# PRAYER DIMENSIONS

JONATHAN JONES

Exploring and Enjoying the Unlimited Benefits of Bible-based Prayers

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**Jonathan T. Jones | PhD**

**Prayers Dimensions**

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# Philippian 4: 6
# In Different Translations

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—NHEB*

*In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—WEB*

*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God—AKJV*

*In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God—ASV.*

*Do not be anxious about anything; but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God in everything—AFV*

*Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—DBT.*

*In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer*

*and*
*supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God—ESV*

*Be anxious for nothing; but in ever thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God—WBT*

*Be nothing carefull, but in all thinges let your requestes be shewed vnto God in praier, and supplication with giving of thanks—GB*

*Be carefull for nothyng: but in all thynges, let your petition be manifest unto God, in prayer and supplication with giving of thanks—BB*

*Be not careful, but in all thinges let yor peticions in prayer and supplicacion, with geuynge of thankes be knowne before God—CB*

*Be not carfull: but in all thynges shewe youre peticion vnto god in prayer and supplications with giving of thanks—TB*

*be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer, and by supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—LSV*

*Be anxious about nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—BLB*

*For nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer, and by supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God—YLT*

*Rave anxiety about nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with gratitude let your desires be made known to God—SLT*

*Be nothing solicitous; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God—C-RB*

*Be anxious about nothing. But in all things, with prayer and supplication, with acts of thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God—CPDV*

*Do not be worried for anything, but always in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known before God--ABPE*

*Do not worry over things, but always by prayer and supplication with*

*thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God—LB*
*Be anxious about nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—ANT*

*Be solicitous about nothing; but in all prayer and supplication, let your request be made known to God—GNT*
*Be not anxious about anything, but in every case by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known unto God—HNT*

*the Lord is coming: be not in any manner of sollicitude, but in all your occasions lay your requests before God by prayer and supplication accompany'd by thanksgiving—MNT*

*Do not be over-anxious about anything, but by prayer and earnest pleading, together with thanksgiving, let your request be unreservedly made known in the presence of God—WNT*

*Be anxious for nothing; but, in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—WNT*

*Be anxious in nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known before God—WNT*

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# Introduction

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (NIV).*

Do you pray?
I bet you do. If you have not been praying, you can start.
The first prayer I learned was seeing my daddy praying before food. My

daddy would pray and thank God, then bless the food and asked God to provide for those who had none to eat. It was simple but profound for me. That was my first lesson in *Prayer 101*. The lesson has stayed with me till today. Do you thank God for your food and ask him to provide for millions in our world who do not have? You know that is happening around the world—I mean lack of food. Then every morning, my daddy would wake everyone under his roof to a living room. (We called it parlor in British English). He would always buy the daily Baptist Devotional Book (I do not remember its name again). He did not know how to read. So, he would assign each of use who could read to read the day Bible story or verses. He would explain as far as he could. He would then ask for contribution or question. Most of the time the struggle with sleep would not make any ask to question or make any contribution. The "Priest" had spoken. Then he would pray. I remember vividly some items on his extemporaneous prayer were thanking God, asking for protection as we all set out for the day, blessing upon his farm, asking for good weather, and praying that the children will grow in the fear of God. He would also pray for the sick in all hospitals, the travelers across the world, the government, and peace for our world. That was my *Prayer 102* lesson. I will never forget that. This is now part of my prayer.

Prayer is good for humanity. Prayer is good for you. Or let me say prayer will prove good for you—if you try it. Prayer has undeniable spiritual, psychological, and physical blessings. Christians takes prayer seriously because God provides means of prayer and invites all his children to pray to him. Thus, prayer is a simple spiritual communication between God and man. God lovingly invites us to prayer when he says: *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou know not."* (Jer.33: 3—KJV). Again, Jesus teaches his followers to, *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye. shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asked received; and he that seeks. finds; and to him that knocked it shall be opened."* (Mat. 7: 7-8—KJV).

Jesus also tells us:

"*You can ask him for anything, using my name, and I will do it, for this will bring praise to the Father because of what I, the Son, will do for you. Yes, ask anything, using my name, and I will do it!'*—John 14:13, 14 (TLB).

Prayer is universal. It is spiritual activities in very part of globe and human history. There is something in human beings, irrespective of irreligiosity or religiosity—that wants to connect with Something or Someone bigger, higher, and powerful than them. Prayer serves as the link or vehicle by which man connects with the Higher Power or the Divine. In my Christian worldview, belief and practices the Higher Power or Divine is God, who the Bible presents as the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

In addition, human being has an instinct to pray through an intermediary. In many parts of the world, the intermediary serves as a link between the Higher Power and man. For example, in ancient Africa traditional religion (ATR), there were the concept and belief in Almighty God who no one can approach. So, worshippers needed intermediary like gods, goddesses, priests, ancestral spirits, etc. This idea helps the spread of Christianity in Africa because the idea of intermediary resonates with people understanding of intermediary between man and Higher Power or God. In Christianity, the intermediary is Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "*For there [is only] one God, and [only] one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"*(1 Tim 2: 5—AMPC).

Prayer means many things to many people in many cultures of the world. However, prayer is universal. Everyone prays in one form or the other. Every religion in the world has one way or the other it prays. For Christian faith, there are many examples of prayers and people praying in the Holy Scripture. We can learn from these examples to improve and enhance our prayer and praying life. To Christian, prayer and praying is an integral part of faith, belief, and practices. It is hard to be a fruitful and victorious Christian life without consistent and fervent prayer. The Bible commands, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*." (1 Thes. 5: 16-18—NKJV).

Jesus categorically teaches, "… *it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit"* (Luke 18: 1-3—MSG). NKJV renders the verse as, "*that men always ought to pray and not lose heart."*

In this book we shall explore different types of prayer in the Bible and how we can use these to enhance our spiritual exercise of prayer. This book is about prayer and praying as recorded by the Bible. It is my prayer you will enjoy the revelation and apply the lessons in your prayer

life.
Rev. Jonathan T. Jones | PhD | BCC
November 21, 2020, to February 14, 2021.

# Chapter 1
# Basics of Prayer

*Do not worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done (NLT).*

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## What is Prayer?

Good question that has a simple answer. Without any theological ambiguity and academic arguments, let see some meanings of prayer.

- Prayer is the spiritual art of communication with God. Many people have different perspectives to the meaning and practice of prayer.
- Prayer in the Bible and to Christian is relational communication with God. The Christians are the children of God, and they relate and communicate with their Father through prayer.
- Prayer has been defined and described as; “simply a direct address of and communication with God”[1].
- Prayer is also seen as a devout petition to God or an object

of worship.

- Prayer is spiritual communion with God or an object of worship, as in supplication, thanksgiving, adoration, or confession.[2]
- The Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary describes prayer as conversation with God.
- Prayer is the intercourse of the soul with God, not just in contemplation or meditation, but in direct address to him.
- Prayer may be oral, mental, occasional, regular, constant, spontaneous, extemporaneous, meditative, contemplative, quiet, loud, formal, or informal, personal, congregational, private, or corporate.
- Prayer is an invocation or act that seeks to activate a rapport with an object of worship through deliberate communication.
- More generally, prayer can also have the purpose of thanksgiving or praise, and in comparative religion is closely associated with more abstract forms of meditation and with charms or spells.

In the Christian worldview, prayer presupposes a belief in the personality of God, his ability and willingness to hold intercourse with us, his personal control of all things and of all his creatures and all their actions.[3] The Bible describes and defines prayer in different terms.

Beseeching the Lord (Ex. 32:11)
Pouring out the soul before the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15)
Praying and crying to heaven (2 Chr. 32:20)
Seeking unto God and making supplication (Job 8:5)
Drawing near to God (Ps. 73:28)
Bowing the knees in worship to God (Eph. 3:14).
Supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks (1Tim 1:1)
Talking or communication with God (Mat. 6: 6)

1. *Focusing on God (Mat. 6: 6—MSG)*
2. *Absolute dependence on God*
3. *Calling on God for felt and real needs on the behalf of others.*
4. *Waiting on God*
5. *Fellowship with God*
6. *Acts of submission to God and his will.*

7. *Trusting God always for all our needs*

In a broader sense, the term refers to an act of supplication or intercession directed towards a deity, or a deified ancestor, or God.

# Why Do We Pray?

Martin Luther noted prayer is the coming of a beggar to God "who opens wide his cloak in order to receive much." He further believed that man tells what he desires to get out of his misery, to be free of the evil thing, he begs for aid; he is not abashed before exalted Majesty but speaks outright, 'help
me, dear God!' "O that I had this or that.'
Zwingli defined prayer as "a begging for the necessaries of life, a calling on God for help."

***Reasons and motives for prayer***

There are reasons why humans want to pray and indeed pray. If there is no reason for doing something, why do we do it. What we have here are not exhaustive. It is probably a tip on the iceberg.

- *Prayer is needed for existential problems.*

What are existential problems? Bob Zunjic[4] says, "The allure of Existentialism lies in its ability to grapple, in a non-trivial way, with so many common although philosophically underrated aspects of human condition: anxiety, anguish, dread, despair, boredom, guilt, loneliness, forlornness, lack of meaning, self-deception, suicide, death, suffering, finitude." Existential problems are life's issues that we all face as we existence; no one is excluded from them. We pray to God to help us grapple successfully with them, alleviate them, or totally remove them. It seems to me that individuals and groups who understand and practice prayer to resolve life's problems often can handle such problems meaningfully. The problems could be solved, or they have the spiritual ability and wisdom to manage or cope with them in ways folks who do not learn to pray, not try to pray, shun praying, and altogether despite the practice of prayer.

On January 30th, year 2000, a Kenya Airplane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean in West Africa sub-region. Many people died (including my eldest brother, the first male child of my father). Only 7 people survived out of over 200 people on board. One of the survivors narrated

her story that can help us to see the benefit of prayer for those who pray and the danger of not praying for they who do not pray, despite prayer, abandon prayer, or take prayer with lefty hand. While the plane broke into two right in the middle, some of the passengers were trapped on both sides and could not come out but sank into the Ocean. Those who sat at the point of breakage were flung into the Ocean. It was at around 7:30 pm. No help at sight. No first responder. Light was getting dimmer and dimmer except some reflection of on the ocean water. These seven persons had one or two things to do to survive. First, swim across the Ocean to shore or to where they can be rescued. Second to leave themselves to fate or their faith. Some did the first because they could swim and were rescued. They were rescued much later. In fact, it was in the morning about 8 to 10 hours after the crash. Those who could not swim died in the ocean. Their fate? I do not know. The other who had faith of some kind began to exercise their faith in what is the object of that faith. And that faith
worked for them. One of the survivors was a lady, a Catholic Faithful. She had a Rosary and was struggling to survive too. Catholics believe the Rosary is a remedy against severe trials, temptations, and the hardships of life, and that the Rosary is one of the great weapons given to believers in their battle against every evil. I know that in the Catholic theology, the Rosary Beads are used to help Catholics count their prayers and tell them which prayer to say. They say the Rosary Prayer with the Crucifix. They make the Sign of the Cross as they say: + In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit…etc.

This lady was chanting her prayer counting the Rosary. Closed to her was a young man struggling with the ocean water just like her. They came close to each other. The struggle man noticed the lady had a Rosary and was muttering something. He asked, “what are you doing?’ The lady said, “I am praying. I am a Catholic. Do you know how to pray? Do you pray? The man replied, “I have never prayed in my life.” The lady said, “but you can pray now. Come close to me if you can and let us pray.” The man said, “No, thanks.” Suddenly the waves drifted him away. He did not know how to pray. He did not want to join someone to pray with him. The story ended sadly for him; he died in the water and his body was found by the rescuers in the morning.

On the other hand, the Catholic Faithful kept muttering her prayer

with the Rosary in her hand. She was praying, “oh, Jesus save me.” She will chant “Hail Mary.” She will chant “the Apostle Creeds.” The will chant “the Lord’s Prayer.” Those are some of basic things in Catholic prayer. The lady was kept and alive and later rescued. It was when she saw the dead body of the man on the shore in the morning, she narrated her story. Well, she survived in part due to her prayer. Let leave the argument behind us. Prayer works. Canon Evangelist J. John said, “when we pray coincidences happen. When we do not pray, coincidences do not happen.” The story can be said to be coincidence. But I believe her surviving happened because she prayed. She was alive and rescued alive. I do not know how that happens except to connect it with her prayer. We need prayer for simple and life-threatening existential problems.

- *A fearful apprehensiveness of the calamity and chaos of life calls for prayers.*

The feeling of weakness at some secular and spiritual duties; needs for personal, family and group, state, and nation—these call for intercessory prayer. Only God knows and has the records of how his people cried for help for their loved ones, communities, nations, and the world in time of crises and he helped them. Prayer serves a great purpose and provide benefits to all—even those who do not pray or appreciate prayer.

- *Unpleasant health condition*

Sicknesses, diseases, illness, and certain health situations demand that we seek for prayer for self and others joining their faith with us to request solution from God. My second daughter was seriously sick the weak of her first birthday; I mean when she was about to be one year old. A day before her birthday, she was still in hospital very sick. I went to see her, and the Doctor told me she was doing ok despite all care. Something grew angry with me; it was a “*holy anger.”* I was wondering how could a child be under treatment for a week and no response? Someone with me told me, “Take her home and pray for her.” I knew it was the Holy Spirit. I told the Dr. please, discharge this girl. The Dr looked at me strangely, she said, “that will be against the medical advice…, against the Dr. advice….” I told her I understand. She could not prevail over me. She discharged her and I took her home. At home, I laid the girl on my bed and prayed all-night for her asking God to heal her miraculously. After long hours of praying and worship, the coincidence happened. She sneezed several

times on my bed, opened her eyes, and said, "*taady, I wan o ead."* Amen, prayer answered. She has been healed. I got her some food, and she ate and sleep. In the morning we celebrated her first birthday at home and not in hospital bed. After 20 years of this incidence, that girl had never visited or slept in hospital for any illness. She truly had some tropical illness like Malaria, and some other short-lived sickness, but had not been hospitalized again. I believe, God will continue to make her healthy and strong in life. Prayer works for immediate situation and right into the future (we shall see this
more in another later chapter).

- *Forces that seem bigger than us demands our prayer*

Horror of death, unprecedented effect of sins, demons, and Satan; devastation of life, disappointment, and discouragement often make people who are apparently at low level of faith seek for prayer form people of God. Crises, temptation, problems, perils, troubles—social, psychological/emotional, spiritual, and some inescapable issues of life—can be surmounting that only a power above human can resolve them. Through prayer, we release such power from above. The author of this book wrote in his book, *Solving Life's Problems,* that, many people want to live a life without any form of problem; this is an illusion, a mirage, something that is impossible. Life without problem, troubles and challenges does not exist on the surface of this planet earth…" However, he teaches that we can solve life's problems by involving people in prayer and by inviting God through faith. God works wonders as we pray.

## When You Pray…

The word of Jesus, "*And when you pray*…" in Mat. 6: 5, presupposes that prayer is imperative. It is an art and act those who believe and trust in God do on regular basis. Thus, is not with whether, it is not if; it is a matter of what should be done as lifestyle; Jesus followers must do and be doing. To Jesus prayer is like other physical or spiritual imperatives for life. For example, water is imperative for good health and well-being. Sunshine is imperative for life. Air is imperative for living. Food is imperative for living. Shelter is imperative. Clothes are imperative. We do not use if for something that is imperative; we just do it, have it, engage it, consume it, or just lay hold of it
and get the best from it. So is Prayer.

Prayer is like the breath to Christian spiritual life and so many other people who believe in prayer. There is no life without breathing. There are so many systems of human being that will not work well if breathing is impair. So is prayer for human being. Even if many do not want to display their religious stance publicly, millions of people have some degree of prayer in the private life. Prayer is lifeline for humanity. There is something in man that wants to connect with something or someone higher than him. Prayer is the channel connecting the Divine with humanity. Prayer is imperative. Prayer is a necessity. Prayer is part of life and living. To downplay this is to look down on one of the important things of life. When you pray well, you will live well. It is as simple as that. If you refuse to pray, the consequences are grave.

Here are some highlights of what happens when we pray.

- You are re-enacting and improving your relationship with God.
- You are in consistent obedience to God who invites and commands us

to pray to him.

- You are engaging your compassionate spirit because you pray not only for you but for others
- You demonstrate faith in God and his Word.
- You are yielding to the Holy Spirit's prompting and leading; they are prompted and energized by God's Holy Spirit. Some Christians do not just pray almost willingly. They need to be prompted.
- You are appropriating the righteousness of Jesus Christ—our Most High Priest. Jesus gives is he right to stand before God; the right to pray based on his righteousness which he imputed on us.
- You are showing your dependence on efficacy of the name of Jesus—in

whose name we pray.

- You are changing negative purpose to positive purpose.
- You are fulfilling prophecies and promise of God. It has been promised

and prophesied, *"you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."* Jer. 29: 12—NIV

- You bring about personal and church revival, restoration, and

refreshing in ways beyond comprehension.

- You can bring personal and other people restorations.
- Your prayer is an instrument God uses to restrain evil in lives, families, society, community, nations, and the world.
- You experience spiritual refreshment and joy.

Why would you not pray friends? Canon J. John says, “when we pray coincidences happen.” When we pray miracles happens. When we pray great things happen. When we pray heaven comes down to our heart and our earth. Prayer changes things. Prayer changes you. Pray!

## When You Feel like Praying…

Whenever you feel like pray, then pray! There are times we want to pray. Never miss that moment. It is sacred moment for you. When you feel like pray, seize the moment, pray. No matter how short or brief. The fact that prayer feeling comes on you, or you have a nudge in your mind to pray means something divine is moving in your life or coming upon you. The feelings for prayer do not always come to some folks. In fact, some people will not pray until there arises a problem or some existential problem. Prayer should be part of our life. Remember the definition or meaning of prayer; prayer is communication with God. If you love a person what keeps the relationship alive is the two-side communicating free and fairly. The Bible says, “*there is no fear in love; perfect love cast out fear*.” If you love God, you will love to communicate with him always. God’s love for you is unquestionable. And he will not love you less because you do not pray. However, if you love to commune and communicate with God, you will discover the depth and height of God that someone who does not pray will never see or attain. God is ever ready to commune and communicate with us. We are the problem in the relationship because we allow mundane things to create undue and meaningless barriers between us and God.

The term **c**ommunion is derived from Latin *communio* which means "*sharing in common",* which translates Greek *koinonia* in 1 Corinthians 10:16. Communing with God means having fellowship, being in his presence, holding his hand, enjoy his being and personality and attributes. Communion with God is a higher degree of prayer. Communion with God is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual

level. A demonstration of communion is the service of Christian worship at which bread and wine are consecrated and shared. Communion is a Christian sacrament in which consecrated bread and wine are consumed as memorials of Christ's death or as symbols for the realization of a spiritual union between Christ and communicant or as the body and blood of Christ. I love this Hymnal because it reflects Christian communion with Jesus, the Savior and Friend. It is “What a Friend We have in Jesus”

*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!*
*What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!*
*Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear,*
*All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?*
*We should never be discouraged—Take it to the Lord in prayer.*
*Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?*
*Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy-laden, cumbered with a load of care?*
*Precious Savior, still our refuge—Take it to the Lord in prayer.*
*Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer!*
*In His arms He will take and shield thee, thou wilt find a solace there.*

*Blessed Savior, thou hast promised thou wilt all our burdens bear;*
*May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to Thee in earnest prayer.*
*Soon in glory bright, unclouded, there will be no need for prayer—*
*Rapture, praise, and endless worship will be our sweet portion there.*

Communion and communication are also better expressed by another Hymnal.: Thou My Everlasting Portion

*Thou my everlasting Portion, more than friend or life to me,*
*All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.*
*Refrain*
*Close to Thee, close to Thee, Close to Thee, close to Thee;*
*All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.*
*Not for ease or worldly pleasure, not for fame my prayer shall be*
*Gladly will I toil and suffer, only let me walk with Thee.*
*Refrain*

*Close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee;*
*Gladly will I toil and suffer, only let me walk with Thee.*
*Lead me through the value of…*

Look at this Hymnal also on communion and communication of God and his Saints: Draw Me Nearer… to Thee

*I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, and it told Thy love to me;*
*But I long to rise in the arms of faith and be closer drawn to Thee.*

*Refrain*

*Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died.*
*Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side.*

*Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord, by the power of grace divine;*
*Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, and my will be lost in Thine.*

*O the pure delight of a single hour that before Thy throne I spend,*
*When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God I commune as friend with friend!*

*There are depths of love that I cannot know till I cross the narrow sea;*
*There are heights of joy that I may not reach till I rest in peace with Thee.*

Communication is defined as the imparting or exchanging of information or news. This is what we do when we pray to God. We speak and God responds. It is a two-way communication system. Unfortunately, some Christian and persons would only do the talking and will not allow God to speak back to them or would not listen to God speaking back to them.

Communication is sending or receiving information, such as in phone lines or computers. In prayer the objects involved in the art is God and man and the lifeline or vehicle is prayer.

Communication is the act of conveying meanings from one entity or group to another using mutually understood signs, symbols, and semiotic rules. God is an entity in one end, man is another entity at the other end. Through prayer we can pass our message to God, the Holy Spirit then conveys God message to us. He gives us understandable signs, symbols, and appropriate words in ways we could understand. He reveals the mind of God to us. If we have developed our spiritual antennae well, we will catch the message from God with ease.

