

Wielding the Sword of the Spirit When You Pray

In homes, parks, churches, and auditoriums, there continues to be diligent gatherings of elite kingdom forces. They've engaged in what I believe is the first priority of the church – *they are praying (Is. 56:7)!*

The Holy Spirit has lit the fuse of intercession and is turning up the flames. Before there ever is a revival, there is always an intercessor. Worldwide harvest is on His mind, and the harvest of souls always begins with prayer. *The Holy Spirit is releasing the war cry of prayer (Is. 42:13)!* He will prevail against His enemies and loose their captives.

Over the years, I've spent hours praying with intercessors. It's refreshing to pray with seasoned intercessors, but I'm usually praying with those still learning to find their sword in prayer. Prayer is something you learn. It doesn't come easily to most people. And because of the governmental nature of prayer—namely that we rule our own world and the entire world from our knees—I've had a strong need to communicate a few points of order and to stir up your faith to *expect an answer when you pray.*

God is Waiting On Us

The disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus complied giving them point-by-point instructions in prayer, also known as the Lord's Prayer, to get them started. As part of His instruction, He taught the disciples to pray for the will of God to be done: "Therefore pray in this manner: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-10).

This teaching for the disciples is also a teaching for us. We,

too, need to pray and we need to pray for God's will to be done.

The prophet Elijah demonstrated this concept well. The Lord told Elijah He was going to end a three-year drought in Israel and send rain on the land (1 Kings 18). But Elijah did not leave things there. Instead, he climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and postured himself in prayer (v. 42). Even though Elijah knew what God wanted, he still prayed for it to happen. As he anticipated, it soon began to rain and God's will was being done on earth as it is in heaven.

Unless we pray for God's will to be done, it simply isn't done. By God's own design, He has limited Himself to the faith of His church. We have more influence with God than we think, but God is waiting on us to pray.

Pray the Will of God

It fascinates me that when something bad happens in our nation we presume it's the judgment of God, but when something bad happens to us personally we presume it's a demonic attack. This is the double standard that we often live by. We don't discern what God authors or doesn't author when we don't know His heart or His Word.

Let's go to the written word to lay this down more firmly. First of all, God so loved the world that He died for it (John 3:16). If He died for the world, then He's not killing off the world in unbridled judgment because He's not double-minded. There is a judgment day coming, but that day is not today (Acts 17:31). Nevertheless, the world suffers terribly for its choices against God! It suffers hardship, death, abuse, disease and even worse because it's source for living is the kingdom of darkness, a kingdom that can only offer death and sorrow.

Secondly, the Bible distinguishes between the works of Satan and the works of Christ. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief

does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” This helps us to generally discern the spiritual source behind tragic circumstances. If it’s stealing, killing or destroying, then, biblically, we can point to Satan as the source. This is the point where intercessors release the war cry of prayer! Through their prayers and prophetic decrees, they birth resurrection life into tragic circumstances, into corrupted systems, into cities, nations and more.

In the name of JESUS, we raise the hedges of protection over our cities and nations. We bind the spirit of terror from unleashing death and destruction. We ask you, Father, to release Your angel armies to surround and guard the peoples. We command Your Word to run swiftly through the cities! We ask the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of people everywhere to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ (Job 1:10, 2 Tim. 1:7, Matt. 16:19, Matt. 26:53, 2 Thess. 3:1, Acts 16:14).

An intercessor is a person who prays in favor for another. This is what Abraham did in regards to Sodom and Gomorrah. God was making moves to destroy this wicked city as the cries of its victims had become deafening (Gen. 18:20). Remember this was well before the cross. There was nothing standing in between this city and God’s imminent judgment. Regardless, He still solicited the intercession of Abraham. Abraham interceded *for* the city and not against it, and God accepted the terms of his intercession. Just like Abraham, God is soliciting our intercession for the nations and He is ready to accept our terms as well. He is not willing that anyone would perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

Effective Prayer vs. Presumptive Prayer

Effective prayer, then, is going to be prayer that reflects the Word of God and the heart of God. Understand that every petition needs to be based on a Bible passage or promise. If

you can't underscore that petition or prophetic decree with the written word of God, then that prayer is suspect for not being the will of God. Every petition must also be redemptive. Praying redemptively doesn't mean we leave evil people and evil systems unchallenged in prayer. We do, however, consider the eternity of people involved and intercede for the salvation of their souls no matter what they've done. We never rejoice in the misfortune of others or celebrate their destruction (Prov. 17:5). Hell is a forever reality, and as intercessors we intercede for the salvation of all—even the worst and most vile sinners, cities and nations.

Finally, intercessors need to stay away from presumptive prayer. We are to carry the priorities of the kingdom clearly above our own priorities. We don't pray our own opinions.

Many years ago, a person on our leadership team had communicated to some members of our church that my husband and I would like to have one particular night of the week to be alone as a couple. The only thing is, my husband and I had never communicated that, and we had a different idea about our schedule. It wasn't a big deal except someone had presumed our will and given instruction to others about our will, without really knowing what our will was.

I see this same presumptive behavior happen often in the place of prayer. We presume His will, presumptively pray His will, but we've never really understood His will.

We have to lay down our opinions and our own agendas and submit to His priorities. We have to line up everything we pray with His written Word. Are you praying for His will to be done, or are you praying presumptive prayers?

Here is another example. A person had written to me disagreeing about my choice to celebrate Christmas. They held that elements of Christmas are rooted in paganism and, therefore, should not be celebrated by believers. I didn't

react to their party pooper mentality because I know from the word that Christians can celebrate any day as holy to the Lord (Rom. 14:5,6).

What got my attention and my rebuke was their veiled threat to “pray for me about this matter.” Because I understand the power of prayer, I wasn’t going to let that go. Whether you are praying God’s will or your own will, you are still engaging in a spiritual act. You have the capacity to release spiritual power in prayer even if that prayer didn’t come from the heart of God (read my article *Right and Wrong Praying*). Don’t pray your opinions on people! Carry and pray the priorities of the kingdom instead.

This is an area that needs instruction and alignment in the body of Christ. I’ve heard way too many opinion-based prayers, something that escalates during election season! These prayers are highly suspect because they are too often based in opinion rather than being based in His Word.

When we are full of His written Word and carry His redemptive heart, then we can pray whatever we desire and He will answer us favorably (John 14:14). This gives us great confidence in prayer knowing that *when we pray, we can expect an answer.*
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