast from sleep; we fast from food; we fast from our own agendas and doing what we want to do during the watch time. Isaiah 58 lists the rewards of the fast God acknowledges:

- The bonds of wickedness will be cut (v. 6).
- The oppressed will go free (v. 6).
- The yokes of oppression will be broken (v. 6).
- Your light shall break forth like a daily sunrise (v. 8).
- Healing will come speedily (v. 8).
- Your righteousness will be your reputation preceding you (v. 8).
- The glory of the Lord shall follow and guard you (v. 8).
- Your prayer will be answered immediately (v. 9).
- The Lord will manifest Himself in your midst (v. 9).

- Your light will shine in the midst of darkness (v. 10).
- Your darkest times will still be like noonday sun (v. 10).
- You will have continual guidance from the Lord (v. 11).
- You will be full in time of leanness (v. 11).
- You will be filled with strength in the very center of your life (v. 11).
- The Holy Spirit will water you and make you fruitful and beautiful (v. 11).
- The Holy Spirit will fill you daily and make you like a spring that never runs dry (v. 11).
- You will be a repairer of the breach, a restorer of streets in which to dwell (v. 12).
- You will be delighted with God (v. 14).
- You will have authority with those in authority and have power in difficult times (v. 14).