Further, communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place, person, or group to another. Every communication involves (at least) one sender, a message, and a recipient. Your requests, praises, thanks, adoration, worship, the promises of God, singings, groanings, thoughts, words, etc. contains lots of message you convey to God in prayer. You are the sender and God is the Receiver of those messages or information. The opposite is also through because God also will transfer information and message to you. These are the answers to your prayers or divine instructions or leading. So, we communicate through praying to God and God answering us. We do not severe or stop this line of communication at any point in our life with anything that God hates.

God hates sins.
God hates doubts.
God hates unbelief.
God hates disobedience.
God hates coming to him through other means or person.

The only way God loves us to come to him is through his Son, Jesus, who had died and paid the price for our redemption and now serves as our intermediary between God and man. We dare not use other means to approach God. God will not accept it. We must accept and go to God on God's terms, promises, faith, and with our hearts ready to listen and obey. That is how our communication with God will be dynamic and effective.

When you want to pray then pray. Communicate and commune with you Father and God. He waits for you. He inspires that feeling because he wants to talk with you or listen to you. That is what we can describe as the sweet hour of prayer. That is the hour we draw close to God and speak with him as friend.

# When You Do Not Feel like Pray…

Prayer is one of the primaries means by which we discover God's sovereign plan for our lives. We will not always want to pray, but things are happening when we do. The weakness of our flesh that kept Jesus' disciples from prayer often dampens our desire to pray. *"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Mat.26:14). That weakness, together with the downpour of life's circumstances, can extinguish our prayer lives altogether.

Caveat! W**e** do not pray out of duty but as a means of delighting in God. We may not condemn ourselves for the lack of temporary desire to pray. We just need to find a solution to that kind of desire when it arises. Have you ever had some moments in your life when you do not want to pray? I mean any kind of praying or anything close to prayer? You are not alone. I had those moments and many folks; even very religious persons can say they have had that experience. So, what do you do when you do not want to pray? My humble answer is just PRAY. There are moments we all experience spiritual dryness or wilderness experience. At those moments praying, studying scriptures, worship, giving thanks all become stale and stalled. The urge is absence. The fire seems to be off or burn low. The heat is cover with ashes. Our spiritual graph desires have a dip. We become lethargic and seemingly cold in our heart and life spiritually. Friends, that is the time to pray. But how is that possible? It is possible because your feeling does not determine your relationship with God; your faith love for God do. Learn how to pray simple short prayers. Learn how to prayer "the Lord's prayer." Learn how to recite a psalm, or just a little prayer every day. Your daily simple child-like prayer catches attention of God because you demonstrate your dependence and love for him.

God loves to hear your voice regularly because he loves you. That is why He says, *"pray without ceasing."* That means communicate with me constantly, regularly, always. Even if you do not feel like prayer, pray anyhow. Simple prayer of faith can bring unthinkable miracles of healing. Very short, little words, small sentences like, "I command you, get out of him…" Short sentence like, "Be open…." Short phrase like,

“Go, your faith has made you whole…” “Praise the Lord.” “Thank you, Jesus.” “God is good.” “Amen.” Here are some circumstances that lead to no desire to pray.

1. When you are overwhelmed by life challenges. At such a time learn how to whisper His name.
2. Sometimes you do not have words to pray. At such a time just rest knowing Jesus is praying for you.
3. When you are too stressed out and you cannot to pray. At such a time take care of yourself.
4. You may spiritually feel numb. At such a time just invite Jesus into your world.
5. You may have to take a walk and begin an honest conversation with God. Just talk freely to him. Do not be religious about this. Express your love for God and let him know your concern.
6. Sometimes we can be too exhausted to pray. Just stop and take a rest and pray later when you feel better physically.
7. Learn to say what you want to say to God not necessarily in prayer fashion. The Songwriter says, *we speak with God as friend*. That is, it.

We all need to remind ourselves that it is not about what we do but what Christ has already done. Whether you pray or not will not affect God's move in your life. As the Bible tells us, God already knows our needs before we ask (Matthew 6:8). We pray not to earn God's favor since the latter is already set with Christ's finished work on the cross.

When you do not want to pray, then, sing to God. When you do not want to pray talk to God freely. He understands you better. When you do not want to pray then read the Bible aloud, meditate in the Word of God. When you do not want to pray find a Christian and speak to him about how you feel and request for a prayer of agreement or ask someone to pray for you and with you. When you do not feel like pray, never deny the fact, seek for spiritual help from others.

## When You Do Not Pray…

What then is the point of praying? The purpose of prayer is to grow in relationship with God. When we pray, God communicates more to us

than we communicate to Him. It is in prayer that he assures us more of his will, power, and faithfulness. We pray not to get things done. Jesus has said that *"it is done."* Or it is finished. However, prayer has some direct spiritual and psychological effects on our well-being. As early said prayer is imperative. It is like air we breath or water we drink or food we eat for our physical and biological life. Here are some insights of what happens when we do not pray, that is when we ignore or fail to commune and communicate with God.

- *We lose our confidence in God and our relationship with him*.

If we do not pray because your busyness, we will lose confidence in God and our calling. We will possibly lose our spiritual and life priority. Our testimony should be like the early Christians. *"The apostles were devoted to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." (*Acts 6: 4). The early Disciples prayed because it was the most important thing. If we dare to replace prayer and the Word with other busy things, we may end up with quantity rather than quality spiritual life.

- *We will be separated from God's kind of holiness*.

Our life and ministry without prayer becomes an act of sheer nothing but legalism, even if it appears holy on the outside. Life without prayer will be mere words but no power, holiness without power. Then we should be prepared for fear that may come to us.

- *We can be separated or lose connection from God—even if it is temporary.*

We can begin to experience a kind of distant relationship with God. It can bring a sense of distance that makes us hide ourselves from God.
When do not pray, our spirit moves away from worship and begins to deviate from all holy acts. Within short time, fear can set in on then.

- *We will come a point when we depend more on things other than God.*

Where there is no spiritual breathing through prayer, we experience some struggle that looks like choke in our souls. We may tend to rely on something to hold onto. Whenever we fail to pray or have forsaken the privilege to pray, nothing seems to
work out no matter what we rely on.

- *When we do not pray, we will be manifesting more of ourselves not God.*

When the people of the Holy Spirit do not communicate with

Him through prayer, they begin to take their own actions. Prayerless may lead to secularism in our life.

- *When a person of the Holy Spirit abandons praying, he may lose Spirit's influence*.

He may turn to the world for assistance like Samson (Judges 16: 21-28). When there is no prayer, a Christian can be self-centered, not Christ-centered. Fear comes when you do not pray. Glory without suffering is never true glory. Resurrection without death is impossible. When you follow Jesus, you become heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus prayed at dawn, but busy during the day. It is his habit. Honestly, those who feared God always prayed. Remember how Daniel prayed when he was about to be thrown into a lion 's cave. The righteous always pray and always prevails against the enemies.

One thing about those who pray is that they are brave. I encouraged you to go into your closet. Do not be afraid of the shadow of death but spread the light of prayer in search of the glory of heaven. Payer will set your will in front of all the Babylonians of the world and defend you from meaningless death. Jesus came to die. He always prayed. If Jesus does, then sinners like us should pray even more. The righteous are people who believe in Jesus. "*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*." (James 5:16).

## When God Seems Not to Answer Our Prayer…

When God does not seem to be answering our prayers it can be hard. Sometimes, downright awful, and discouraging. When God seems silent, we can wonder if prayer makes a difference. Some of the reasons why God seems to not respond to our prayers are,

- God is good and knows what is eternally best for us and does not want us to settle for the less. So, God will be silent so we can stop and listen to what he is saying—sometimes different
- from ours.
- God sometimes can say no or close a door because he has

Something better for us than we have not even thought of. He is One who can do *"… immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine (*Eph. 3:20).

- God wants us to trust him; trust his timing, trust his "no," and trust his idea of what is eternally best for you. God really is a

good father.

- God's "no" is an answer also. "No" is certainly an answer of love on the part of our Heavenly Father. Sometimes we ask for things which are not really for our good or for his glory.
- God does not always give us what we want; he gives us what we need. Just as a good parent does not grant all the requests of his child, God

does not answer every request in the way we desire.

- Sometimes "unanswered" prayer may mean that we do not understand

the way in which God responds to our requests. God may not grant an immediate answer, and sometimes our prayers are answered in a way that we fail to recognize. For example, we pray be praying for prosperity, and in return God allow sometimes financial stress. However, we discover that our souls are made stronger through the financial stress or test. God makes no mistakes, though at times we may question his wisdom.

- God checks our motive for making a request. God expects our motives to be pure. Any prayer that is self-centered, or that is concerned with the gratification of our own desires, God cannot grant answer due to his faithfulness. James 4:3 says, *"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."*
- When our prayers are not answered as we expect, it is not because God is not working in the situation. It maybe we are not understanding God's move or ways he is providing answer to our prayer. God is good and knows what is eternally best for us and does not want us to settle for less.
- God sometimes says no or closes a door because he has something

better for us than we have even thought. God can do "*immeasurably more abundantly and above than all we can ask or imagine"* (Eph.3: 20). We need to trust his timing; we need to trust his "no," we need to trust his idea of what is eternally best for you. God really is good Father.

- Remember God's "no" is an answer also. "No" is certainly an answer of love on the part of our Heavenly Father when we ask

God for things which are not really for our good or for his glory.

- God does not always give us what we want; He gives us what we need. Good parents do not grant all the requests of his child, so God does not answer every request in the way we desire.
- God's answer of no to our prayer or what we call "unanswered" prayer, may be that we do not understand the way in which God responds to our requests. God may not grant an immediate answer, and sometimes our prayers are answered in a way that we fail to recognize. For example, we pray for prosperity, and God sometimes grant financial stress. Nevertheless, our souls are made stronger by God's answer. God makes no mistakes, though at times we may question his wisdom.
- We must have good motive for making a request to God. Our motive must be pure. Our prayer that is self-centered, for gratification of our own desires, God cannot grant answer because of faithfulness. James 4:3 says, *"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."*

When God seems not to answer our prayer, we must not permit ourselves to give in to despair. We should, however, continue in prayer, knowing that the Lord is more concerned for us than we are. His will must come to pass in our life. His will is to help us always.

## When God says No…

This sub-topic and the previous one is akin. God can say "no" or remains silence to us when we pray. The reason may be same—humanly speaking. Do you ever feel like God is not answering your prayers? Remember that God's idea of a "good thing" might be different from yours**.** In Matthew 7 verse 11, Jesus said, *"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him."*

Even if there is an apparent no answer from God, keep praying, keep worshiping, keep standing upon his promises, keep going to fellowship with other children of God. Never, never give up on God my friend. Here are some suggestions for God saying no to our prayers.

***a.*** *God may be looking and waiting for our obedience.*

A simple but profound example is 1 Peter 3:7; *"Husbands, in the same way be*
*considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (NIV).*

And Psalm 84 verse 11 tells us; *"no good thing will He withhold*
*from those who walk uprightly.*" The questions are, are you walking obediently and uprightly? Is your life obedient and surrendered to Him? If not, God may be withholding or refusing to acknowledge your prayers to get you back into line with His will and purposes.

***b.*** *It may not be the right time for the blessing.*

I have heard this word early and many times in my life, *God's*
*time is the best*. It is sound theology of and on prayer. God has three answers. Yes, no, and wait. Because God can see what is eternally best for us, and He can also see what is coming down the road which we are not, or we cannot see. We need to trust his judgment. Do not second-guess God. His timing is always better than ours. If we are walking uprightly and what we are asking for is truly a good thing then, according to the Word of God, God will not be withholding his blessing. It just a matter of time.

*c. We may not be asking in faith.*

How we pray is just as important as that for which we pray. James 1: 5-8 tells us:

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you***.** *But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."*

In addition, the book of Hebrews 11: 6 says:

*"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*

So, we need to ask in faith and not with hesitation or doubting. God may be waiting for us to genuinely believe He can do what we are asking for.

***d.*** *God has better things for us than what we are asking for.*

This is the great reason God says "no" which we somehow often forget. Because God is good and knows what is eternally best for us and does not want us to settle for something less, God sometimes says no or closes a door because He has something better for us that we have not even thought to ask for. He is One who can do "*immeasurably more"* than all we can ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20).

# When God says Wait…

David tells us in Psalm 31:18,19 (NIV):*"How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you. In the shelter of your presence, you hide them from all human intrigues; you keep them safe in your dwelling from accusing tongues."*

Here are some great reasons why God blesses us and answer our prayers by saying "wait."

1. God wants us to wait for abundant and good blessings that are store stored up for us.
2. God's blessings are store in his own shelter, in his presence.
3. God wants his people to fear him and take refuge in him.
4. When God is ready to bestow his blessings, it is unhidden; it is in the sight of all.
5. God hides or keeps his blessings from all human intrigues (evil plans and plots of men).
6. God keeps our blessing safe in his dwelling safe from accusation of tongues or strives of tongues.

I have come to an understanding of the Scripture that men can destroy other blessing with their evil plans and plots and using their tongues. Men can use undue accusation or bring about strives that can destroy God's children blessing. To avoid this, God will purposefully tell us, wait! Let these accusers and strivers or men with evil intention get out of your way and site before I release to you your blessings and then you can enjoy my blessings. Is that not wonderful? It is.

We need to wait or learn to wait on God. What we expect worth the wait. Psalms 27:14 says, *"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."* Our problem is that we are always in haste. Our generation is the microwave generation. God is not an instant God. He works by principles,

processes, promises, patience, prayer of faith, and ability to wait. The reason for our waiting on God obvious. They are as we read early in Psalm 31: 18, 19. Check this again. It is convincing enough. That is God's way of doing thing and we better learn to follow him. We do not want to force the hand of God to release our blessings in an untimely manner or like a child desperately desiring something from his or her parents and tactically forces them or by pressurizing them get what is requested. The Israelites did that with God and the outcome was not pleasant at all. Psalm 106 verses 13, 14 and 15, New Living Translation says:

*"… yet how quickly they forgot what he had done! They would not wait for his counsel. In the wilderness their desires ran wild, testing God's patience in that dry wasteland. So, he gave them what they asked for, but he sent a plague along with it."* Or *"a wasting disease among them."*

In another account, it was recorded they had what they wanted, but God gave them leanness of souls! *"And He gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul."*

We can pester God with our prayer request and get what we desire.

However, if it is not his will and the best for you, you may end up in trouble. The above story was originally narrated in the book of Numbers chapter 11. The Israelites were complaining about the food they were eating and started complaining and murmuring and asking for meat as they used to eat in Egypt. Meat was good, but that was not best for them at that time as far as God is concerning. When they insisted and whined and pestering God, he answered them and gave them meat. Psalm 78: 29 says, *So, they ate and were well filled, for He gave them what they craved."* But see what happened after that.

*"Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It scattered them up to two cubits deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction. All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague."* Numbers 11: 31-33-NIV.

May this never be our experience. That is why we need to

understand when God says wait or no. He has the best for us. We do not tempt our God or provoke him to anger. It is a dangerous thing to experience the anger of God.

## When We must Wait for Long…

Sometimes we must wait—and that can be long in human point view. We need to wait for God if he deems fit. When we need to wait for God time, our faith cannot make any change to his providential plan or sovereignty. Let me show us some people who truly waited for God's to answer their prayer.

*Noah*

It took Noah many years to build the ark and waited for God's rain of destruction (Gen 6). Scholars have suggested it was between 70 to 100 years, yet God told him the rain was coming. The rain eventually came. God lingered the rain so that people may listen to Noah, see what he was doing and change their mind. Jesus said, in the days of Noah, people were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving children to marry, until the rain came, and they were not ready. God can be pretty "slow" in our eyes but wait and keep doing what he gives you to like Noah.

*Abraham and Sarah*

God called Abraham and promised him the covenant child when he was t about 75 years. He never got Isaac until he was 100 and Sarah was 90 years of age. Patience. Hope. Faith. Let us learn from our father and mother of faith.

*Jacob*

Jacob had to work for 14 years to get the wife of his desire. As stubborn as we might think Jacob was, he waited not only for his wife but for so many things in his life. He was waiting for God's answer to his prayer in Bethel when he escaped and ran away from his brother's threat. God met him in a dream and gave him the promise of Abraham his grandfather. The promise came to passed after many years.

*Hannah*

This woman of God suffered many humiliations and mockery because of not having children. She was praying year-in year-out in Shiloh until God one day let her know her waiting period is over. She had Samuel and other children. However, she learned to pray and wait!

*David*

The Psalmist and King of Israel was anointing long before he could get to the
throne. David knows the meaning of waiting for God's best time to get to his legitimate throne. A careful study of the Psalms of
David will reveal his faith and patience. He knew what is waiting on and for God's appointed time.

*Jesus Christ*

Everything about Jesus was prophesied and Jesus came to fulfil God's mandate. Nevertheless, he had to go through God's appointed time. Jesus could not do the redemptive work when he was 12. He waited, learned from earthly father, and grew in wisdom and body. God made him wait until 30 years of age to begin his public ministry. At the appointed time he demonstrated he was the Lamb of God who took away our sins. Jesus learned obedience by what he suffered. He is a perfect example of waiting on God's perfect time.

*The Nation Israel*

God promise Abraham a nation. However, it took 400
years for that nation to become a reality in the heart of Egypt. It was predicted that the children of Israel will spring up and out of Egypt after 400 years of services. ESV Bible renders this as:

*"Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions."* (Gen. 15: 13, 14).

This is exactly what happened. 400 years of waiting tends to be above and beyond what some contemporary Christians or people can fathom. Wait. Learn to wait. Every good thing takes time.

Wait on the Lord.

# Prayer and Secret Place of Prayer

Best prayer is conceived and given birth to in our hearts. That is the first and best secret place of prayer. If you do not have a heart where God dwells, you hardly can pray. Our heart is the home of God. God dwells in us, in our heart by his Holy Spirit. Our heart is the most secret place for prayer. If you have a heart that does not love God, you cannot love to pray, inspire to pray, conceive prayer, desire to pray, and pray indeed. In

fact, you have no secret place of prayer. Or you have secret place but something else or someone lesser than God dwells in it. Whoever dwells in your heart will control your life. There is no better secret place of and for prayer than our hearts. Prayer begins from our hearts and ends in heaven—at the throne of grace. God puts the desire to pray and what to pray for right inside our heart. So, if we do not prepare our hearts for prayer
and engage our hearts in prayer, we are not praying at all.

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was kept in the Holy of Holies until the Israelites was careless about it and it was "stolen" by their enemy. The Ark of the Covenant represents where God met with the Priests and let them know the mind of God. There were events that explained many things that happened to the Ark. It was at the end of the day, the Ark was almost lost, abandon, or neglected somewhere. The bottom line is that the Ark was a shadow of something better and greater to come.

In the New Testament, the Ark of the Covenant comes to full realization in Person of the Holy Spirit. Everything inside and outside of the Ark was pointing the Person and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Just like the Ark was meant to be in the Holy of Holies, the Holy Spirit now lives in our hearts, which is now the Holy of Holies. The overlaid gold, meaning the purity of our holy God, the Manna, representing the Divine food given to believers by the Holy Spirit, the Aaron Staff that budded, representing the new life from the Spirit, and the presence of God represented by the Ark, all are embedded in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit now dwells in every believer's heart. The Holy Spirit thus dwells in our secret place—our hearts. God dwells in our hearts. His Presence is with us now. God is our Emmanuel. If God lives in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, it is obvious he lives in our secret place. This is the greatest privilege and redemptive blessings for all the redeemed. Our hearts are the secret place God dwells now. If God dwells in your heart, there is no way you will not desire, love, and pray. The Spirit of God in you moves you to pray. We only need to yield to his prompting. That is our challenge as Christian. We fail to yield to the Spirit's bidding us to pray. We ignore the Holy Spirit as he speaks to us. We provoke him with our lifestyle. We often almost quench him. Some Christians truly quench the Holy Spirit and become like any other person in the world.

When we all have the best secret place of prayer, our hearts, then, we can talk about other secret places of prayer. Jesus says in Matthew 6 verses 5 and 6,

"*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father,*
*who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

Some things stand out in those verses about prayer.

- Prayer is imperative. Jesus says, *"when you pray…."*
- Everyone prays, even hypocrites love to pray. Jesus says, *do not be like hypocrite for the love to pray…"*
- The hypocrites pray "*standing in the synagogues…, and on the corner of the street to be seen by others."*
- Hypocrites and hypocritical prayers are not from the secret place of prayer. They obtain no answer from God. Their rewards are the praise from men.
- True prayer is done in the secret place. This can be spiritual closet, our hearts, physical closet like our rooms with closed door.
- Jesus says to pray meaningfully is "*pray to your Father, who is unseen."*
- The answers or rewards to prayer done in the secret comes from "*your Father, who sees what is done in secret…"*

Aside from praying in our heart and from our heart where no one even knows we are praying, prayer can be done and should be done in private, secret places. Many Christians have prayer rooms or praying chambers where they meet with God. That is recommended. Secret prayers can also be in the wood, on the mountain, in the forest, in the beach, riverside, etc. if it is done in such a way that we focus on God and not ourselves or others. Jesus is a great example of a person who prayed in the secret—either in heart or places away from others. Jesus prayed in the wood, on mountains, forest, etc. He was always alone with the Father. That is who we should follow.

