

Love Prays: Responding by Talking to God

We finished a tumultuous election season where there were two assassination attempts on the life of our former president, Donald Trump, and major political unrest. Then we thought we were having a sweet calm in the national storm, only to have that be interrupted by bomb threats on the president's Cabinet appointees and then the Democratic members of Congress from Connecticut right before Thanksgiving. The violence touched leaders from both sides of the aisle and brought havoc and fear to their families during a national holiday.

I know many prayer warriors who have been praying nonstop for the elections thought in the back of their minds afterward, "We can take a break, right? Everything is OK now."

But then it wasn't. And we realized that evil doesn't stop, the job is never done and therefore, our prayers for our leaders can't stop.

As a practice, not many people in America even think of prayer as it relates to our nation or national leaders, even in our churches. When was the last time you heard your pastor stop everything and say, "We need to pray for our leaders right now"?



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We might respond on social media to someone's crisis with a quick comment such as "Prayers," or "I'm praying for you," but how many of us actually stop and pray?

Over the years, I fought with my own level of prayerlessness. I have had seasons where I thought I had it all together and

didn't need to ask God for help. After years of working for members of Congress and having ongoing prayer for their families, I have gotten tired and complacent even about that. Then a crisis happens, and I am reminded again that I can't live without prayer, and our national leaders need it every day.

We have two serious issues in the modern American church as it relates to our prayer lives. First, we forget that we can talk to God—that He is a real person with real feelings and that He really cares for us, and second, we forget that our burdens for our nation come from God, and we can partner with Him in the place of prayer for change.

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Prayer is simply talking with God. Having a relationship with anyone without talking with him or her is impossible. Talking but not listening to someone we supposedly love is also a problem. Have you ever tried that with your spouse? It doesn't work very well. Relationships must involve two-way communication, and this is just as important with God as with our fellow human beings. We talk, and more importantly, we listen. He teaches us to pray.

In Luke 11, the disciples had spent months with Jesus. They had seen Him heal the sick and feed more than 5,000 people with just a few loaves and fishes. Yet it is fascinating to me that they didn't ask Jesus how they could follow in His footsteps and do all those important works. Instead, they made a simple request: "Lord, teach us to pray."

They knew instinctively that His power came from somewhere. His ability to do miracles and healings couldn't be taught. The power that flowed from Him came from His relationship with the Father.

Jesus instructed them to make time to pray. He said *when* you

pray, not *if* you pray. Then Jesus Himself, God in the flesh, gave these weak disciples an indispensable outline for praying to the Father in what we call today "The Lord's Prayer."

The American church must start again at the beginning. We must go back to simply talking with God. We need to remember that we can't survive a year, a month or even a week in a prosperous place in our souls if we don't start talking to Him on a regular basis. It doesn't have to be complicated; we just need to be consistently in need of Him and talking to Him.

Second, we forget that we can regularly talk to God about our national burdens and about specific people such as our government officials and stories in the news. Instinctively we know when something is not right. When we watch the news and see corruption, debauchery or injustice in our cities, we shudder. As believers we have God's heart for our nation because He gives us discernment.

Why do we see it all? Because the Spirit of God is in us. If we are Christians and have been born again by the Holy Spirit, we have the Holy Spirit inside us, and He will "teach [us] all things" (John 14:26b, NKJV). When we study the Bible, we find truth and wisdom. Our discernment is heightened. We know deep inside that things are not right in America, and we want change to happen, or we see national emergencies as we have recently, and our hearts are broken for the families of our national leaders.

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The question then arises, "God, what would You have us do?" What should be our response?

We must begin with the most important act: prayer!

We agree with God's heart for our nation and the problems in

it. We take our burdens for America to the feet of Jesus.

After almost two decades of political activism and political jobs, I have seen many horrible national problems. I have seen members of Congress who can't get their heads around even a tenth of the issues. The pressures and burdens can consume and destroy well-meaning people from the inside out.

As Christians, we should be the ones who are sensing what is really happening in our nation. We cannot, however, let what is happening—no matter how real the issues are—eat us up and spit us out. Anger and fear concerning what we see—the injustices, lawlessness, national failures and worldly corruption—can cause us to want to fight back and rush in with solutions. That is the nature of God in us: the God of justice and the God of order. Yet we cannot solve anything without Him. We can't do anything without His grace, and we can't constantly carry the burden of it all in our hearts and minds. Though we must still engage with it, we can't let the burden overtake us. We must bathe the battle in prayer and release those burdens onto His strong capable shoulders.

We get to pray. We get to be a partner in His story.

When elections come, we need to pray. When crisis hits with our national leaders, we have the privilege of praying. We are called to love God and love others. Love prays.

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