## What about Corporate and Public Prayer?

The Bible teaches private, individual, or personal prayer. It also teaches

us family prayer and group prayer. The Bible also is full of accounts of God's people worshipping and praying corporately and publicly. We have instances of prayer in reverential and quiet format as well as loud and public prayers in both Old and New Testament. All we should know is we should understand the context of where we are and pray as appropriate as possible. This is the wisdom; when I found myself in a church where the prayer is open, public, congregational, loud, and extemporaneous or spontaneous, I adjust myself and get the best of it. On the other hand, when I am in context where the prayer is expected to be calm, quiet, personal, and solemn, I get the best of it. At home I do pray all kind of prayer in my room. There are times I pray silently, right in my heart. And there are times I burst out in ecstasy and loud and worship with singing. This is wisdom in adjusting ourselves to any situation we found ourselves. That was how Jesus did and we can do that as well by his grace.

## When We Do Not Know What to Pray for…

Surprisingly, there are many things to pray for. All the same we have Christian folks for whom claim they have nothing to pray. If you ever see yourself in that condition and you do not have physical illness or mental issues or psychological challenges, here are some things to understand. There is always something to pray to God for. It can be as simple as thanking or praising God or just worshipping him. Look at this simple formula for prayer and you can see you will and can always have something to say in prayer.

Prayer is encompassed in this acronym, A. C. T. S

A = Adoration

C = Confession

T = Thanksgivings

S = Supplication

ADORATION

Friends, there are more of God to ADORE in prayer that can take all our time and praying experience. Have you learned what to adore in God? His beauty, holiness, righteousness, power, love, peace, compassion, mercy, grace, goodness, glory, etc. Take some time to adore God in your prayer you will see you have more than enough to say in prayer.

CONFESSION

Confession many folds.

a. We need to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness.
b. We can do confession of faith.
c. We can confession the greatness of God.
d. We can confess God's promises.
e. We can confess the Lordship of Jesus.
f. We can confess who we are in Jesus.

I like how Paul writes this in Philemon verse 6, *"that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."* Tell me, who can ever come to full understanding of every good thing which is in him in Christ Jesus? Or who can itemize in full every good thing in us by our redemptive relationship with Jesus? The Songwriter says, great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercy I see, all I have needed your hand has provided… We can never thank, praise, worship, appreciate God enough. That is why we have what to say in prayer. The problem is if we are self-centered in our prayer, we will run short of what to pray for or what to say in prayer.

THANKSGIVING

This is another dimension of prayer that has no limit. It is an axiom that a thoughtful person is a thankful person. Thus, if you can think deep on who God is, what God has done for you, what he has promise you, the blessing of his daily mercy, unfailing grace, his unconditional love, his ever-abiding presence, etc. giving thanks will be easy. Give thanks as much as you can in your prayer you will discover you have much to say. Thanksgivings open the door for more of God's rich blessings. Be thankful in your prayer and you will see you surely have more than view words to say in prayer. There is always something fresh or old to thank God for. Much thank is never a sin. God never quantify the number of tanks we should give him. So, give thanks generously to this generous God who gives all things freely to enjoy.

SUPPLICATION

This is a form of prayer, wherein one party humbly or earnestly asks another party to provide something, either for the party who is doing the supplicating or on behalf of someone else. Supplication and petition and

intercession are great part of Christian prayer that when we do them faithfully, we see are fully engaged in praying to the Lord.

I bet you, you have many things you desire for yourself and family. I believe if we are praying for salvation of our immediate family, especially for salvation and other spiritual blessings we would have something to pray for. Now, add your friends, neighbors, co-workers, colleagues, acquaintances, etc. Then, add praying for your community and nation. Add praying for the world. What about praying for leaders—spiritual, political, educational, economic, and business, etc.

How about praying for the Kingdom of God? Jesus teaches us to pray to God, *"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* We do not have extended prayer because we often and selfishly narrow praying to ourselves. Prayer is not designed for you and your family only. God wants to use our prayer to touch and bring transformation to you, children, family, neighbors, community, nation, church, unbelievers, and the world. We need to repent of our selfish, narrow-minded, little prayer. We can do better than that if we use ACTS.

*Do not worry about anything but pray about everything.*
*With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God—CEV*

# Chapter 2
# Prayer Dimensions

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God—ESV.*

Prayer has dimensions. This connotes the length, breath, and height of prayer. In these three dimensions, no one can say how long, how wide, and how deep any prayer.

- Prayer can be as *qualitative*. That is, it is done in faith, with a pure and loving heart, and directly to God, and focusing on the will and promises of God. Jesus teaches and recommends to us to pray to God, *"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* That is a qualitative prayer.
- Prayer can be *quantitative*. That is, we look at how long, how wide, the eloquence of person(s) praying, the pitch and intensity of the voice we use, etc. Jesus warns about the hypocritical pharisaic prayer; *"And when you pray, do not be*

*like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others.*

- Prayer can be *vertical* going to God. This is when we direct our prayer

"upward," looking for answer from God.

- Prayer can be *horizontal*. This is when we are praying to

God for others. When we intercede on behalf of others.

- Prayer can be i*nwardly*. This is when we are praying for

yourself.

From biblical understanding and practices of Saints, prayer can take the following dimensions we will examine in this chapter. I encourage you to examine these dimensions and adjust and advance in your prayer life. It worth the effort. God looks for qualitative prayers; such prayer has eternal rewards.

## Prayer as Worship Experience

Let us examine this worship-prayer song.

*Holy are You Lord, all creation calls You God*
*Worthy is Your name, we worship Your Majesty*
*Awesome God, how great Thou art*
*You are God, mighty are Your miracles*
*We stand in awe of Your holy name*
*Lord we bow and worship You.*
*King of kings, Lord of lords, everlasting King*
*Savior Redeemer, soon coming King*
*King of kings, Lord of lords, everlasting King*
*Savior Redeemer, soon coming King*
*Awesome, awesome, you are awesome.*
*Awesome, awesome, you are awesome*[5]

This song is an example of worshipping in song. It shows God's names, attributes, power, and the honor due to him. It shows what God is to believers now and eschatological hope. We can read words in prayer or sing in worship. Prayer and worship are spiritual disciplines. We pray in worship, and we worship as we pray to our God. It looks like we cannot separate praying from worshipping. They are Siamese twins. The Bible teaches the two-edged sword of prayer-worship and worship-prayer.

Each time you pray you are worshipping God and each time you are worshipping you are praying to God. This is how Jesus clarifies this spiritual logic in Matthew 6: 9, 10.

*"This, then, is how you should pray:*
*"'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be*
*your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

The first part of Jesus' model of prayer is acknowledging God as our
Father and worshipping God. Jesus teaches us to start our prayer with worship. Then, we can ask what is worship? In simple man language, worship is the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity. This deity to Christian is the Almighty God. Genuine worship is not only about music, songs, singing, dancing, emotion, good choir, etc. We can worship God with or without these outward acts and things. While such acts may involve honoring God, they are not full meaning and practice of worship. An act of worship may be performed individually, in an informal or formal group, or by a designated leader.

A biblical theology of worship is intended to serve as a compass for the local church when evaluating the various worship options available in an ever-changing culture. The heart of worship is hearts delighting in Jesus and expressing praise to him for the true things the Scriptures teach us about who he is and what he has accomplished for us. It is, then, "all about" Jesus, not us. It involves us, but we are at the periphery. He is at the center. He is the focus. When we pray, we worship God putting all the above qualities and description into effect. Our worship begins in our heart and is a propelling force for true prayer. We pray and worship, giving God the praise, honor, thanks, adoration etc. that are his at all time. In such attitude, worship and prayer become a lifestyle of God's people.

We worship God in our prayer because it is the best sacred moment to do so. Thus, according to the Scriptures,

- We worship God because of who He is.
- We worship God because of what He has done for us.
- We worship God because He commands us to.
- We worship God to bless and honor Him.
- We worship God because we love Him.

- We worship God because of what He is doing on the earth.
- We worship God because we desire to experience God's presence as we do so more than when we do otherwise. We intentional draw near to God in worship and prayer.

Now look at this. We often connect prayer and worship; they are inseparable according to Jesus. When we pray and begin with *"our Father in heaven, hallow be thy name…"* it is an art and act of worship. And when we continue the prayer with *"give us this day our daily bread…"* we are still worshipping God because we see him for who he is. He is our Provider and Sustainer—our El-Shaddai God. When we pray *"forgive us our sins…"* we are still worshipping him, depending on him for cleansing and sanctification which only him can do. And when we close our prayer with *"for yours is the Kingdom, the glory and power, forever and ever, Amen,"* we are closing our prayer with the spirit and utterances of worship. Jesus got this in place for us. I call this Jesus' dimensions of true worship. Prayer and worship can hardly be separated. While we may feel we are praying and asking for everything in heaven and earth, we can never have biblical prayer without elements of worship.

Again, let us be reminded that worship and prayer can take any format.

- Both can be done alone (if we can separate them) or work together simultaneously.
- These two spiritual Siamese twins can be expressed verbally and non-verbally. Thus, we can say our prayer and worship, or we can have both done in our secret place—our hearts. We can read words of prayer and worship that we have written.
- We can sing in worship and in prayer.
- We can pray and worship spontaneously, extemporaneously, with emotions of crying, or smiling or laughter, or sadness and sorrow.
- Our worship and prayer can be expressed in diverse kinds of songs, instruments, and languages.
- Both worship and prayer can be performed in silence or quietly and loudly.

We see all of these in the Scriptures. So, there can be legalism about these spiritual disciplines of worship and prayer. When we legalize them, we will miss what the Lord has for us. Jesus was very gracious in his

prayer and worship life. So, we must be. We must develop a dynamic and positive relationship with our Father like that can allow us to pray and worship anytime, anywhere, without fear of intimidation from people and environment. That will allow us to pray and worship openly or secretly, publicly when necessary or privately. When praying and worshipping is our lifestyle, we can do them at anytime and anywhere effectively and meaningfully. Remember, God is Omnipresent.

Please note the followings.

We can pray and worship and can worship and pray.
We can sing to pray and sing to worship.
We can talk and pray, and we can talk and worship.
We can pray in silence and worship in silence.
We can shout in prayer and shout in worship.
We can praise and thank God in prayer and in worship.
We can use God's words and promises in both cases.
We can pray in the spirit and worship in the spirit.
We can have a genuine encounter with God in both prayer and worship.
We can grow spiritually as we pursue these disciplines intentionally.
We can change our life, family, community, and world with both prayer and worship.

I have come to realize in my spiritual journey that worship and prayer enhance my spiritual growth. My Bible study, evangelistic endeavors, missions, giving, social ministry, teaching, preaching, and witnessing become as effective and fruitful and meaningful as my quality of prayer and worship.

## Prayer as Weapon of Spiritual Warfare

Christian life involves spiritual warfare. It is inescapable. At one point in our life, we will have to fight. That is why Paul tells us *to "fight a good fight of faith."* For us to fight and win we must have right weapons and know how to use them. We need to be properly trained in the art of spiritual warfare. Christians are likened to soldiers. Every soldier is trained in the use of weapons or armory. So, Christians need to be trained. Apostle Paul tells us:

"*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the*

*pulling down of strong holds;).* 2 Cor. 10: 3-4—KJV.

There is warfare, so there are weapons to us. The Bible gives us some weapons for spiritual warfare which include the following things.

i) The name of Jesus.
ii) The Blood of Jesus.
iii) Faith.
iv) Love.
v) The Word of God.
vi) Angelic assistances.
vii) Prayer and worship.

All the weapons can be effectively used in the atmosphere of prayer. While prayer itself is a weapon, we can couple it with other weapons for effective fight and victory. Prayer is a powerful and universal weapon. Facts of history and experiences of Christians show how prayer has been a great weapon of warfare.

Mary Queen of Scotland (also called bloody Mary because of wicked lifestyle and leadership) said, "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the armies of England." Many students of missions and Reformation know John Knox (1505-1572). John Knox was a Scottish clergyman and leader of the Protestant Reformation who brought reformation to the church in Scotland. Imprisoned during the late 1540's for supporting the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, Knox prayed daily, "Lord, give me Scotland, or I die". By the time he died in 1572, Scotland had been transformed and the Scottish Parliament had adopted the Reformation doctrines. Some of the first missionaries to America were from Scotland.

Throughout history, there have always been leaders who emerge in cities and regions, take the leadership in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and claim their city or region for the Lord. We often look to these men and women as "John Knoxers" – willing to risk everything, including their life, on the line." They rather use prayer as weapon to win battles than using physical armory. Prayer has been known by experience and outcomes as the most disciplined of all human acts. It is the act of obedience to the command of a Sovereign God that is met with organized battle by the raging forces of hell - its target. A man/woman of organized disciplined of consistent and growing prayer is a single force of wealth and power on the earth[6]. Prayer is spiritual weapon that can

defeat any force from hell or on earth. God has given all believers in his Son this weapon and we should all learn how to use
adequately and effectively.

How do Christians use the spiritual weapons God has provided for
them effectively? Here are some insights.

1. Use the weapon by faith in prayer and confession.
2. Use the weapon to pull down of strong holds.
3. Use the weapon to cast down imaginations.
4. Use the weapon to cast down every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.
5. Use the weapon to and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.
6. Use the weapon to revenge all disobediences.
7. Ensure your obedience is fulfilled (2Cor. 10: 3-5).

There are always strong holds, evil imaginations, high things, disobedience thoughts and acts around us that we need to subdue and bring to obedience of Christ Jesus. We have that divine mandate from our Captain Jesus. It is just normal Christian life to fight spiritual fight using God ordained weapon. That is the only way we can ensure our victory in the Lord.

***Examples of God's people who prevailed through prayer***

- *Moses*

Moses is known to have face-to-face talk or communication with God. That is praying. How did Moses overcome Pharaoh's magicians and wisemen if not by the power of God through his face-to-face relationship? How did Moses prevail over Pharaoh and his army? By prayer. How did Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and down to the promised land? My gut tells me by prayer. How can you lead, counsel, instruct, direct, pray for millions of uncivilized, stubborn people? Ask Moses and he would tell you his secret was the weapon of
prayer.

- *Joshua*

Joshua prevailed by prayer. Joshua was known to constantly seek the face of God before any war. Joshua used prayer to decipher the evil deeds of Aichan and his prayer helped the children of Israel to move

forward to the promised land. Prayer warfare was Joshua strategy. Through prayer Joshua helped us to know that the Captain of hosts of heaven is with is. The Captain is the Lord himself. Our God is a man of war and our Captain. The strategy of walking around the fortified wall of Jericho for 7 days and 7 times on the 7th day could not have excluded worshipping and praying to God. That was never just a military strategy. It was a spiritual military strategy that God gave to Joshua. It worked because we read that Jericho fortified wall fell flat and God people conquered
the city.

- *Abraham*

Abraham prevailed over existential challenges by divine power of prayer. God said of Abraham*, "can I hide from Abraham what I intend to do…?"* Abraham knew how to prevail in prayer. He interceded for Lot and saved him and his children. Abraham is known to be good worshipper of God. We see him building altars to God everywhere he went. This means Abraham was a man of prayer and worship.

- *Jacob*

Jacob literally means a cheater or supplanter. But that name was given by men and not God. Before we keep on crucifying Jacob who was never crucified by God let us remember and understand the Scriptures about him. While his mother was pregnant, she went to God to enquire about her pregnancy. Here is what God told her. God announced to Rebekah that the twins in her womb—Jacob and Esau—will have differing futures in relation to the divine promise**.** And God spelt out that divine purposes. We read the account as:

*"Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren.*
*and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah*
*conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If it is to be this way, why do I live?' So, she went to inquire of the Lord and the Lord said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.' When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so, they named him Esau. Afterwards his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so, he was named Jacob."* Gen. 25: 21-26.

It is interesting to know that Isaac prayed for children. It is also interesting to know that God answered Isaac's prayer—his wife conceived, and the pregnancy was two peoples (or nations). When the babies were troubling Rebecca, she was spiritual enough to pray to God to know she was having problem with the pregnancy. At this point God spoke to her about the children and their future divine purposes. Both Esau and Jacob had divine purposes. It was clearly stated to Rebecca,
"*… Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger."*

Some of us who condemn and crucify Jacob, do we see and understand this divine purpose? Jacob was the younger of Rebecca's twins. And it was divinely designed for him to lead his senior brother. We cannot do anything about that. It was like Jacob was hearing when God was speaking to his mom while they were in the womb. So, when time comes to be delivered, he "*came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so, he was named Jacob."* I guess if the mother or the father remembered what God told them before they jumped to give the younger twin Jacob, they could have given a different name to him. His name was not Jacob in God's record. Jacob was designed to be a Prince of God; a covenant child who will continue God's covenant with Abraham and Isaac. It is simple. It was never Esau
in God's divine economy.

We see how prayer played in this event of Isaac and Rebecca. It seemed they quickly forgot what God told them and gave the younger child a name contrary to God's divine purpose because he held his brother's heel. In that culture, a child who does that is telling them he is out to cheat his brother. So, culturally, they named him Jacob. When God was ready to fulfil the ultimate divine purpose, he has and promised to Jacob, God changed his name to Israel which means a Prince. Jacob was a Prince of God and not a supplanter which his parent culturally named him. It took Jacob a whole night prayer—a night of being with God wrestling to overcome and come to what God has said about him and to him. Esau never did that. We dare not keep on condemning Jacob who is not condemned by God. Remember, the Prince of God fulfilled the divine purpose of God. That purpose was the formation of the nation of Israel. Israel's children became the nation we call Israel till today, no Esau's

children.

Jacob had many wars to fight. He either wins or perish. But he prayed and won. Jacob has battles to fight. They were,

1. Battle to resist or reject the name God did not give to him. God did not call him cheater or supplanter. How do you feel if you are called one of the most derogatory names in the world? Mr. Cheater. Mr. Supplanter. Mr. Thief, etc.
2. Battle to hide or run away from his brother who was angry at him and would kill him.
3. Battle to overcome being homeless, hunger, thirst, dangers as he fled from home.
4. Battle with his father-in-law who turned out to be deceiver in business and abuser of persons.
5. Battle to overcome the plots of his father-in-law when he fled with his

wives and children.

6. Battle to prevail over his brother Esau who was coming to

destroy everything Jacob had as he meets him on the way back home.

7. Battle to reconciled with God after realizing his life is not in line with what God has in plan for him.

Do you know the best prayer Jacob ever prayed that brought real victory for him over all his challenges? It was record for us in Genesis 32: 26-31: *"But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" So, He said to him,*

*"What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there. So, Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.*

That was the turning point in Jacob's life. It was the moment of ultimate victory. What weapon did he use? The weapon of prevailing prayer. The angel of the Lord said, *"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men and*

*have prevailed."*

I tell you Jacob really struggled with God and men to enter his divine purpose. I am glad he did prevail and had the life victory. Many of us can resonate with Jacob in life struggles. We are struggling with God, asking question, when, where how our divine purpose will come to pass. We can learn something from Jacob, prevailing prayer. We are struggling with men as they call us names that are not meant or designed for us. With weapon of prayer, we can prevail and have permanent victory like Jacob. God can give us our original and divine name—names in line with our divine purpose and plan.

- *Jehoshaphat*

If you were Jehoshaphat, what would you have done when *"a great multitude is coming against you…?"* Maybe I may not know what to do immediately. But Jehoshaphat did so well. The Scriptures says, *"Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD AND proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD."* It is natural to be afraid when troubles come or is imminent. It is spiritual and divine to seek the face of God through praying and fasting. It is even better to get more of men of similar belief and faith with us in the prayer. So, Jehoshaphat mobilized his people to fight the battle with divine weapon of prayer. The prayer involved everyone. *"Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children."*

Then there was a Levite or Priest within this "spiritual army" of God fighting with weapon of prayer. God's Spirit came upon him

"… *A Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King: Thus, says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's… Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you…."*

That was nothing but true prophecy. Believing these words of encouragement was ok.

"*And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." And when he*

*had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever."*

We can see multilayers of spiritual weapon used by Jehoshaphat and his people.

1. They prayed.
2. They heard words of prophecy.
3. They sang and praised God.
4. They fasted.
5. The appointed worshipers and they all worshipped.
6. They believed or trusted God for victory over their enemy.

And they won effortlessly! They prevailed over the enemy. God fought for them according to the prophecy.

"*And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another."*

It was like an unknown soldier sprang up and fought to defend the people of God. God made opposing army *to destroy one another.*

- *Jabez*

Jabez knew what humiliation, looks like. He knew poverty, understood derogatory name, the stress of being raised by a single parent. The Bible says his mother called him Jabez because she gave birth to him in sorrow. We never knew his father. May be that was the beginning of the sorrow. But Jabez mother should be commended for teaching or training Jabez how to pray. If he did not know how to fight his life battle with prayer, he would have remained *Jabez*, the sorrowful forever. Prayer weapon was what helped Jabez. The Bible has just two verses about this man and how he prevailed and obtained his victory over sorrow, poverty, lack of recognition, derogatory name, stresses, and anguish of life. In 1 Chronicles 4 verse 10, we read this powerful account. It is an account like no man or
woman in the Bible.

*"And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called*

*his*
*name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."*—1 Chron. 4: 9, 10 (KJV).

The honor Jabez eventually got was because of his prayer to God. Jabez has five prayer points presented to God.

1. Bless me indeed. So, there was no blessing indeed?
2. Enlarge my coast. He was restricted before.
3. Let your hand be with me. He never felt the presence of God as he expected.
4. Keep me from evil. His background tells us he was living with evil from birth.
5. Do not let me be grieved anymore. His life was initially an epitome of

sorrow and grief.

When Jabez prayed he overcame these challenges because God granted all that which he requested. How did God remove sorrow, grief, restraints, and brought abundant blessings? We were not told. We know Jabez got victory and breakthrough via his prayer to God… *"And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren:* Prayer works. Prayer weapon works. I dare you pray the prayer of Jabez today!

- *Hannah*

Hannah knew what it meant to be provoked and ridiculed by her adversary. One day, when she could not take it any longer, she prayed a different kind of prayer from what she used to do every year in Shiloh. She added another layer to her prayer; she prayed with a vow. The Bible says:

*"Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to*
*the LORD. And she made this vow: "O LORD of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow, answer my prayer, and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the LORD, his hair will never be cut… When Elkanah slept with Hannah, the LORD remembered her plea, and in due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I asked the LORD for him."* (1 Samuel 1: 9-19—NLT).

Hannah's prayer brought forth Samuel, the great prophet of Israel. Prayer worked for Hannah. She overcame all odds and imaginations, and strong holds by prayer and vow to the Lord. We can do this. That is another dimension to prayer, and it works. Hannah did not accept no for an answer. She was relentless in her praying to God she trusted. She kept worshipping God despite her anguish of soul and bitter mockery in her life. Some people would have said God does not exist or accuse God wrongly in such a situation. Hannah only source of hope was God who she contacted in her prayer—closet prayer. This was how Hannah prayed.

*Hannah stood up*—this was a different kind of standing up. It is a stand of desperation to pray. God welcomes any posture in prayer. Prayer liturgy has no mono-posture. Standing up is one of the postures for prayer. It is an act to keep you alert, awake, conscious, and intentional in what you are doing. Hannah knew she did not need to lay on her bed or knee down or be in a more comfortable disposition that can make her doze or sleep off.

- She stood up to fight spiritually.
- She stood to resist the evil spirit of mockery and shame of her life in prayer.
- Hannah stood up!

You too can stand up and pray today. God welcomes standing up to pray. Praying moment is a moment of spiritual battle. Hence, stand up and fight.

*i. Hannah prayed to the LORD in her deep anguish weeping bitterly*

Problems of life are real and one of the ways God has designed to solve life's problems is by praying to him seeking divine intervention. If you neglect this, you will blame yourself. Hannah made use of this divine channel of solving life's problem. Hannah prayed in deep anguish. That was a prayer in desperation and God honored her faith.

ii. *Hannah made a vow*—I wonder a little who or what taught Hannah

these strategic moves in prayer. She provoked God to do something. Hannah went beyond herself. The vow made her prayer a different kind of prayer. When one is thus desperate with God something will happens. Hannah was doing a prayer beyond her, a prayer that will give birth to a

prophet that God as prepared in eternity. May be this was the reason God temporarily closed her. Her situation spurred her prayer!

iii. *Hannah kept on praying to the LORD*— Yes, keep praying, never give

up. Do not worry about who is watching your mouth seeking to hear what you are saying. In fact, when we are praying in this manner, people around us are irrelevant and insignificant. Hannah was praying and the Priest was watching her mouth!

vi. *Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice*

*was not heard*—There are many types of praying persons and praying postures in the Bible. There is no one-fit-all-style when it comes to prayer in the Bible. In my own understanding, liturgy and theology of prayer, there are variety of ways, attitudes, and patterns that one can use. Do not tell me to keep silent when I am prompted to shout, cry, yell, scream, like Jesus did. Remember Jesus:

*"…who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death and was heard because of His*

*godly fear…"* (Hebrew 5:7-NKJV).

At this moment of prayers (only heaven knows how many times Jesus did this), praying silently was not what should be done. This was not time to read prayer from a paper or book. This was extemporaneous, fervent, loud cries and prayer of Jesus. It is highly welcome when our need demands it! However, Hannah had a different liturgy of prayer. She stood up. She cried up. She wept. She moved her lips. No one could hear what she was uttering—even the observing Priest as close as he was to Hannah, possibly could not hear Hannah's voice. Yet, Hannah was praying rightly, fervently, earnestly, and sincerely. She prayed in her closet and God answered her openly. Hannah prayed as the Lord epitomizes or gives us the blueprint in the gospel narratives.

We may not know fully the power in prayer as spiritual weapon until we put this weapon to use. Prayer works. Prayer procures victory. Prayer can make us prevail over our enemies or life challenges. Prayer is a great weapon. That is why Jesus strongly recommends to us to pray and not to faint because he knows the power in and of praying.

- *Esther*

Esther knew what desperate prayer is, and she went for it.

The story of Esther in the Bible reminds us to pray and wait for God to work. Divine providence took Esther, an orphan, and her uncle to a foreign land. There are problems everywhere under the sun. Esther and her uncle came across a wicked person who wanted to wipe out their race and people. Esther had been providentially made the Queen of the land and her uncle told her the evil intention of the enemy. If this plot was carried out Esther may likely not be spare. Her uncle encouraged her to use what we call the stewardship of influence, perhaps, they can overcome the evil schemes of their adversary and live. It was a hard thing for Esther, and she needed to do something because the issue was time sensitive. Desperate, Esther decided to seek the face of the Lord and do something that was against palace protocol. She decided to fast for three days. That was a fasting and praying even though praying was not mentioned. This was the divine plan Esther suggested to her uncle. She and other-like-minded persons with he did the say. In Esther 4: 15 and on we read,

"*Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "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 attendants 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."*

Friends, she never perished. Her people did not perish. In fact, their enemy

perished, and he was hung on the gallows he prepared for Esther's uncle. Leo Ravenhill said, "we can preach and perish; but we cannot pray and perish." Praying saves life. Prayer preserves those who pray because through it, God moves to do something great for them. The weapon of prayer and fasting was what Esther and her people used and their lives were preserved. You too can engage that weapon today and see what God will do through your prayer.

## Prayer as Work to Do

*"Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured"*—Col. 4:12-NIV.

*“Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”*—NKJV.

I looked at the words used by different translations to describe prayer effort of Epaphras. They are very astonishing. Some of them are listed.

- always wrestling
- always laboring
- always struggling
- laboring earnestly
- laboring fervently
- always prays hard
- always contending
- always striving
- always prays intensely
- always striving
- always solicitous
- always combating earnestly.

Greek scholars say the idea in the original word is that of struggling. Thus, prayer involves struggling in the spirit, mind, and body. True prayer takes hold of our spirit, mind, and body. All the phrases above are true of biblical prayer. In some places, prayer is likened to anguish, moaning, groaning, agonizing, etc. Even when the Holy Spirit prays for us. *“The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*”—Romans chapter 8 verse 26 (NKJV).

The Message Bible renders this as:

*“the moment we get tired in the waiting, God’s Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we do not know how or what to pray, it does not matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans.*

All these show that prayer is not a child play even if a child could pray meaningfully. When we are praying, we are practically laboring, engaging our spirit, soul, body, and the Holy Spirit. We need to grasp this truth and be ready for what it takes to pray meaningfully. Yes.

***Jesus at Praying***

In Matthew 4 verse 11, we read in MSG Bible, *“The test was over. The Devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus’*

*needs."* I used to see the temptation of Jesus as prayer for victory against something opposing the will of God. Do you know, we like Jesus, struggling against devil's temptations to the point that we lose physical and spiritual stamina? In case of Jesus, God had to send angels to care for him; *"angels came and ministered unto him.;" "some angels came to Jesus and helped him." "Immediately angels came and began to serve Him.;" "suddenly angels came and waited on him."* The intensity of Jesus' prayer to overcome the devil was so energy sapping that God had to send angels to strengthen him immediately. Prayer is real work. We should be prepared for this work if we will do it diligently. Lazy Christian finds prayer hard. However, when we are weak in prayer our victory in life is in jeopardy.

In another episode of prayer of Jesus, we read how Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives. The account tells us:

*"Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him. When He came to the place, He told them, "Pray that you will not enter into temptation." And He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, where He knelt down and prayed, "Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And in His anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground."*—Luke 22: 39-44 (BSB).

Three things are undeniable from this narration.

- Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives to pray.
- He prayed for God's will to be done. When anyone comes to this level of "your will be done," he or she has come to the higher level of prayer. Knowing and accepting God's will is the best. Nothing is more important than that.
- Angels had to come to strengthen Jesus because of apparent exhaustion

he had due to prayer.

- Jesus' prayer was so intense that his sweat came out as drops of blood falling to the ground.

Medical field calls this as hematohidrosis or hematidrosis,
hemidrosis. It is a condition in which capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood. This occurs under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress. That is what

prayer can do to our physical body. The author of book of Hebrews further shed lighter on Jesus' experience of hemidrosis. The author writes, *"in your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."*—Heb. 12:4 (NIV). Jesus did resist temptation of abandoning God's will to the point of shedding blood. He overcame by saying*, "not my will but your will be done."* I have not seen any other person in the history of Christianity who has this horrific experience.

Prayer is labor. Prayer is work. Prayer lays hold of our spirit, soul, and body. Prayer takes our physical and spiritual energy and stamina. Prayer is not a joke. Nevertheless, God has given us the channel to communicate and fellowship with him and to overcome spiritual battles in our life. We need to embrace prayer and brace up for the effort, energy, labor, and work—physical and spiritual—that is involved. When we pray well, we will live well. When we do not pray, we live a defeated life. The choice is ours. I strongly believe God who asks us to pray knows the practical details of prayer and he will provide us the necessary grace and wisdom to do it in a way to get his best from this discipline.

# Prayer as Walking with God

Do you want to be closer to God? Then start and continue to pray. Learn how you will improve your prayer life.

- *What is walking with God?*

First, God created us for fellowship with him and he desires us to walk with Him. Micah 6: 8 says:

*"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does*
*the LORD requires of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

God requires our walking with him so he could do some great things in us, for us, and through us.

Second, Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the garden of Eden (Gen.3:8) but when they disobeyed God, they lost that privilege. But Jesus came to offer us forgiveness and restoration with God. Thus, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus enables us to have a personal and close relationship with God through the Holy Spirit (John 14: 15-17). When we put our faith in Jesus, our relationship with God becomes the most important thing in our life. This is what is meant by walking with God.

Third, walking with God was something God's people did and still doing. It is our evidence of our living relationship with him. We see Enoch walking with God:
*"Enoch walked with God…"* (Gen 5: 24). We see Noah walking with God; *"Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God*" (Gen. 6:9**).** We see when God told Abraham, *"…I am God Almighty; Walk [habitually] before Me [with integrity, knowing that you are always in My presence], and be blameless and complete [in obedience to Me*]" (Gen. 17: 1—AMP).

People of God were called men who walked with God. When we walk with God the following experiences are us.
We place him into our everyday life and our decision making.
We spend time praying and talking with him throughout the day.
We talk with him.
We have conversation.
We seek him try to please him in all our ways.
We will share things that are on our mind with him.
We always listen to him in our journey to eternity.
We stay focused on what each other is saying and refuse to be distracted.
We agree with God and his ways. *"Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?" (*Amos 3:3).
We make God desire as our desire.
We let our selfish desires die for the sake of seeing God transform
us more and more into the image of his Jesus Christ his Son and our Savior.
We walk in the Spirit.
We allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us and correct us.
We depend on the power and work of the Holy Spirit
to enable us to walk with him.
We walk in God's way; we do things as God would have us do them—according to his divine plan, pattern, and purpose.
We live to please him and not yourself.
We display the fruit of the Spirit on daily basis.

Does this look like praying? Absolutely. Praying is not just bending our knees or clasping our two hands looking up to heaven. Prayer is conversation with God. It is what we do as we go along our

pilgrim journey, every day. As believers in Christ, we need to walk with God. God loves to be in relationship with us, and we can converse with him through prayer and reading his Word, hearing his love, and gaining is wisdom for us as we live our lives here on the earth.

Walking with God is a way of life, and it is a choice. There will be sacrifices to make no matter which path we choose. Walking with God is the way of eternal life. We should cut things out of our lives that keep us from walking in the ways of God, because we are motivated by his love and a desire to be close to him. When we consistently walk with God, others will be able to recognize that we have been with Jesus, though we have flaws and imperfections. Prayer is a way of walking with God. DO you want to feel his presence daily? Then pray!

The idea is expressed vividly by this Hymnal.

*Thou my everlasting Portion, more than friend or life to me,*
*All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.*
*Close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee;*
*All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.*

*Not for ease or worldly pleasure, not for fame my prayer shall be*
*Gladly will I toil and suffer, only let me walk with Thee.*
*Close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee;*
*Gladly will I toil and suffer, only let me walk with Thee.*

*Lead me through the vale of shadows,*
*bear me o'er life's fitful sea;*
*Then the gate of life eternal may I enter, Lord, with Thee.*
*Close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee;*
*Then the gate of life eternal may I enter, Lord, with Thee.*

There is no better way we can walk with our Everlasting Portion, our Savior and Friend than praying. Praying is walking with God. Praying is bringing God down to the earth and make him walk with the mortals. Praying is enjoying friendly conversation with God at all times. I have a close friend that I always want to talk with. If I have my way, we would be doing together every day. We are friends. I am free and open with and to him. We talk. We pray. We cry together. We laugh together. We always want to be together. The same should happen between us and Jesus.

We should do the same with our God because he is not only our Creator and God, but also our Friend. Jesus did not hide this truth from us when he said, *"you are my friends…."* And he meant it.

We are his friends. What keeps us from walking with him closely like a friend? What hinders us from communication with him freely? Why do we not enjoy conversation with our great Friend? Look at your life and answer

these questions honestly. Always remember,

- God is a faithful friend.
- God is a loyal friend.
- God is a loving and lovely friend.
- God is a friend who cares.
- God is friend who is always there.
- God is friend who wants to talk with and to us.
- God is a friend who wants to walk with us.
- God is a friend who want to hold always.
- God is friend who wants to hold our hand and walk together with us.
- God is our contemporary and eternal friend.
- God is a friend indeed and in need.

What a friend we have in Jesus! Friends, who and what do not allow you to enjoy your friendly relationship with God? Check it out and eliminate whosoever or whatsoever.

Do you know the best of us has the tendency to avoid walking with God? We have the propensity to do three or four things when it comes to walking with God. Here are they.

1. *Walking behind him*—at this level we are distracted by things around us like a little boy and could not catch up with his da. Sometimes God must call us or wait for us. This is not a good way to walk with God.
2. *Walking ahead of him*—at this level we prove we know the way more than God and we presumptuously do things out of his will. God must be stern with us a dad will do to his son, saying who asked you to do that? He did this to Adam and Eve, saying "*where are you? Who told you that you are naked*…" etc.? This is also not good for us in our relationship with God.
3. *Walking far away from him*—this is an act of sliding back from

Jesus. At this point we cannot catch the full image of God and his grace again. We begin to ask question about Bible and rationalize things. We become lukewarm or cold because we are far from divine heat and fire. This is very dangerous. It is like a chicken straying away from mother hen. There is danger nearby. We need to draw closer by

praying earnestly.

4. *Walking side-by-side with God*. This is walking closely with God. This is the best. At this point we can see him. We can hear him. We can touch him. We can hold his hand. We can smile with him. We can hear his praise or correction. We can pray and he will hear us and give us the right answer. We are closer and friendly. We have conversation and communion. This is God's plan for us.

This is made possible as we learn to pray earnestly and regularly with God. We can do it. He has given us grace and he can give us more grace if we need. He is our Friend, Savior, Redeemer, God, and Father. When we truly are walking Jesus, we can boldly sing this song every day.

*Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy, my all;*
*He is my strength from day to day, without Him I would fall.*
*When I am sad, to Him I go, no other one can cheer me so;*
*When I am sad, He makes me glad, He is my Friend.*

*Jesus is all the world to me, my Friend in trials sore;*
*I go to Him for blessings, and He gives them o'er and o'er.*
*He sends the sunshine and the rain,*
*He sends the harvest's golden grain;*
*Sunshine and rain, harvest of grain, He is my Friend.*

*Jesus is all the world to me, and true to Him I will be*
*Oh, how could I this Friend deny, when He is so true to me?*
*Following Him, I know I am right,*
*He watches o'er me day and night;*
*Following Him by day and night, He is my Friend.*

*Jesus is all the world to me, I want no better Friend;*
*I trust Him now, I will trust Him when Life's fleeting days shall end.*

*Beautiful life with such a Friend, beautiful life that has no end;*
*Eternal life, eternal joy, He is my Friend.*[7]

# Chapter 3
# Ingredients for Effective Prayers

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God—BSB*

A Yoruba[8] proverb says *a good soup costs some money.* One of the good soups in Yoruba culture is the *Egusi* soup. *Egusi* seeds are taken from the one of the bitter melons cultivated by farmers in the region. Egusi soup is great but expensive. It is not a soup one cooks every day. In fact, Yoruba people prepares Egusi soup for special occasions or when there are festivals. It takes time, efforts, many ingredients, and creativity to prepare this delicacy. Whoever will prepare Egusi soup must have some money to buy the ingredients. The ingredients include but not exhaustive to green vegetable, onion, tomatoes, pepper, red oil, meat, dry fish, crayfish, sometimes intestine of animals, lot of Egusi powder, and different types of spices. All these ingredients can be cooked together according to the menu. Each of the ingredients comes into the

cooking pot at different time in right proportion. The person preparing the soup should be ready to stay in the kitchen for some time to have a well-cooked Egusi soup. So, before one prepares Egusi soup, one needs to carefully consider many factors, such as money to buy the ingredients, time to stay in the kitchen, sequence of introducing the ingredients at different cooking time. One needs to be patient and be watchful because Egusi itself can easily get burnt while cooking. One needs to constantly churn up the whole mass of the soup in the pot from time to time. At the end of the day, the sweet aroma will fill the house, and everyone would like to have a taste. If you are not careful you can over-eat! Another interesting thing with Egusi soup is that one can eat it with any other food ranging from rice to beans, to fufu, to cassava flour, pounded yam, etc.

Prayer is like Egusi soup. Prayer is expensive, laborious, time-consuming, and requires a lot of ingredients to make is effective and sweet. I have listed and expounded on some of the ingredients of prayer in this chapter. I know we may have some other ingredients. Please, add whatever ingredient you know that spices up and improves prayer and praying. Let us examine these ingredients and how they function in praying.

## The Person Praying: Relationship with God

The first factor in prayer is God. God is the constant factor in prayer. Prayer is not man's design or creation; it is God's idea. While other factors in prayer are variable God is constant, his Word is constant, the name of Jesus is constant. They are not negotiable. God says,

*"Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you [and even show you] great and mighty things, [things which have been confined and hidden], which you do not know and understand and cannot distinguish."*—Jer. 33: 3 (AMP).

Jesus says, "*Ask and keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened."*—Mat. 7: 7 (AMP).

Jesus says, *"Men ought always to pray and not to faint"*—Luke 18: 1.

God tells us, *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a*

*future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you*—Jer. 29: 11-14 (NIV).

God says, *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the people of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace (unmerited favor) and supplication."*—Zech. 12:10 (AMP).

Apostle Paul writes by the Holy Spirit, *"Be careful about nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"—Phil. 4: 6-8 (KJV).

Paul also writes by the Holy Spirit in 1 Timothy 2: 1-4, "*First of all, then, I urge that petitions (specific requests), prayers, intercessions (prayers for others) and thanksgivings be offered on behalf of all people, for kings and all who are in [positions of] high authority, so that we may live a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This [kind of praying] is good and acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who wishes all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge and recognition of the [divine] truth."*

Apostle James writes by the Spirit in James 5:16 (AMP),

*"Therefore, confess your sins to one another [your false steps, your offenses], and pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored. The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]."*

King David understands prayer as incense burnt to God,

*"Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!* —Psalm 141: 2 (ESV).

Apostle John shows the same thought in Revelation 5:8,

*"And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."*

Revelations 8: 3-4 says the same thing, *"And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel."*

From different angles we might look at it, prayer is God thing. God established prayer so we can easily connect, communicate, commune, and converse with him while we are on this terrestrial plan. Prayer is not your idea, neither mine. God set everything about prayer up and invites us to enjoy. It is great we have prayer and praying in place. It is for our good and from our God. Even Jesus used the divine machinery perfectly while he was on earth and admonished and commanded us to use it. We cannot do less or otherwise.

God is a constant factor in prayer. He is ever faithful. He has set in place what we need. All we are asked to do is to use what God has provided freely. We are the variable. We need to have a living relationship with God before we can enjoy his provision. He made that possible through his Son. We need to believe in the Son of God. We need to acknowledge and accept what Jesus did. Jesus came, suffered, and died for our sins. He was buried and on the third day, God raised him from death. Jesus is right now in heaven as our
Savior, Redeemer, Most High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate
before God.

We need to,

A = Acknowledge and accept Jesus as the Son of God before we can be saved. *"Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"*—Acts 4: 12.

B = Believing in Jesus connects us with God and establishes our relationship with God. *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"*—John 1:12.
*"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."*—Gal. 3:26.

C = We must couple our acknowledgement and believing in Jesus in our hearts with public, open confession of what we have in our heart.
*"But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

*For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."*

We can see how this heart believing and mouth confession open the door of prayer for anyone (either Jew or Gentile) coming to God through his Son, Jesus for the first time. The Bible makes this so clear that our faith in Jesus and our mouth confession is the key to the door of prayer—the first meaningful we can ever have as a believer in Jesus.

The Bible says, *"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of*

*the Lord will be saved."*—Rom. 10: 8-13.

As we have this in Old Testament, we see in the New Testament. It is awesome. We are variable factor in prayer because we are not constant. We may accept or refuse Jesus; God never forces anyone. We may pray regularly or sporadically. We can have doubt or demonstrate faith. Today we may be on the mountain top, tomorrow we are in the valley. We are not constant. We change more frequently as human being. But prayer, God who calls to prayer is ever constant or faithful. We need to appreciate God more because he remains faithful even when we are not. However, if we can turn to the side of faithfulness in prayer, great will be our blessings and more meaningful will be our relationship and walk with God. I believe we have so many admonitions, commands, encouragement, and constant calls to prayer in the Bible because God we are volatile, unstable, faithless, doubtful. He must keep hammering it maybe we will hear and response in obedience. Our obedient response is the best. We have many promises and calls to prayer in the Bible. If only we obey and response to the divine beckons not only, shall we be blessed, but we also make God glad, we will have more victories and success in our spiritual life. Without you and me obeying and responding to God's invitation to praying, there is nothing like praying. I do not know for sure if angels could pray like human beings, especially the redeemed of the Lord. Let us hold on to the golden opportunity to enjoy God while we are here. Without biblical prayer, we cannot please God and fulfill what God has called us to do. Let see more about other variables and variability.

## Prayer Demands Some Level of Faith

Another ingredient for our prayer is faith. Faith in God, in his Son Jesus, on his promises, in his power, in his ability to answer our prayer, in his faithfulness, in his love and mercy, in his providences. The Bible puts it this way, "*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*—Hebrews 11: 6 (NIV).
If any believer wants to please God, comes to God, and enjoys God rich rewards or blessings as a great and gracious Father, such a believer must have faith—that is firmly believing in God's existence. God rewards those who believe in him enough to come to him, seek him, pray to him, have a relationship with him, and
looks ahead to live with him in eternity. I do, do you friends?

***What is faith?***
Come along with me. Hebrews 11 verses one and two says, "*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for."* There are abstract concepts about faith out there. This is my description of faith from natural point of view. I have faith or confidence in many things in the natural. What does that mean? When I have headache, I will likely take paracetamol or aspirin without asking questions. I just look at the directions or instructions for use, take the recommended tablets, grasp my cup of water, and throw two tablets into my mouth and wash them down into my stomach with water. I am expecting the headache to go or reduce in some minutes. And in most cases, it does. I am not questioning the tablets, the water, the manufacturer, the ingredients in the tablets, etc. That is because what is written on the tablet container is true and trustworthy. So, is spiritual faith.

In my biology class I learned many things about cells. Initially, I never saw a cell with my naked eyes nor handle it with my hand. My teacher taught me all about cell. I agreed with him. There is something called cell in plants and animals. I did not argue about cell with my biology teacher. I did the same with my physics class and teacher when he taught me atom. I never saw atom before I agreed and believed atom existed. Then, my physics teacher went further to show me the components of atom to be proton, neutron, and electrons. I believed my teacher all about atom, proton, neutron, and electrons. I had faith in my

physics teacher and his lessons on many topics by the assurance I had from my teacher. The same way I approached other subjects whether they are arts or sciences. In fact, I never had opportunity to see some of the things I learned in elementary physics, biology, and chemistry until I was in high school grade four. I just believed and moved on.

Now, the same is with faith. How many people would like to see something that is spiritual with their naked eyes until they believe? How many have not believed in God and his plan of salvation for them just because they have seen God or Jesus face-to-face? If we can take many physical things by "faith," accept them, and talk about them as real and tangible like in atom, cell, or electrons before we see them (in highly magnified microscopes), why cannot we believe God, his Word, and many simple spiritual things? The Bible puts it this way, "*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*—Hebrews 11: 6 (NIV).

Allow me to say but without faith I could not please my physics teacher. If I began to argue with him about atom, neutron, proton, electrons, etc. and I did not agree with him because I have not seen those apparently "invisible" things in nature, I will never be a good physics or science student. The same is with Christian spiritual experience and lifestyle.

We must agree with God and his Word.

We must believe in his Son for us to be saved.

We must live by faith before we can pray to God and enjoy his blessing.

We must believe in the spiritual Entity who is controlling and in charge of everything we see and those we do not see.

We need faith to do science. So, we need faith to have relationship with God and live a life that pleases God.

The Bible says, "*"But as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"*—John 1:12.

*"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."*—Gal. 3:26.

Interestingly we do not create or form faith by our own power. God gives means to develop faith in him. This is how God does it.

1. *God supernaturally draws us to himself through his Word.*

He sends his Word and makes us to hear his Word so we can

believe. The Bible says, "*But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed, they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*

No one can obey an instruction that is never given to him or her. Nobody can believe in anything he or she has not seen or heard of. So, God wanted everyone to hear and believe him. He sends the Word to the whole world. He also sent his Son to the whole world so that people can hear, believe, and obey; and God will be justified and just when he judges anyone who refuses to believe.

*2. God in his grace and power provides the gift of faith to man.*

Man will not naturally believe or accept things of God. God knows this. God impacts his gift of faith to man so man can believe his Word and his Son and be saved. God never forces anyone to accept his gift. He gives us chance to make use of our freewill gift as moral agent. Any man who response to God's Word, and demonstrates interest in his way, God grants the gift
of faith and grace.

The Bible says, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*

God made man for himself and does everything to help man even when man rebels and disobeys him. His mercy endures forever. And we need to appreciate this at all time and trust God all the days of our life. We need to develop and grow in faith toward God. That is the faith we need as one of the ingredients for effective prayer. Prayer requires faith. It takes faith eyes to see the invisible God and faith ears to hear God we cannot lay our hands on physically. It takes some degree of faith to pray and expect answer from God that is higher and above us all. We can stir up our faith in God and for prayer to him by going into God's Word—the Bible. The Bible reveals God more clearly than any other thing. Go to the Bible and your faith in God and prayer will grow dynamically. Give it a trial. If you can have confidence in many unseen things in the natural, why cannot you have same confidence in the loving and living God who cares for you so much and desire the best for you?

# Prayer Involves Worship/Adoration

Another great ingredient for prayer is worship. According to Jesus' model of prayer, worship and adoration of God is the beginning of our prayer. Jesus says this is a sentence, *"Our Father who is in heaven hallow be your name…"* And at the closing of our prayer Jesus teaches us to say, *"Yours is the kingdom, power, and glory, forever, Amen."* That sounds like worshipping and adoring God. Our prayer is not complete without this ingredient. In fact, no matter how desperate we are, we do not begin our prayer well if we do not have time to acknowledge God in worship.

***What is worship and adoration?***

The word worship in so broad that we tend to ignore the theological meanings and application. Amongst other things, worship is.

- An act of religious devotion usually directed towards God.
- Recognition of God, who God is, what God did, does, and will do.
- Acknowledgement of God as Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Alpha and Omega, etc.
- Giving God's glory and respect for who he is. We look at his names

attributes and worship him. Psalms 8:1 says, *"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"*

- Demonstration of awe or fear for God. We fear God because he is

Almighty who can do and undo anything. His Sovereignty rules at all times.

- Honoring God with extravagant love and extreme submission[9] **.**
- The heart expression of a lifestyle of holiness and submission to the

Holy One that flows out of the reality that God loved us first.

Psalm 96: 5, 6, *says*, *"For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary."*

- Regular encounter with and between Jesus and us (John 4:1-26). It can be through prayer, in meditation, in songs, in Bible

study, etc.

- Becoming devoted to God because of His greatness**,** and to become governed by His greatness to the point where we can boldly say I live for him alone.
- Acknowledgement of the worth of God. We can only touch this peripherally*. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"* Rom. 11: 33.

How many names, attributes, tittle, descriptions, images, metaphors, figurative expressions, etc. of God do you know and use when worshipping God?

God says in Psalm 91 verses 14 and 15, *"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him."*

There is a divine connection between prayer, worship, and your loving, knowing, and acknowledging God's name in prayer. It is the chore of worshipping him. There is divine reciprocity of honor between the Immortal and mortal as we worship God in prayer.

*"… them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."*—I Sam. 2:30 (KJV).

And in John 5: 23, Jesus says, *"that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."*

Worship can be express in many ways. However, the substance of our worship should come from our heart. We can sing, yell, scream, shout, roll on the ground, appear piety, look sanctimonious, harmless, and calm. We can dress neatly and look innocent. We can use different kind of instruments and have great choir. Or we can be liturgical and get all things organized and systematic. God may not say no to all of these. Nevertheless, if our hearts are like sepulcher—full of rotten stuffs and our outwards are like whitewashed tomb, God will not accept our worship. You can imagine how many folks, groups, churches, and religious people God is not accepting their worship. Jesus says, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*—John 4:24 (NKJV). This means,

- True worship must be *"in spirit,"* that is, engaging our whole heart.

Unless there is a real passion for God, there is no worship in spirit.

- True worship must be *"in truth,"* that is, properly informed. Unless we have knowledge of the God we worship, there is no worship in truth.

Do you have these ingredients in your personal, family, or church worship and prayer?

# Thanksgiving as Prayer

Psalm 100:4 says, *"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name."*

Thanksgiving opens the gate of prayer; it connects us with God's court or throne of grace. In the New Testament context of worship God's gates and courts are not necessarily the building where we gather to have worship service. Our heart is his dwelling place—God's court. While God has heavenly court or dwelling place, and manifest in our house of worship, he also lives in us by his Spirit now. While we many believers may gather to worship God in building, Jesus says, "*where two or three gathers in his name he is there with them."* God is with individual as he or she prays and worships alone as he is with multitude of worshippers in physical house of worship anywhere on the globe. The basic factor is each of us or all of us gather in the name of the Lord.

Thanksgiving from our heart is paramount to effective and meaningful prayer. What do we mean by this? In Psalm 50 verse 23, we read this truth, *"He who brings an offering of praise and thanksgiving honors and glorifies Me; and he who orders his way aright [who prepares the way that I may show him], to him I will demonstrate the salvation of God."* (AMPC).

Lisa Appelo helps us to see the power of gratitude. She highlights 12 benefits of giving God thanks on regular basis.

1. *Gratitude glorifies God.*

This alone is the reason to give thanks to God. Our gratitude glorifies God as we exalt not the gifts, but the Giver. Gratitude helps us realize all we have comes not because of us, but from God. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and
more glory. 2 Corinthians 4:15

2. *Gratitude opens our spiritual eyes and helps us see God.*

Gratitude opens our spiritual eyes. There is a beautiful cycle in giving God thanks: the more we thank him, the more we see him working in us and around us. Gratitude helps us sense God's presence, his personal care, and his perfect timing.

3. *Gratitude puts us squarely in God's will.*

We often make God's will out to be some big, mystical plan when sometimes,
it is simply obedience. And part of his will for us is to be thankful, not just on the sunny days but on the hard ones as well. *"…give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* 1 Thes. 5:18.

4. *Gratitude brings peace.*

Count your blessings, and not what we try to get rid of that we worry about and that keeps us up at night. Gratitude helps us see that God's hand is all over our circumstances. And God tells us when we give him our thanks, he gives us supernatural peace.
*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Phil. 4:6-7.

5. *Gratitude draws us to God.*

Thankfulness for the magnitude of God's undeserved kindness draws us to him. We see that when Jesus healed 10 lepers. As Jesus walked by, all 10 cried out for healing. *"Go, show yourselves to the priests,"* Jesus commanded and as they went, they were healed! Fingers were restored and leprosy disappeared as full sensation returned to their faces and limbs. Certainly, they were all happy, but only one was thankful. Only one came back to Jesus, fell as his feet, and thanked him.
*Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."* Luke 17:17-19

6. *Gratitude brings contentment.*

It is said that gratitude determines what we have. If we are not grateful for what God has given us, getting more will not satisfy us either. Being thankful is the key to contentment.

7. *Gratitude deepens faith.*

Keeping a record of God's past faithfulness is faith boost when we face new difficulty. We need to learn to make gratitude journal, recording our

testimonies of what God did in our life. God's record of faithfulness is 100%. That is why God commanded Israel to remember his great deeds. "*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever"* Psalm 136:1.

8. *Gratitude leads to joy.*

The overflow of gratitude is joy. Realizing God's abundant goodness, even in the hard, is a gateway for joy. Psalms 126 shows this so clearly as the Hebrew exiles sang their thanks to God for bringing them back to Israel. It is a psalm I prayed in
advance for years.

*"When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy."* Psalm 126:1-3

9. *Gratitude defies Satan's lies.*

Satan is so wily! He whispers that God is not good; that God is withholding good from us. But his scheme is as old as the garden of Eden, where he questioned Eve*: "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?*" When Eve responded only the tree of good and evil was off-limits, Satan suggested God was keeping good from them. *"You will not certainly die. . . For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* In a garden that was perfect, that produced abundantly without work or weeding, where every single plant but one had been given to Adam and Eve, Satan focused on the lack. True gratitude for God and the abundance he gives protects us from caving to the enemy's lies. "*No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."* Psalm 84:11.

10. *Gratitude guards against envy.*

Envy makes us want what someone else has. Gratitude makes us realize God has given us far more than we deserve. Because there is enough for everyone, we can cheer rather than compare. A heart wholly grateful has no room left for envy*. "I will give You thanks with all my heart"* Psalm 138:1.

11. *Gratitude helps us live in the present.*

"Wherever you are, be all there!" Jim Elliot famously said. But that is difficult to do in the worry and rush of life. Gratitude helps. Gratitude opens our eyes to the simple beauty of ordinary days. It lets us see this

day and this moment as gifts and to take in the abundance right now.

*12. Gratitude is a testimony. It is evangelistic.*

When we thank God openly and acknowledge what he has done for us, we proclaim a personal, caring God to the world around us. We show that contentment and peace come not from what we have but Who we know. "*Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done."* Psalm 105:1 Developing a grateful heart brings incredible blessing.[10]

# Love/Mercy/Compassion are needed for Prayer

Nothing makes God to create us and to have fellowship with us, but his love does. Nothing makes God to listen and answer our prayer but his love.

Prophet Jeremiah gets this insight and tells us*, "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness"*—Lam. 3:22.

This truth must be engraved in our heart and remain there permanently. God loves us.

Because God loves us so much, Jesus tells us*, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."* –Luke 10: 27.

Prayer thrives well in the atmosphere of love. First, you cannot pray to God whom you do not love. The relationship we have with God is born out of his love for us. God always demonstrates his love to man—even those who fail to acknowledge and worship him. God's love is that which stoops down to raise us up. His love transfers us from dungeon to throne, from darkness to his marvelous light. God is love and we enjoy God because of this attribute. It is interesting that everyone who has come to accept and believe in the Son of God has become a child of God. If you are a child of God, then his DNA runs in you. That means God communicable attribute of love is in you. You only need to stir it up and live that love-life out. If God so loves us, we need to reciprocate that love to him by obedience, trust, and constant communication with him. That communication is prayer. Your love for God is one of the reasons and power that propel and motivate you to pray. If you love someone, then communication with that person will not be a barrier or burden. I know God loves me. He wants to speak with me always and I response

to God with my prayers. That is why we are admonished to *pray without ceasing*. I love to put that Scripture as *communicate without ceasing*. God is never tired of loving you, hearing you, answering your prayers, and fellowship with you. Why could you be tired of loving, talking, communicating, and having fellowship with God? That is what we do in prayer.

Second, Jesus says, "… *and love your neighbor as yourself."* – Luke 10: 27. Part of our praying items is praying for others. This are people in our sphere of influence and the world. So, we are called to pray for our friends, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors (FRANs). Then, we are to pray for our leaders—political, spiritual, and business. We are to pray for community, nation, and world at large. It takes a big heart of love to do this. Our prayer to God and for other demands of us a heart full of love. We must banish selfishness. We need to be selfless, sacrificing, and sensitive to the physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and general needs of people around us and if we cannot do anything, we can pray for them. Love makes us pray to God who loves us so much. Love makes us to pray for our FRANs and the world. Love and prayer help us to be effective in our world.

Look at love in action through prayer. *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being proclaimed all over the world*."—Rom. 1: 8.

"*We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*—Col. 1:3 (NLT).

*"I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers."* — Philemon verse 4.

*"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers…"*—Eph. 1: 16.

The relationship of God and Abraham was such an intimate and lovely one that when God wanted to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, God had to tell Abraham before he commenced his action. The story goes thus. *"The LORD said to himself, "I should tell Abraham what I am going to do, since his family will become a great and powerful nation that will be a blessing to all other nations on earth. I have chosen him to teach his family to obey me forever and to do what is right and fair. Then I will give Abraham many descendants, just as I promised."*—Gen. 18:16-33 (CEV).

When God got to Abraham, he told him his plan. Because of

Abraham's heart of love, he interjected God in prayer for the city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Remember Lot lived around that area. Abraham's love made him pray or intercede for Lot and his family and for those two cities.

The Lord said, *"Abraham, I have heard that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are doing all kinds of evil things. Now I am going down to see for myself if those people really are that bad. If they are not, I want to know about it."*

Abraham began to bargain with God not to destroy the cities if he could find some righteous men in them. He started with 50 righteous people and counted down to 10. God said, *"For the sake of ten good people… I still won't destroy the city."* Unfortunately, there were not just 10 people who fear God or were righteous. So, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire. Abraham interceded for the two cities because of love. God would have changed his mind if there were 10 righteous people. But there was none. Love prays for others. If we want to excel in prayer, we must love God, develop an active relationship with God, then we need to love others and that love will move us to pray for them. Love is a vital ingredient for prayer.

## Prayer Requires Patience

Patience is a golden ingredient of prayer. Patience can be said to be perseverance, longsuffering, endurance, attitude of calmness with hope, not worrying, waiting on God, trusting God, not giving up when we do not get what we need and pray for. Patience is a biblical virtue that gives us the spirit to keep on expecting something wonderful from God as we pray.

The Bible teaches patience is a need for prayer. Patience is all we need when all seem blank after prayer. God is not sleeping over our request; he is only finetuning what is best for us. We learn from the book of Hebrew that, "*For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."*—Heb. 10: 36 (KJV). Prayer is the will of God. Prayer supposes to bring outcomes. As we discussed early God may say "yes," "no." "wait" or be silent to us when we pray. When we do not receive an immediate answer to our prayer, then we come to acknowledge the need of patience. God never comes too late or too early; God comes at the right time. His time may not be

ours. His time is always the best. We need to learn to stay calm, cool, and collected when the answer to our prayers seems to be delayed. Remember as a child of God, delay is not denial.

When Lazarus, a friend of Jesus died, his sister sent for Jesus, expecting him to come and do something—pray for him. They had seen Jesus doing wonders and miracles and that could be their time to experience the supernatural from their friend Jesus. The Bible says, "*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days…"*—John 11: 5, 6. That looks like intentional delay, saying wait, or no to these friends. Is it not a contradiction that when these friends of Jesus who he loves was sick unto death, Jesus did not rush to help? He stayed where he was for two more days. I do not get that. If it were me, I may be offended.

But there were reasons for the intentional delay. Jesus gave the reasons. Jesus said. *"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."* (verse 11). Jesus was not seeing Lazarus as dead; He saw him sleeping. On a more serious case Christians do not die, we sleep temporarily. What we called death to Jesus is just a "nap," Even when Jesus told the disciples that spiritual truth, they did not understand him. They said in reply said, *"Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better."* Jesus has been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. Naturally, Lazarus was dead or had died. Spiritually, Lazarus was sleeping. The reasons for not quickly rushing to him were,

- Jesus was going to use Lazarus situation to teach his disciples about his death and resurrection.
- Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from death as a practical demonstration of his anticipated resurrection from death.
- Jesus showed here that we need to exercise patience when we request or pray for something, and our Father does not give us immediately. God may want to bring out something more glorious in our situation like he brought Lazarus, a dead man, from death to life again.
- While there may be a little delay or apparent prolong delay of answer to our prayer (as we see in some biblical persons, it does not mean God is not answering our prayer). God is

preparing something better we can imagine (like life is better than death). Jesus *"so then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."*

- Jesus intended to teach his disciples, not only dead and resurrection but lesson of faith. He wanted them to see and believe in him as they see dead Lazarus brought back to life.

So, as we pray let be patience with God and ourselves. God can never be forced to do or give what you want or need. God always gives us something in line with his divine will. Be prayerful but be patient.

## Praying Needs the Word of God

Another essential ingredient for prayer is the Word of God—
Bible. Why? The Bible is a prayer book. That is, we can use the words in the Bible to pray. When we pray with the Word of God, we can hardly pray amiss because we are reminding God of what he already promised to do for us. Our prayer is reminding God what he has already told us. Look at your prayer list. It probably may have personal items, family requests, things you want to pray about for you friends, praying for your community, nations, and the world. All of these are in the heart of God and God has spoken and recorded his intentions for them and have them recorded in the Bible. The Bible has records about every area of our life. The Bible is the manual for living. It is where we go to discover the mind of God and we can use what is in the mind of God when we are communicating with him. That is the best prayer. God's Word is the ingredient for our effective prayer.

God was having a conversation with Jeremiah.
God asked Jeremiah this question, *"What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied. Then said the Lord to me, you have seen well, for I am alert and active, watching over My word to perform it."*—Jer. 1:11, 12.
All we need is to see what is presenting to us, especially in his Word. When we see rightly what is written, we can stand firmly on the Word of God—the promise of God. God tells us as he did to Jeremiah, he is watching over his word to perform. When we see or discover God's will in his Word, we are seeing well. And when we use the Word to pray, we are asking God to remember his Word as he promised; "*for I am*

*alert and active, watching over My word to perform it."* This understanding must be in our consciousness. This promise should be engraved in our heart. God is alert, active, and watching over his Word to perform it. Our responsibility is to give back God's words as he promises in the Scripture in our prayer.

***Why we need God's Word in Prayer***

There are Scriptural verses that help us to see the reason for engaging the Word of God in our prayer. If we ever want our prayers to be effective, we need to work with these scriptural insights.

- *First, the Word of God is the thoughts of God.*

God's thoughts reveal his heart desire, plans, and purposes for our life.
And God says, *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*—Jer. 28:11 (NIV).
Isaiah the prophet also records for us, "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts*."—Isaiah 55: 8, 9 (NIV).
We need to get into those words or promises of God and use them in our prayers.

- *Second, God is always ready to make his promises come true*.

God tells us, *"For as the rain and snow come down from the heavens, and return not there again, but water the earth and make it bring forth and sprout, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."— Isaiah 55: 11—AMPC.*
God' words have come out of his mouth to us. He has the words recorded in a format we all can have. Our responsibility is to intentionally lay hold of the words in our hearts and use them in our prayers. That is the best form of prayer.

- *Third, God expects us to give voice to his Word given to us.*

God is sovereign and can do anything he pleases. Nevertheless, he has given us some responsibility just as he gives angels responsibility. If the Bible (the Word of God) in our hands will be meaningful and fulfil its purpose of,

- water the earth and make it bring forth and sprout,
- give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
- not return to Me void [without producing any effect,
- accomplish that which I please and purpose,
- prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Then we need to do something. We need to do something the angels are doing each time God gives his words to them.

"*Bless (affectionately, gratefully praise) the Lord, you His angels, you mighty ones who do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word"— Psalm 103: 20 9AMP).*

The angels always do the following things,

- Blessing the Lord, praising the Lord for his Word.
- Doing God's commandments.
- Hearkening to the voice of God's Word.

*The ESV Bible renders Psalm 102: 20 as "Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!"*

As we profess, confess, or proclaim, verbalize, voice out the promises of God is our prayer, we are engaging our angels to go to work for us. Angels hearken, obey, and do God's words that God puts in our hearts and that we voice out in our mouth in prayer or in daily confession.

The Bible says angels are *"all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation.*"—Heb. 1: 14 (NKJV).

AMPC Bible renders the verse as *"Are not the angels all ministering spirit (servants) sent out in the service [of God for the assistance] of those who are to inherit salvation?"*

Jesus also speaks of angels in the same manner saying,

*"Beware that you do not despise or feel scornful toward or think little of one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always are in the presence of and look upon the face of My Father Who is in heaven."*—Mat. 18: 10 (AMPC).

If angels do God's commandments, hearken to his voice, minister for those who are children of God, obey the voice of God's words, and are looking upon the face of God's to take instructions for every child of God, then it is spiritually logical for Christians to give voice to the words of God so that angels will have something to work on. Or God hears his words in the believers' prayer and give instruction to the angels to carry out some orders or bring some blessings.

***Using the Word of God in Prayer: Example of Daniel***

That was the experience of Daniel in the book of Daniel 10 verse 1. "*… a word was revealed to Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it referred to great tribulation (conflict and wretchedness). And he understood the word and understood the vision."* After Daniel got understanding of the word of God revealed to him, he went to prayer and fasting with it.

The Bible says God answered Daniel immediately he prayed.

*"Then he said to me, Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind and heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of [and in response to] your words."*

Daniel's prayer was based on the word of God for the future…. God answered Daniel but for 21 days, a demon, called Prince of Persia was fighting with the angel who was bringing the answer.

*"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chiefs [of the celestial] princes, came to help me, for I remained there with the kings of Persia."*

God sent a stronger angel (angel Michael) to assist the first angel so that Daniel would receive his answer.

*"And [the angel] said to me, O Daniel, you greatly beloved man, understand the words that I speak to you and stand upright, for to you I am now sent."*

God still does that even if we do not have a vivid experience like that of Daniel. In fact, the Holy Spirit fights and prays for us and through us using the Word of God. The best way to pray and get attention of heaven is praying with the Word of God—the promises of God in all areas of our life, for our community, and for the world.

# Prayer and Hope/Expectations

Hope is another important ingredient of prayer. We do not venture into something that naturally has no prospect or good outcome. Businesspeople use that principle and expect some returns or profits on their investment. Prayer has great prospects and high return of investment. The profits of prayer are colossal. In fact, it is God who provides our return on investment in prayer. And the return on investment

or reward of prayer is not just for now, it is eternal. Prayer lives on beyond the person who prays now. The effects of prayer go into eternity. Prayer has ripples effect; it keeps going. Prayer effects is also like dominos—once it begins it subsequently or consequently touches many other things. I believe the prayer my parents offered for me still works for me till now and it will continue until I see Jesus. Similarly, the prayers I am offering for my children is working for them now and into their future. Hope is a vital force of prayer. We pray in anticipation that God will answer us and give to us what we requested whether immediately or in the future. That is hope.

Without hope we would probably not pray at all. Something tells us all will be well if we can only pray and so we go and pray. Something tells us never to give up in prayer because something good is coming our way soon or later. That voice is hope. Apostle Paul throws light when he says, *"Yes, it was written for our sake: The plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the harvest.*"—1 Cor. 9: 10 (AMP).

In the same manner, a praying person prays in hope and looks up to answer to his prayer in hope. A prayerful person is like "*the hardworking farmer"* who labors in hope that he *"should be the first to receive his share of the crops."*—2Tim. 2:6. Answers to prayer is the harvest of crop we planted.

The Psalmist understood this idea well when he prayed and told God in Psalm 71:5, *"For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth"* This is a person who had been praying to God from his childhood. He knew the importance of hope in prayer. God has become David's hope, source of answers to his prayers. To have hope is to desire an outcome that makes your life better in some way. Hope does not only help make a tough present situation more bearable but also eventually improves our lives. When we envision a better future, it motivates us to take the steps to make it happen. One of such steps we take is praying.

We are encouraged by Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:

58, "*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, knowing that in the LORD your labor is not in vain."*

To experience the fulfillment of this exhortation, we must abound in prayer, we must be immovable in prayer, we must be steadfast in the

work of the Lord, we must live in expectation that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. Hope gives us this perspective. Hope is the belief in what could be. Hope redefines what is probable and opens the paths to the impossible. For Christians hope inspires and motivates praying knowing fully well God will do something they ask. The Bible hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised which we can lay hold on or receive by prayer. So, we need an attitude of hope, living faith, compassion, the Word of God. and a worshipful heart to have biblical prayer. If *"you ask and do not receive*" (James 4:3) you probably *"ask amiss."* The word amiss means not quite right, inappropriate, or out of place. To avoid praying amiss these are some of the things we need to put in place in our prayers.

# Prayer and Daily Conduct/conversation

Action speaks louder than voice says the adage. Sometimes our actions and deeds speak so loudly that we do not need to speak at all before others can hear us. Our life conducts, conversation, or way of life affects our prayer life significantly. Let us see some of things we do in life that can help or hinder our prayers and praying.

1. *The people we hang out with*

There is a saying, show me your friend and I will tell you the type of person you are. Truly, life experience shows us that birds of the same feather flock or fly together. When people have like-minds they do or like to do similar things together. So, if you have friends who are smokers, if care is not taken you will end up smoking. If you have parents smoking and drinking, you may end up doing what your parents are doing. If you hang out with people with some vices in their life, they will probably rub on you their lifestyle and you become like them. This means having friends who love Bible study, going to church, praying on regular basis, witnessing for Jesus, hardworking, loving and caring, etc. may help you do the same things. If you have Christian friends who care less about spiritual growth, your spiritual life may likely be retarded.

The Bible succinctly puts it this way, *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."*—I Cor. 15: 33 (KJV).

The Amplified Bible renders this as, *"Do not be so deceived and misled! Evil companionships (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character."* (AMPC).

There are many Christians folks who have been deceived, misled, corrupted by their friends, sometimes some friends who are not Christians, who are still living the depraved life. Christians ought to have the truth, live a life without corruption from outside world, have good companions, develop positive associations with others, and conduct themselves in a way that demonstrate good manners, morals, and Christlike characters. Your friends, colleagues, co-workers, siblings, parents, the society and systems, call prevent all these from happening in you. They can also change what you have. If you are not prayerful before evil communications can prevent you from praying. If you have been praying, evil communication can make you lower the tempo and intensity and frequency or time you have been using in prayer.

Jesus says, *"All of you must keep awake (give strict attention, be cautious and active) and watch and pray, that you may not come into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*—Mat. 26: 41 (AMPC).

Bad friends can lead us into temptation of not praying at all or reduce the time we use for prayer for something mundane and unproductive to our spiritual life. The words of Jesus are, keep awake, that is, give strict attention, be cautious, be active, watch and pray, do not yield to your weak flesh, surrender yourself to your willing spirit—the spirit who wants and inspire you to pray. Do not suppress or quench the Spirit of God in you by yielding to the promptings of the flesh suggested by your ungodly companions or careless, prayerless Christians.

*2. Our life's conducts*

Not only friends or wrong companions can negatively affect our prayer life. Our daily, person conduct or conversation in life can limit our praying lifestyle. Here are some other things.

- I have seen many Christians folks who sleeps for hours every day as if

they have nothing to do with their life.

- I have seen many Christians who watch TV and movies for many hours.
- I have seen Christian folks loving sports far and above Bible study, going to church, praying, and witnessing.
- I have seen Christians engaged in politics and that slow down the Christian race.

- I have seen Christian friends who go into business and the pursuit of money has led to horrible consequences on their spiritual life.
- I have seen Christians involving with unholy relationship that ended up jeopardizing their faith.
- I have seen Christian's students who get caught in academic pursuit and ended up leaving the Christian practices side completely.
- I have seen Christians who love to eat food so much and eating becomes a disorder for them and ruin their life.
- I have seen Christians who started drinking liquor and before they know they become alcoholics.
- I have seen Christian who love the world and things in the world, and they get transformed to the pattern of the world.
- I have seen Christians who were once on fire for the Lord and Kingdom business but with lackadaisical attitudes get lukewarm and cool off. The fire went down, and their life were covered with ashes of gracelessness.
- I have seen Christians who turning back from the Lord because of those they hang out with.
- I have seen Christian who get cold and lethargic because of the relationship with spouse, colleagues, and ungodly friends.

We need to watch who are our friends. We are in the world as salt and light. We are in the world but not of the world. Anything that will hinder or jeopardize our relationship and communication with God should be avoided like plague. That is the teaching of Jesus and the Bible in general. We do well take heed so we can have a good prayer life, communion with our loving Father, and gracious Friend, Jesus.

3. *Missing the mark or sinful life*

Missing the mark is a technical way of trespassing or going beyond the line God has set for us. It is Christians falling in sin(s). When we fall into any sin and do not cry to God immediately, or as we are convicted by the Holy Spirit, it can be a barrier to our prayer and praying life. Apostle John says it more clearly, *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* (1John 5: 8). This verse tells us Christians can fall into sin, either deliberately or not deliberately. But the Apostle goes on to provide how to handle that situation.

*“This is the message we have heard from him (Jesus) and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

King David expresses it this manner; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”*—Psalm 66” 18. When we regard or keep sins in our heart or have the habit of sins is the same thing as *we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* The biblical remedy is given to us as well. Without delay, go back to the Light, confess your sins. Get back into the light. Then, this Scripture is fulfilled; “*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

Christians are not immune from temptations and falling into sins. We are in the sanctifying crucible of the Lord and the above passage shows how we can gracefully handle that problem in our life. There is no “holier-than-thou attitude” suggested in the Bible but a sincere heart that loves to please God. God looks at such heart and help in providing forgiveness and cleansing.

Then, the next recommendation from the Apostle Paul is in Galatians 5 verses 17and 16, “*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*. *This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”*

I revert the order for clarity. Let us watch and shun sins so that our prayers will not be hindered, or answers are delayed. Devil will always accuse any child of God who lives in sin or who is not careful in his walk with God. We are more than conqueror through the name and blood of the Lamb.

## Praying and Fasting

God considers praying and fasting important. The Bible contains 92 passages referring fasting and many references to praying. Many of our heroes of the faith are men of praying and fasting. Consider people like Moses, Elijah, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul. These all prayed and fasted at crucial points in their journeys with God. Praying and fasting

played an important role in the life and ministry of Jesus. After being anointed by the Holy Spirit, He was led into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days (Matthew 4:2). During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave specific instructions on how to pray and how to fast (Matthew 6:16-18). Jesus knew the followers he addressed would fast.

- Fasting demonstrates humility by acknowledging our dependence on God.
- Fasting demonstrates the depth of our desire when praying for something.
- Fasting shows you that you are serious enough about your prayer request to pay a personal price.
- God honors deep desire especially when we fast and pray in faith.

***Purpose of Fasting***

We have been dealing with prayer in this book. Let us look at some reasons for integrating our praying with fasting.

1. Showing humility and repentance. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, *"if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*
2. Seeking God's face more fully. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*
3. Asking for something you desire specifically. Ezra 8:21,31 says, *"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, "The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him." So, we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty."*
4. Fasting and praying to know God's will. In Judges 20: 28, the entire army fasted until evening, and they asked God, *"Shall we go up again to fight against the Benjamites, our fellow Israelites, or not?"* (Judges 20: 28, NIV).
   In 2 Chronicles 20:3, we read "*And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah*."
5. Fasting helps us to develop discipline in life. Paul tells us how he did it in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "*No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."*
6. Fasting is needed to be set free from demonic oppression.
   Jesus shows us how this works. *"You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible… However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."* Mat. 17: 201, 21.
   Jesus spells out three factors for deliverance from demonic oppression here; faith, prayer, and fasting.
7. Fasting can be utilized to mourn a loss. 1 Samuel 31:11 to 13 we see how Saul's people mourned for him and his sons; "*Now when the*

*inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh and fasted seven days."*

***8.*** Fasting for healing the sick. Psalm 35:13 gives us insight on this. *"Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting…"* I remember how my dad told me one time he was sick, but he fasted and prayed, and God healed him.

**9.** Fasting for spiritual strength. In Matthew 4:2, we see Jesus in praying and fasting for spiritual strength. *"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry."* Jesus was hungry physically but was strong spiritually.

**10.** Fasting was one of the spiritual tools used by the early Apostles before they appoint of elders in the church.

Acts 14:23 let us know this; *"So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."*

What do we need to make our prayer meaningful and effective? We need a living relationship with God. We need God's Word, his promises. We need faith in God and his Word. We need to have a heart that loves God and people. We need hope so that we can see answer ahead of time. We need patience so we can wait and not give up. We need to combine our praying with the discipline of fasting. These are ingredients we see used by Bible characters when they prayed. We can do likewise.

*Never worry about anything. But in every situation let God know what you need in prayers and requests while giving thanks—GWT*

# Chapter 4
# The Universality of Prayers

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God—NASB.*

When we speak of the universality of prayer, we discover many sides to it. First, it may be remarked that all men ought to pray. Prayer is intended for all men, because all men need God and need what God has and what prayer only can secure. As men are called upon to pray everywhere, so all men must pray for men are everywhere.
*"For there is no difference; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* –Rom. 10:12.

*“"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy, and to our God who will abundantly pardon.* —Isaiah 55: 6-11.

The above Scriptures show us that as wickedness is universal, and as pardon is needed by all men, so all men must seek the Lord while he may be found and must call upon Him while he is near. Prayer belongs to all men because all men are redeemed in Christ. It is a privilege for every man to pray, but it is no less a bounden duty for them to call upon God. No sinner is debarred from the mercy seat. All are welcomed to approach the throne of grace with all their wants and woes, with all their sins and burdens. Prayer reaches up to heaven and brings heaven down to earth. Prayer has in its hands a double blessing. It rewards him who prays and blesses him for whom is prayed. It brings peace to warring passions and calms warring elements. Tranquility is the happy fruit of true praying. There is an inner calm which comes to him who prays and an outer calm as well. Prayer creates "*quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."*

- Prayer is far-reaching in its influence and world-wide in its effects.
- Prayer affects all men, everywhere, and in all things.
- Prayer touches man's interest in time and eternity.
- Prayer lays hold upon God and moves him to interfere in the affairs of earth and men.
- Prayer moves the angels to minister to men in this life.
- Prayer restrains and defeats the devil in his schemes to ruin man.
- Prayer goes everywhere and lays its hand upon everything.

There is a universality in prayer. When we talk about prayer and how it works, we must use universal terms. Prayer could be done by individuals but its influences, applications, and benefits, are general and world-wide. Prayer blesses man in every event of life, furnishes him help in every emergency, and gives him comfort in every trouble. There is no experience through which man is called to go but prayer is there as a helper, a comforter, and a guide.[11] Let us see some ramifications of prayer.

# Prayer for Individual or Personal Needs

The Bible is filled with individuals who prayed to God and got answers. You too can be included in this catalogue if you can pray. Heaven has an unending list of prayer warriors who were not probably known in this world. There are many people whose life was preserved by nothing but persistent, heartfelt, and prayer of faith. The table below shows some individuals in the Bible and answers to their prayers.

| **Persons who prayed** | **References** | **Prayer items** |
|---|---|---|
| Abraham. | Gen. 18: 23-32 | Abraham prayed for Lot, Sodom & Gomorrah |
| Eliezer. | Gen 24: 12-14 | Eliezer Prayed for God's leadership |
| Isaac. | Gen. 25: 21 | Isaac prayed on behalf of his wife Rebecca for a child |
| Jacob | Genesis 32:9 | Jacob prayed for protection of God |
| Joshua. | Joshua 7 | Joshua prayed to God concerning people's lowered moral failure that led to defeat |
| Hannah | 1 Samuel 1:10-17 | Hannah prayed a son and vowed to God |
| Moses. | Exo. 32:31. Deut. 3:23 | Moses prayed to God to be merciful with his people |
| Esther | Esther 4:16 | Esther prayed to go to the king, though it is against the law, to request for a favor |
| Daniel | Daniel 9:3- | Daniel sought the Lord |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 19 | God by prayer and fasting pleading for mercy for his people |
| David | 2 Samuel 15:31 | David prayed to the Lord to turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. |
| Elijah | James 5:18 | Elijah prayed for rain after 3.5 years of drought |
| Elisha | 1 Kings 17:21 | Elisha prayed for restoration of life of young child |
| Ezra | Ezra 10:1 | Ezra fasted and implored our God for revival |
| Jehoahaz | 2 Kings 13:4 | Jehoahaz sought the favor of the Lord because of oppression of Syria |
| Jonah | Jonah 2:1 | Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish for rescue, |
| Habakkuk | Habakkuk 3:1 | Habakkuk prayed for revival. |
| Hezekiah | 2 Kings 19:14-19 | Hezekiah prayed for safety and protection from hand of Sennacherib |
| Manoah | Judges 13:8 | Samson's father prayed for a son |
| Jeremiah | Jeremiah 32:16-25 | Jeremiah prayed for understanding |
| Nehemiah | Neh. 1: 4-11 | Nehemiah wept and mourned for days, and |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | fasting and praying before the God of heaven for walls and gates of Jerusalem that were broken and burnt down |
| Paul and Silas | Acts 16:25 | Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God in the prison |
| Paul | 2 Cor. 12: 7, 8, 9 | Paul prayed, pleaded with the Lord three times that a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan, which torment him be taken away. |
| Peter | Acts 9: 40 | Peter prayed for Tabitha to rise from death |
| Samson | Judges 16: 28 | Samson called to the LORD to remember and strengthen him. |
| Samuel | 1 Samuel 8:6 | Samuel prayed to the Lord reporting the desire of Israel to have a king |
| Solomon | 1 Kings 8: 22-54 | Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and prayed to dedicate the Temple |
| Jesus Christ | John 17 | Priestly prayer of Jesus.<br>- Jesus prays that the Father would protect |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | His church.<br>- Jesus prays for His church to be sanctified…<br>- Jesus prays for those who will believe through the message of that disciples<br>- Jesus' three prayers on the Cross:<br>"*Father forgive them; for they know not what they do*"—Luke 23:34<br>*"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Mark 15:34; Mat. 27: 46*<br>*"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit"—Luke 23:46* |
| Job | Job 42:10 | Job prayed for his friends; The Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. |
| Church leaders | Acts 13:1-3 | Church leaders were seeking God's direction for their ministry through prayer and fasting. |
| Samuel | 1 Sam. 15L31 | Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the LORD. |

There are so many prayers in the Bible that we can study and learn from. The fact that there were many people praying shows the relevance and

importance of this spiritual disciple. God is never tired of listening, hearing, and providing answers to the prayer of his people. The only problem we have is we pray less, or we do not pray at all, or we pray amiss or wrongly. Let us go to the Scriptures and learn how people of God pray and receive answers to their request. God is still the same today as he was yesterday.

I learned that the word PUSH in acronyms means,

P = Pray
U = Until
S = Something
H = Happens

When we pray biblical prayer something awesome will always happens. God still answers prayer. And everyone and anyone can pray to him at anytime and anywhere in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.

## Praying for Children, Teens, and Young Adults

Children are blessing from the Lord, and motherhood is a gift to mankind. *"For you created my inmost being you knit me together in my mother's womb." (*Psalm 139:13). Prayer can be offered to anyone even before conception in his or her mother, during pregnancy period, when the baby comes to life, at infancy and toddler, through the teens and teenage years, and to youth and for every sphere of our life. We can pray for anyone at any stage of his or her life. God is ready to accomplish his will when we do pray. Look
at these biblical examples.

*Praying for children before they are conceived or born.*

**Abraham and Sarah prayed for a child before Isaac was born.**

*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; so, she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. (Gen. 16: 2)*

*Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit[c] my estate is Eliezer of*

*Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so, a servant in my household will be my heir."*
*Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Gen. 15: 2-5).*

*Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.*
God answered the prayer of Abraham and Sarah and they had Isaac.

**Isaac prayed for children before Jacob and Esau were born.**

Genesis 25:21 "*And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived."*

While the babies were in their mother's womb, Rebecca prayed to the Lord for details about them…

*The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So, she went to inquire of the LORD.*
*The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other,*

*and the older will serve the younger." When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. (Gen. 25: 22-24).*
Before Esau and Jacob came to life, their mother knew some detail about their destiny…

**Jacob and Rachel prayed before they gave birth to Joseph.**

"…*but Rachel was barren"* (Gen 29:31).
At a point Rachel was mad with her husband, Jacob saying, *"Give me children, or I'll die!"* The husband replied to her, *"Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"* (Gen. 30: 1, 2).

Jacob theology was broad enough to know it is God who gives children. They persisted to pray to God who give children. Then,

*"God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive. taken She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has away my disgrace." She named him Joseph and said, "May the LORD add to me another son. (Gen 30:22-24*

The Bible portrays a great picture of what Joseph later became and did to his family and the Egypt as a nation.

**Samson's father prayed for a son before Samson was born.**

In the book of Judges 13, we read,
"*A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth. The angel of*

*the LORD appeared to her and said, "You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son…"*

Then, Samson father prayed to the Lord for wisdom to train the child when he is born.

"… *Manoah prayed to the LORD: "Pardon your servant, Lord. I beg you to let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born."*

Samson was born, the parents trained him as they were taught by the Lord, Samson was a judge in Israel.

**Hannah prayed for a child before Samuel was born.**

*"Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none… Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her to irritate her.*

*"In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD*, weeping *bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." As she kept on praying to the LORD…. So, in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."* (1Samuel 1).

Hannah fervent prayer for a son brought forth Samuel a great Prophet in Israel.

**Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for fruit of the womb before John the Baptist was born.**

*Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. [6] Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. [7] But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old…"* (Luke 1: 5-7).

Despite the religious piety of this couple, they had no child. In my theology as a Pastor, they were asking God for a child. Then, the answer to them was sent by God through an angel. "*But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John"* (verses 11-25).

John the Baptist became a Prophet and the Forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was a great man. He was a product of prayer of his parents.

Just like we saw in biblical history how people prayed before conception of a child, during pregnancy, and after the babies were born, so we have in human history and in our contemporary world. Prayer can bring things from unseen to the visible. I had a couple in my church sometimes ago. They were service God faithfully but had no child. At a point, the wife came to me to tell me of the situation. We made and appointment for prayer. I went to their home, and we had a session of prayer and I prophesied that they would have a baby in nine months. God answered our prayer. They had a beautiful girl in nine months from the time we prayed. God still answers prayer of those who desire to have children. We only need to pray in faith and trust him. Whenever my wife was pregnant, I used to lay my hands on her belly and prayed and prophecy

to and about the baby in her womb. She delivered without complication and our children grow up without undue issues.

***Jesus prayed for little children***

Jesus Christ shows us an example of praying for little children. In Matthew 19: 13-15 (NLT), we have this narrative.

*"One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Do not stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children." And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left."*

This means we can pray for our tomorrow leaders and builders of nation tomorrow; those are our children. Do you know some Christians parents who do not pray for their children? Do you know a Pastor or church leader who forbids praying for children? Such people are not doing the will of God. They are opening doors for demonic attacks on their children. Jesus knows better; he placed hands of their heads and blessed children. I do pray for the children in my church as a Pastor. I have programs for them. I sing with them and eat with them. They recognize me as their Pastor just as their parents do. Such children grow up in the church to know God and love to worship. Some have become servants of God now. I do the same for our new converts in the church even if they are adults, they are my spiritual children. I do pray for them so that they grow in grace and knowledge of Christ and desire to serve God. I see many of these new believers becoming servants of God.

When my children started school, before they went to school every day, I would lay my hands on them and prayed for them. I have not had occasion when the school called our home to report any bad thing any of children do in school. They love to go to school, and they were doing well at school—academically, socially, and morally. Prayer works for children in any age group. I still constantly pray for my children even when they are in college or university. My prayers go into the future of their lives.

Prayers never die, Prayers live longer and go into eternity. Prayers produces fruits more than we imagine. There is power in prayer that can impact our children eternally. Praying parents are demonstrating some indescribable power of God against the devil and paving ways for

success, victory, breakthroughs, breaking forth and abundant life for their children. Do you pray for your children? Children are always children even when they reach adult age. I like to hear my aged dad (when he was 103 years old) saying, “Jonathan, I am praying for you”, even when I am over 55 years of age. Prayer is good, my friend. Thank God for praying parents, pastors, Christian leaders, and praying churches. We shape the life of our children with our prayers. That is how God wants it to be. May God help us to keep praying for our children—
either spiritual, biological, adopted, or others.

## Prayer for/with Family

It is a good wise saying with deep theological value that a family that prays together stays together. There are undeniable benefits in praying for the family. Some of them are,

- Praying for our families strengthens our relationship bond.
- Praying teaches children, especially, to form a habit of prayer, depending on God for all their need and life after they left home
- Praying daily with the family establishes a good spiritual habit especially at the beginning and the end of each day.
- Praying teaches each member of the family to seek God’s will always, no matter what the circumstances in life are.
- Prayer can release God’s divine protection on our family beyond our imagination. A praying family hides under the shadow of God.

Perhaps, someone is wondering that for which do we pray? So many things. I heard some folks saying both good and bad things need prayer. Good things require prayer to make it the best and bad things need prayer to transform and change to good. No matter how our family’s structure, shape, and size may be presently, there is always need for prayer. The family system is so complex, and it requires lots of divine assistance. When any member of the family is in trouble, the whole family suffers. That is why we should try as hard as we can to ensure our family dynamics are in order. Here are things we can pray for in our family.

- Unity within the family.
- Increasing love for one another.
- Protection against all forms of dangers and spiritual attacks.
- God’s guidance and direction for life.

- Healing, spiritual and physical for the sick.
- Salvation for members who are not save yet.
- Restoration of anything lost.
- Strength for spiritual race.
- Peace within the family setting.
- Thanksgiving to God for family blessings.
- Family spiritual growth.
- Financial helps and stability.
- Children education and academic success.
- Better future for members of family.
- Praying against the enemy of the family.
- Leadership of the family especially by the father.
- Grace for submission (wife and children).
- Praying against generational curses to be broken.
- Growth in faith by members of the family.
- Praying for grace for commitment to serve the Lord, etc.
- Praying for the unknown…

There are many things the family can pray to God for the family. It is sound spirituality and theology to pray for our family and to pray with our family. When I was young boy, I remembered how my dad will wake us up every morning to pray. He had the Baptist Daily Devotion booklet that we used. Although my dad is not educated, he made timetable for some of his children who can read. When you are chosen to read the daily devotion material, just read. My dad will do the "exegesis" and asked anyone who has an insight, contribution, or question. He would welcome any of these and provide whatever response he could. He would pray before we all depart for our daily chore. Sometimes my dad would ask anyone to pray. The thoughts that I might be called to pray in a way was good for some of us. It made us prepare ahead in case dad would call. It was a helpful exercise and experience even though some of us never liked it them or did not understand what my dad was doing then. We understand better now.

The Bible clearly admonishes us, *"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."* Deuteronomy 6:6-7. That was what now my dad was doing. The early daily family prayer was

the foundation of my spiritual life. I am thanking my dad now for giving me that opportunity early in life; opportunity to think about praying and to learn how to be praying in a simple, humble, and homely atmosphere.

Again, the Bible tells us, *"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain."* Psalm 127:1.

Prayer to God helps in building the family. Each of the family member will be receiving some spiritual encouragement and increasing in knowledge and fear of God if the family has what we often called *family altar.* My family had a simple but meaningful family altar, and my dad is the family priest. He was faithful in this call, and he taught all his children the same. The experience is unforgettable and not regretted in any way by my siblings and me. Thank God for my dad's faith and love. He allowed the Lord to build his home and family.

Before I ever understood the Bible or what Christianity all is about, I often heard my dad quoting this verse of the Scripture; *"As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15). My dad came out of ancestral spirit worship. We have that as masquerades in my hometown. Masquerades represent that ancestor visiting his people to bless or warm them of imminent danger. The annual festival is always celebrated in fancy, food, singing, dancing, display of charms, spells, other form of *juju* or *voodoo*, and market square ritual. Our compound is the center masquerades in my town. My dad could probably be a priest to the ancestral spirit worship shrine. However, much early in his life, he told us the Christian Missionaries can to another nearby village where he was born. The missionaries were reaching out with the Gospel message. They would preach the Gospel publicly. I think they would come regularly and would go back to the other town. My dad could no go with the missionary at the initial stage even though he was touched by the Gospel and wanted to go to church. He told us he had to leave his parents and moved to the town where the missionaries had a church and a day school. He wanted to go to school but his uncle denied him. He could go to church and that was how he became a Christian and lost interest in idol worship. He was about 9 years old when all these was taking place in his life. It was an experience my dad often talks about. By the time this book was written he was about 103 years and still strong in faith and prayer. He trained all his children in the way of the Lord and God used

that homely and family Christian atmosphere to shape our spirituality and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Some of us have family that are religious and actively seeking for God like Cornelius. The Bible says of Cornelius, *"He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; they gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly."* Acts 10:2. God saw how this man was leading his family with passion for religion things. God knew Cornelius was devoted, God-fearing, generous, and prayerful. Yet Cornelius did not know Jesus. God gracious had to arrange how Cornelius would experience fullness of truth and grace by opening Peter's spiritual eyes to see and then sent him to help Cornelius and his family to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus. Remember Cornelius was a pious, devoted, and prayerful person—he and his entire family. Interestingly, Cornelius and his entire family got saved in the same day and were filled with the Holy Spirit. What a great experience and testimony about Cornelius. Cornelius teaches us that prayer never dies. He teaches us that God answers prayers of families.

## Prayer for Friends and Acquaintances and Enemies

Everyone of us has a circle of influence. We have friends and neighbors. It is just a great act of love to pray for our friends and acquaintances. It is high level of love to think of others and lift them up to God in your prayers. The Bible strongly supports this thought and practice.

Paul tells us in Galatians 6 verse 2, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*" We can bear others burdens in prayer, taking those burden to God. Apostles James tells us again, *"… pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* And Jesus says, *"love your neighbors as yourself."*

The implication of these Scriptures is we should pray for others—Christian friends, unbelieving friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and our supposed human enemies. Praying for people outside our family is a display of selflessness and sacrificial love for them. When last did you pray for someone outside your family members? The neighbors, acquaintances, and enemy you do not pray for today may not see the

light of Jesus shining through you. They may grow and become persons causing social menaces in your community. However, if we pray for them, they may become children of God and be useful for God and your community. Through prayer God changes people. God answers our prayer to change lives.

A study of Paul's Apostle life will reveal that he was a person of large social, religious, and political circle being a lawyer before he came to Jesus. As we study Paul's epistles to churches and individuals, we see Paul mentioning so many Christian friends. And more importantly, he would say*, "I thank God for you…;" "I remember you in my prayers…": I sought the face of God on your behalf that you stand firm in faith…"* etc.
To make us get a broader perspective on praying for others, Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2: 1-5, *"I exhort therefore, that, first, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."*

For whom do we pray? All men. Kings. Presidents. Leaders. All men include your friends, neighbors, acquaintances, strangers, etc. I enjoy praying for others. My experiences show me that my friends and neighbors come to know Jesus because someone and myself have been praying for them. When I was in college, I had some friends I prayed for. I asked the Lord to save them. Sometimes after praying I would write a letter to them explaining the Gospel. I have some of them as Christian friends now; they are serving the Lord faithfully. Many people think it only Pastors who must pray for others. They are outrightly wrong. We are called to pray for everyone. Look at these few Scriptures.
"*Be diligent to know the state of your flocks and attend to your herds…*"— Proverbs 27:23.
*"Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not*
*grudgingly--not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God."*—1Peter 5: 2 (NLT).
These are some of the Bible verses that some believers think command the
Pastors and Ministers to provide pastoral care (praying included) for

others. I had the same belief and thoughts before until I came to this biblical truth in the book of Genesis. 4 verses 9. Cain murdered his brother and pretended as nothing happened. God came and asked him, *"Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"*

The answer was shocking. God told Cain*,* yes! *"What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."*

The Spirit of God thought me it is not only my blood-related brothers that are my brothers; all boys and men are my brothers irrespective of the social, religious, ethnic, and color, and cultural background. Hence, I am my brother's keeper. You are my brother as far as God is your Creator. So, I have friends from different nations and regions, and I pray for them always. It is very profound that lack of understanding of the Word of God has made some people racists and tribalists and nepotists. The book of Acts clearly shows that we are from the same blood.

*"And He* (God*) has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their reappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being… "*—Acts 17: 26-28 (NKJV).

Believe me, everyone you ever met in life are your sisters and brothers in God's view. We must get God's perspective of humanity if we will live peacefully. God's perspective of others will inspire us to pray for them. The above Bible verses say,

1. We are all made from one blood (Adam) no matter which nation we are

and wherever we live on the surface of the earth,

2. God wants all of us to seek, find, and know him.
3. God is not far from us for we all live and move and have our existence in him.

This understanding changes me every day. I hope it will change someone as well so that we may pray for those who do not know God wherever they live on the globe. We are brothers and sisters; neighbors and acquaintances, friends, and companions of one another. That is the reason we should cultivate the spiritual habit of praying for one another.

Jesus paints this canvas beautifully with the story of the good

Samaritans. How many of us are like the empty-heart priest, who saw a wounded person and "*passed by on the other side*" or religious bigot Levite, who saw a person writhing in pain and *"passed by on the other side"?* To show who is the true neighbor to this stranger wounded by armed bandit, Jesus pointedly told his hearers and now tells us, "… *He that shewed mercy…*" to this wounded stranger is his neighbor. My point is: it takes a heart full of mercy to care for strangers found in his own pool of blood. Congruently, it takes a heart of mercy to pray for neighbors, friends, acquaintances, and unknown person. However, that is what we are called to do for Jesus said unto the man who was asking the question, who is my neighbor, "*Go, and do thou likewise"*—Luke 10: 37. May I say we all are called to friendship, neighborhood, acquaintanceship, and stranger ministry? One way to begin that is by praying to God always for strangers we meet on regular basis or some folks in our neighborhood.

If our friends, acquaintance, and neighbors do not know the Lord, God can touch them as we pray for them, bringing them to the point of decision to follow Jesus. If our neighbors and neighbors and acquaintances are sick or going through some existential challenges, we can intercede on their behalf. God loves a prayerful heart and persons. God loves intercessors. God is always looking for intercessors or some persons who will fill the gap.

God told the Prophet at a time, *"I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for [the sake of] the land, that I would not destroy it, but I found no one [not even one]"*—Eze. 22:30.

For this set of people, God said "*but I found no one [not even one]."* Will God say the same to us in 21st Century? God is recruiting intercessors all the time. So, get enlisted. Say yes to God. begin to pray for your family, friends, foes, acquaintances, neighbors, strangers, and all men. This is the will of God for us as his redeemed children.

## Prayer of Dedication of Property and Material Things

*"Be careful of nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace*

*of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* Phil.4: 6 (KJV).

From the above Scripture, we learn that God wants us to pray for all things. The outcome of our prayer is peace of hearts and minds via Jesus Christ. All things include our material possession, property, land, equipment and machinery, house, farm, business, workplace, marketplace, peace in our streets, community, society, and nation. The reason we have lots of chaos, protests, violence, vices, crimes like gun wars, drunkenness, prostitution, children trafficking, police brutal, immorality at various strata of the society, etc. is because many Christians have abandoned their spiritual responsibility. One of such is prayer and praying. If we fail to do what God instructs us to do, we shall not avoid all the atrocities we see around us.

Remember Lot. Lot was said to be righteous, but his righteous soul was vexed daily with evil of the society around him. I did not know whether Lot was a praying person, however, when God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot was living there. Abraham was interceding that God should not destroy these cities if he could find just ten righteous persons. God told Abraham, there were not ten righteous persons. So, Lot was not considered to be amongst the first ten righteous persons in Sodom and Gomorrah. May be if Abraham wen down to five righteous persons, Lot could have qualified. But it is sad to know he was not amongst the first ten righteous person.

Now, I hold the belief that prayer is one of the vital keys to live a righteous life. If you are praying and communicating with God on regularly basis, you will have the grace to live right. Praying and sins are not friends just as God and sins are not. Prayer and sins are mutually exclusive. Prayer and right living are a great asset for anyone who pursue that grace. Before we can pray for all things and anything, we need to live right. God is necessarily not looking for Lots, who had to be saved from Sodom and Gomorrah as by fire or by force. God is looking for people like Abraham who will live right and pray always and relate with him as a friend. You remember also, Bible says God calls Abraham his friend.

There is apparently nothing under the sun that Christians cannot pray for—if such things are good; or pray against—if such things are bad and ungodly. Much as we are not to weaponize prayers, we should

understand that prayer is one of our spiritual weapons. Prayer is a channel we can connect with the Omnipotent power of God and has him to fight and defeat our enemies and any force working against us. In my Christian and pastoral care ministry life, I have had occasions to prayer for the following.

- Praying of members' landed properties.
- Praying for businesses of others.
- Praying for houses under constructions.
- Praying for completed houses before the owners move in.
- Praying for school premises or campuses or compounds and staffs and leadership, and students.
- Praying for farmers and their farm activities.
- Praying for those who are jobless to secure good jobs, and promotion for those who deserve one or who are denied one.
- Praying for students' convocations and graduations from various level of schools.
- Praying against territorial spirits of our cities and towns that are influencing people's life, health, and businesses.
- Praying for church to grow, fruits in evangelism, revival, and restorations of Christians sliding back.
- Praying for fruits of the womb for women who desire children.
- Praying for family to flourish and prosper.
- Praying for marriages with challenges.
- Praying for to-be couples as they plan their marriage and wedding programs.
- Praying for families who have other members abroad and those who desire to travel abroad.
- Praying for favor to obtain visa and travel documents and safe trips.
- Praying for spiritual growths of many family members and friends; church members and ministers.
- Praying for other Christian ministries and churches locally and globally.
- Praying for rain when there seems to be absence of rain or delay and the farmers are planning to plant for the season.
- Praying for great harvest for our farmers.
- Praying for health of friends, families, and colleagues.

- Praying for sick persons in hospitals and homes.
- Praying for people who are traveling by land, seas/ships, and airplanes.
- Praying for deliverance of those who are possessed, obsessed, and oppressed by the devil.
- Praying for civil servants and private business owners for success in
  their endeavors.
- Praying for economic and political stability in different nations.
- Praying for positive social atmosphere in the nations and globally.
- Praying against the operation of devil and his cohorts in families and lives.
- Prayer for personal and family protection
- Prayer for God's provision and supply of needs.
- Prayer of commitment to the Lord.
- Prayer for re-dedication of spiritual life.
- Prayer for peace and comfort for all around us.
- Prayer in agreement (2 or more persons) for some specific things.
- Praying for weather conditions to be favorable to people. Weather can
  be challenging in some regions of the world.

There are so many things for which we can pray. I am so happy that God is much more interested in listening, hearing, and answering our prayers. And most of the time God answers our prayer according to his own will and not ours. Thank God for his grace to answer prayer for all things. Make your list of all things and go to God with them every day. God still answers prayers. Your prayer list is never too long for God. Your prayers are never too much for God. He has the capacity to listen, hear, answer, and preserve your prayers. Therefore, pray without ceasing. Pray always and do not faint. Pray. Continue in prayer.

# Prayer for/Protection

In many places in the Bible, we see people of God praying for protection. You and I should be aware of the fact that there are many things God is sovereignly protecting us from. There are many forces in the universe that we cannot see; that we are unaware of, and we do not even understand how they operate. But God knows. Our faith and trust in God call us to pray to God to keep us from so many things we do not see

fighting against our souls and our lives. King David gives us a better description of this in Psalm 91:3-5 (NIV) when he said,

"*Surely, he will save you*
*from the fowler's snare*
*and from the deadly pestilence.*
*He will cover you with his feathers,*
*and under his wings you will find refuge;*
*his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*
*You will not fear the terror of night,*
*nor the arrow that flies by day,*
*nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,*
*nor the plague that destroys at midday."*

David knows there are fowlers setting snare for him; there are deadly pestilence: there are terrors of night; there are arrows that fly by day; there are pestilences that stalk in the darkness; and there are plagues that destroys at midday. It means there are dangers, death, destruction, and some forces that can cause devastation to our life. What is the implication of this? Pray for protection. Acknowledge God as your shelter, refuge, fortress, and shadow that protects. It means we understand and acknowledge God as the only One who can cover us with his feathers and wings and his faithfulness.

When Jacob was fleeing away from his brother Esau, he was intelligent and spiritual enough to pray for protection for and on his journey. Jacob prayed this prayer: *"Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."*—Gen. 32: 20-22 (NIV).

Look at the content of that prayer again: 1) be with me; 2) watch over me on this journey I am taking; 3) give me food to eat; 4) give me clothes to wear; and 5) let me return safely to my father's household. Do these sound like protection? I believe so. Did God answer Jacob's prayer? Yes, God did. See the answer in Genesis 33. We too can learn from this.

Moses priestly blessing for the Israelites is a prayer for protection and security from God. Moses wrote in Numbers 6:24-27, *"The LORD blesses you and keep you; the LORD makes his face shine on you and*

*be gracious to you; the LORD turns his face toward you and give you peace."*

When God blesses and keeps us; when God make his face to be on us and shines his light of us; when God gives us peace, these all encompass divine protection.

Do we have examples of prayer of and for protection in the New Testament? Yes, we do. Here are examples from Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus—"*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."* (John 17:15).

Paul—*"But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one*." (2Thes. 3:3).

Paul-- *"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen*." (1Tim. 4:18).

The Early Disciples—*"Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals;" and so, he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." So, he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."* (Acts 12: 5-11).

The protection of Peter from execution by Herod and his deliverance from jail by an angel is nothing but Gid's miraculous acts. We should not lose the sight of the fact that *constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.* God answered that prayer of the church. If

Paul, the Early Disciples, and Jesus knew there are evil and evil one (Satan and demons and their agents) and prayed against them, why should you not feel the need to pray for protection? Wickedness, evil, danger, death, destruction, evil ones, forces of darkness working against people and people of God are universal and ubiquitous! The remedy is praying to
God who knows all things and has all power to protect you.

Celtic monks used it to start their day with "protective Prayer Hymn. This Hymn is believed to be written on St. Patrick's Breastplate. The hymn was several stanzas long, and the last two stanzas were especially memorable and moving:

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the Name,
The strong Name of the Trinity;
By invocation of the same.
The Three in One, and One in Three,

Of Whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.

# Prayer for Provision/Supply

Psalm 40 verse 17 says, *"[As for me] I am poor and needy, yet the Lord takes thought and plans for me. You are my Help and my Deliverer. O my God, do not tarry!"* (AMPC). Psalm 34:6 tells us, *"This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him from all his troubles."* (AMP)

In John 16: 24, Jesus says, "*Up to this time you have not asked a [single]*

*thing in My Name [as presenting all that I Am]; but now ask and keep on asking and you will receive, so that your joy*

*(gladness, delight) may be full and complete."* (AMPC)
In Matthew 7: 7, 8-11, Jesus tells us, "Ask *and* keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek *and* keep on seeking and you will find; knock *and* keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened. **9** Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will [instead] give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will [instead] give him a snake? If you then, evil (sinful by nature) as you are, know how to give good *and* advantageous gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven [perfect as He is] give what is good *and* advantageous to those who keep on asking Him."

Humankind needs are unlimited and insatiable. However, we have a God who is also unlimited in resources. On this terrestrial plane, we have told and taught ourselves that our resources are limited. But that is not God's perspective shown to us in the Bible. God has unlimited resources. God is El-Shaddai or multi-breasted-God who can feed all his children satisfactorily and simultaneously. No human being can do that. If we listen to our so-called economic theories, we shall forever be perplexed and stress out. But if we listen to the Word of the Lord, we can develop faith and key ourselves into divine strategy of accessible God's unlimited resources. What is that strategy? Prayer of faith. We need to trust God for all our needs and express our trust to him by praying to him asking him to meet our needs and supply what we desire and need for a meaningful life. Jesus has the best teaching and revelation on prayer for us. In one of his profound teachings, he said pray like this, "*give us this day our daily bread."*

- Prayer is the channel of communication to receive what we need here on earth
- Prayer is open check God wants us to request from him
- Prayer gives us unlimited and unrestrained access to the treasury of heaven
- God answers prayer of his children always.
- Jesus' formula of A. S. K is still relevant and applicable to us now.

A means Ask (God first for whatever you need)
S means Seek (God's face for whatever you need)

K means Knock (God's treasury house door for your need)

James tells us the reasons why we do not receive God's blessing when we need them. He says*, "You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."* (James 4:2-3 NKJV).

Instead of asking God for what we need in prayer of faith, see what we do.

1. We lust— we are in a state of strong desire *for* something; intense

longing; including usually intense or unbridled sexual desire. Many Christians lust instead of praying to God to supply their needs.

2. We murder—we commit the crime of deliberately killing a person, sometimes with weapons of words or pen or disposition. How many people kill others to get something instead of prayer to God?
3. We covet—we desire what belongs to another inordinately or culpably. Do you covet to obtain something, or do you pray to God?
4. We fight—we use weapons or physical force to try to hurt someone to secure and obtain something. Some people are good fighters illegitimately to obtain something. However, they are not prayer warrior, pleading their cases with God of heaven.
5. We war—we are in a state or period of fighting with other countries

or groups. We are in a situation in which people or groups compete with or fight against each other. Have we ever obtained anything that last and bring peace by wars? Why cannot individuals, groups, or nations seek the face of God for what they need.

6. We ask not from God—we have been wrongly taught to believe we are the captain of our own ship. We are the drivers of our life; our mind can conceive something and have it. We are lost in the euphoria of individualism and selfish ambition

and undue struggles for life. Some of us have our mind programmed in such a way that we believe we can do anything without God. No, you cannot do anything with God. So, you do not see the need to pray? It is dangerous.

7. We ask amiss or wrongly—When some of us pray, we never pray according to God's revealed will. We pray wrongly. When we prayed amiss, we will not have any answer.

God promises to supply our needs as we pray to him. We must pray to him because prayer shows we are continuously communicating with him, we are constantly connecting with him. God asks us to pray to him not only because of providing for us what we need but also because he wants us to have a living relationship with him. Jesus never fiddles with prayer. So must we. We can rely on God's promises to answer our prayer and supply our needs—spiritually, emotionally, financially, physically, etc. Because God has promised to answer our prayers, when we go to him to pray, we need to remember that we are not going to convince him to change his mind and answer our prayers. Here are some of the promises of God to answer our prayers.

- *"Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you*" (Jeremiah 29:12).
- "*Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and honor him. "With a long life I will satisfy him. And let him see My salvation*." (Psalm 91:14-16).
- *"In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full*" (John 16: 23, 24).
- "*And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."* (Mat. 21: 22).

## Prayer for Commitment to the Lord

*Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him,*
*And He shall bring it to pass* (Psalm 37:5).

The Scripture encourages us to commit our ways to the Lord. How do we do that? Simple answer is by prayer. There are so many things we cannot handle with human power, education, intelligence, skills, etc. We need God to see us through life, so, we must commit our entire life to him.

Proverbs 16: 3 says, *"Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."* And in the say book of Proverbs we are admonished*, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*" (Pro. 3: 5-6).

We need God in whatever we do. We need God's understanding because our understanding is limited and shallow. We need to trust the Lord with all our heart and acknowledge him in all our ways. We do this through prayer, trusting, and hoping in him. He will always direct anyone who does so. He is ever faithful, his Word is true, and he is always enough. I encourage you to always pray committing your ways—either small or big—to the Lord and you will never regret you did. This is the secret of Jesus. He always commits his ways to the Father and the Father will tell him what to do and how to do it. Jesus can boldly tell us I do things that I see my Father doing; I do things that pleases my Father. How could he have done otherwise? He commits his ways to the Father. The Father responds to him by showing him what to do. I tell you that brings effortless, sweatless, stress-free success. It is not magic. Rather, it is letting God take the lead in all areas of our life. That was what Jesus was doing.

God loves anyone who absolutely depends on him for all things at all times. God always manifests to anyone who seeks his face in prayer of commitment. When we combine prayer of faith with obedience to God, we will live a life that is meaningful and rich in divine blessings. And, interestingly, there is nothing so small or so big we cannot commit to the hands of God in prayer. God never limits us in prayer. Jesus makes this open as he presented this open and bank check to us. Jesus expects us to fully yield our life to him and the Father; to learn how to bring every area of our life to God in prayer. Jesus makes prayer imperative when he says, "when you pray." I tell you; we can always have something to pray for, something to commit to the Lord. And he will answer us as he has promised.

# Prayer for Re-dedication

The best of Jesus' follower can fall into temptation if he or she is not watchful. Peter did and he ended up in one of the heinous sin ever committed by mortal man—denying Jesus. Peter was warned severally by Jesus is the danger ahead and he was admonished to watch and pray. But Peter seemed to be presumptuous. The effect of his presumptive life was he fell into temptation, and he denied Jesus three times even with swearing. Before Peter denied Jesus, the Master told him*, "Oh Simon, Simon, do you know that Satan has asked to have you all to sift like wheat?*" Jesus knew the danger ahead of Peter. He told him and prayed ahead of him for his restoration. Jesus told him, "*but I have prayed for you that you may not lose your faith. Yes, when you have turned back to me, you must strengthen these brothers of yours.*" (Luke 22: 31—Phillips). We do not know how Peter handled what Jesus told him and warmed him of. We see later, Jesus told him to watch and pray while he went to pray before his death. Peter and other disciples were sleeping instead of watching for the Master in prayer. Because of failure to watch and prayer, they all fled because they had no spiritual stamina to withstand the challenge that faced them while Jesus was going to the cross to die. Peter who did not flee ended up denying the Master three time before a maid. The only thing that rescued Peter was Jesus' prayer before the denial came.

When Peter realized what he did, the Bible recorded for us, *"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly."* That was a cry of repentant and contrite heart. That was a crying-prayer of Peter telling the Lord to have mercy and forgive him. That was Peter's prayer re-dedicating his life to Jesus. We know Peter was restored as he turned out to be one of the pillars of the Early Church after Jesus ascension to heaven. Judas never cried that way. He never repented.

When King David fell into temptation and committed murder and adultery, he seemed to have intended to cover them up. However, God sent his prophet to expose David. What was his reaction? It was prayer for forgiveness and restoration. David prayed and asked God to restored him. It was a prayer of re-dedication. Re-dedication prayer is for believer

who goes astray or backslides, and God convicts him or her of what has been done. In response to the conviction, such a person asks for forgiveness and re-dedicate his life to God. God is faithful to restore (See Psalm 51).

## Prayer for Peace and Comfort

Times and again, Jesus promises his followers peace. The challenge is that many of us do not know how to appropriate the peace that Jesus promises. He is the Prince of Peace. How can we have the King or Prince of Peace in us, and we never experience the peace he gives? When you are born-again, one of the first benefits of the new life is peace.

Romans 5 verse 1and 2 says, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand*. "(NIV).

If a Christian is no experiencing peace and comfort of his Lord, something is wrong. He or she needs to check the lifestyle he or she is leading. When I was a young Christian one of slogans from my experience is KNOW CHRIST KNOW PEACE and NO CHRIST NO PEACE. It was one of my evangelistic words as I witnessed to people. And it was the real experience of peace I had that made me felt so bold and confident to tell other so boldly. To me Jesus means PEACE. I believed it. I experienced it. I proclaimed it everywhere. If someone does not the initial and continual blessing of peace Jesus ushers and gives to all who believes in him, the person needs to pray earnestly.

Then, there are some existential issues to attempt to steal believers' peace temporarily. Many things happen to us that tend to affect our peace of mind and heart. Life challenges like sickness, death, jobless, losing job and not knowing when means of living will come immediately, failure in education pursuit or in business, satanic and demonic attacks, accidents, and incidents of life, etc. In any circumstance we find ourselves, we have the encouragement of and from the Bible.

Paul encourages us in Philippians 4: 6-"*Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to*

*make your wants known to God. And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*

This is the antidote of anxiety, fretting, worries, etc. In everything and circumstances, pray to God to give you peace that is beyond understanding. We have the assurance that God will make peace that transcends all understanding to garrison our hearts and minds in Christ. God gives us the grace to pray for peace when we lack peace. Pray for peace!

## Prayer of Agreement

A divine principle often seen in the Bible is the agreement principle. It usually involves two or more people. In a deeper dimension the Bible calls it covenant. The principle enjoys a good place in Christian prayer, and no one taught it than Jesus himself. Prayer of agreement is another form of all kinds of prayer.

Jesus says, *"Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."* (Mat. 18: 18, 19—KJV).

Christians have the privilege of praying the prayer of agreement on any legitimate things each of them desire. How does this work? First, there is combination of faith. One brother's faith encourages other. Second, like the first, there is sharpening of one another spiritual tool or weapon. Iron sharpens iron, Third, Jesus promises his presence anywhere there is agreement of faith, hope, love, intention, plans, etc. Combining these factors ensure answer to prayer. It is not that a Christian cannot pray and receive answer from God. Jesus wants us to appreciate the power of unity, community, agreement, covenant, doing things together, collaboration, cooperative, walking and working together, being one in purpose and in prayer. Anytime you seem to experience downturn of faith in prayer why not call for a brother or sister and agree to pray to God? Jesus cannot deny himself.

*Never worry about anything. Instead, in every situation let your petitions be made known to God through prayers and requests, with thanksgiving—ISV*

# Chapter 5
# Church Related Prayers

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God—NASB— (1995).*

In this chapter I want us to see how the Early Church used the vehicle or channel of prayer to achieve many things—from small. The redemptive

work of Jesus is the bedrock of Christianity. The beginning and the conclusion of redemption was surrounded or enclosed with prayer of Jesus. Jesus prayed a lot to accomplish the redemption of mankind. Jesus was fully man, and he went through all that any man could or would go through. He knows what it means to be man. As a man he demonstrated how every man needs to depend on God through prayer.
The Bible says of Jesus, *"While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God."*—Hebrews 5: 7 (NLT).

The pattern of prayer of Jesus is something we can hardly ever beat as his followers.

- The Church on earth was born out of prayers.
- The New Testament Church was inaugurated by and with prayer.
- The seed of the Church was planted and water in prayer.
- The growth and development of the Church depended on prayer.
- The Church's future on earth needs more prayer.
- Prayer is the undeniable key for the Church and Christians' growth.
- Prayer is the master key to spiritual growth of the Church of Christ Jesus.

When Jesus was about to depart to heaven after his resurrection, he told the Disciples, *"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high…. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen."*—Luke 24:46-52 (NKJV).

This was the first post-ascension fellowship and worship service the Disciples had. All they did was to praise and bless the Lord—this was a form of prayer. Praising, blessing, worshipping, and adoring the

resurrected and ascended Jesus were the first things the Disciples did. That was a great prayer meeting focused on appreciating the Lord. What follows this worship service is in relationship with prayer and the Church.

## Prayer for the Promise and Power (Acts 1:8; 14)

"*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

It is amazing to know that the first thing the early Disciples did after Jesus' left was praying and worship. The Disciples obeyed Jesus as they went to the Jerusalem. That was Jesus' command to them. The Disciples went to Jerusalem to tarry for the Promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. They tarried to be endued with power from on high, the power came as the promise of the Father.

*"These* (the Disciples*) all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers*—Acts 1:14.

According to the promise of Jesus, and as an answer to Disciple's prayer, the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost. The special day the Promise and Power of the Father were granted was the birthday of the New Testament Church and it was in the atmosphere of prayer, worship, and devotion. What follows this prayer and devotion and waiting, or tarrying was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit was given, the promised Comforter came, the Teacher came, the Anointing and Power came, and the Disciples can now witness for Jesus as the Lord designed witnessing to be. It was very exciting to them even if it came with challenges.

I suppose a lot of Christians need this experience afresh—the fresh outpouring and anointing of the Holy Spirit. However, the price is tarrying or waiting on the Lord without distraction. The price is going to our "Upper Room in Jerusalem" and engage ourselves in prayers, devotion, and worship. Nothing comes so easily in life. Even spiritual things have big prices. Are we ready to pay the price?

## Church or Group or Congregational Prayer

It should not surprise us the church started with a corporate or

congregational prayer. Here is an evidence.

*"When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those presents were Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew; James's son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas's son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers*—Acts 1: 14,15.

The Disciples here were the 11 Apostles, many women, the mother of Jesus, and Jesus' brothers. These can be said to be the founding members of the Church on earth after Jesus ascended to heaven. Take time to see the composition. And what were they doing? "*They all joined together constantly in prayer"* What a great way to start a church. This was a group or congregational prayer, and it is highly recommended for everyday life of any local church or group of believers.

We see another example in Acts 2 which seems to be a continuation of what we just read.

*"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit…*

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"*—Acts 2:1-3,4; 42-47 (NIV).

Certain things characterized the early Disciples.

1. Unity
2. Fellowship/Communion/Breaking of bread
3. Scripture teaching
4. Praying and Praise together as a group
5. Joy

6. Favor with God and men
7. Giving
8. Growth

These things need to be proactively practiced in any local Church or Christian group. From the moment Jesus left them, to the Day Pentecost, and from there onward these spiritual activities and disciplines continued with the Apostles and early Disciples. In the next chapter of Acts, we see the Disciples had what they called "the hour of prayer*." "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon*" Acts 3:1.

Why do many churches in our time not have the time or hour for regular prayer? The reason for powerlessness and absence of revival in many parts of the world is in part due to this. Prayer has become a burden instead of blessing to many so-called Christians, leaders, churches. The songwriter said many years ago, "Sweet hour of prayer…" How many Christians and their church leaders can still confidently say that in 21st Century? The hour is prayer is sweet because it is the time we consciously and intentionally come to meet with the Author of prayer—our loving Father. If we need revival in our churches, we must endeavor to intentionally revive and restore or create our hours of prayers like the early Christians. When there is no prayer, there will no spiritual power in any local church `or in any Christian life.

In any or all situation, sweet or bitter, the believers prayed group prayer. For example, Peter and John were accused of preaching in the name of Jesus and the religious leaders did their worst to stopped them.
*"They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day… They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this? After further threats they let them go."*

Imprisonment could not stop these Disciples. False accusations could not deter them. Threats could not hinder them. When they let them go, they went to their group and the next thing they did was to pray to God.
*"On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God."*
That was like saying, "problems solved" and life continued. There are so

many instances of group or congregational prayers in the Acts of Apostles. God put those incidences for us to learn that we can do the same or should be doing the same as the Church of Jesus. God still answers congregational prayer. That is one of the ministries of the Church on earth. It is the secret to spiritual power and church growth. When any church prays in unity and in group and reach out in witnessing for Jesus (Evangelism) such church will growth, there will be revival, and signs and wonders will be repeated like we see in Acts of Apostles or as we see in any praying congregation in church history and present day.

Congregational prayer of the church keeps the fire on the altars—the church altar and human hearts. God told the priests in the Old Testament,

*"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen trousers he shall put on his body and take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. Then he shall take off his garments, put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out."*—Lev. 6: 8-13 (NKJV).

What is more synonymous to prayer than the burnt offerings? Prayer can be said to be our burnt offering like we see in the Old Testament.

- As the burnt offering was commanded by the Lord, so we are commanded to pray.
- As the fire on the heathen altar must not go out, so the fire prayer on the altars of the church and our hearts should never go out.
- As the fire should be burning on the altar night and day, so the fire of prayer on the church altar and Christian hearts must be burning nights and days.
- As the priest was instructed to have special preparations for burnt

offering, so we are encouraged to prepare our hearts and church for prayer.

- As the priest needed to wear linen garment and trouser (pants) and take away the ashes of the burnt offerings, so we are commanded to present ourselves with the garment of righteousness, putting off other filthy garments, cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the spirit and flesh before we can pray effectively.
- The ashes must be taken up from the previous burnt offering on the altar and be put aside, so we are to take all unnecessary or useless things from our previous spiritual experiences off and away from the altar of our churches and hearts.
- As the priest put on new garments before he carries the ashes outside the camp to clean the altar, so we should clean our hearts and altars on regular basis.
- As every day needs fresh wood, fire, and offerings, so Christian prayer life is.
- We are priests to and of the Lord. Our priestly ministry is to constantly offer sacrifices to God. These sacrifices include prayer. The fire on the altar of prayer should never go out.

We are commanded to pray without ceasing in the New Testament. Is not this like what God told the Levitical priests, "*And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out"?*
Let us remember God was speaking to the priests in the context of the Temple, in the context of the congregation, or in the context of what now we call church. God commands us to have Temple or Church prayer—that is congregational prayers. Our Pastors are obligated to do this. Christians are obligated to follow the Pastors in this regard. God blesses such obedience.

God specifically told Solomon about the need for congregational prayer in 2 Chronicles 7: 12-15, *"Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or*

*send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place."*

There may be challenges in our community, states, or nations. However, God gave the formular to secure answers to Solomon. One of the ways is congregational prayer.

God says, "*if My people who are called by My name*
*will humble themselves and pray and seek My face…"*

God expects us to humble ourselves and seek his face in congregational prayer even for our community, nation, or churches. If God gives us this formular and requirements, we had better obey and be blessed.

# Prayer and Bible Teaching in the Church (Acts 2:42)

***"****They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*

I submit to us that the success of our church Bible study depends on the prayer of the leaders and the entire church members. That means, first, it is not only Pastor or Teacher, or Evangelist or Minister who leads the Bible study who prays or must pray; the entire congregation should be actively involved in praying for the teaching of the Word. Acts 2:42 was the pattern of Bible study we see in the early Church. What features do we see?

1. Apostles' teaching the Word.
2. Christ Disciples were devoted to the teaching.
3. Disciples were continually devoted to fellowship.
4. Christians continual devoted to breaking of bread.
5. Christians continual devotion to prayer.

There is no way we can divorce the teaching of the Word of God from fervent prayer of the Church. If any Church fails in praying for the teaching of her Pastor, Sunday School Teacher, Bible Teachers or Teaching Ministers, the Word may not be effective in people's life as expected. The Pastor or Teacher should be prayerful and so the entire

Church member. The reason the Bible Study of many modern churches is stale and lack fire of the Holy Spirit is because there have been less, little, or no prayer. It was not meant to be that way. The Early Church prayed and had meaningful Bible study and fellowship and breaking of bread. The less our prayer for these spiritual services the more ineffectiveness we see. Look around, and tell me how many churches are doing Bible study again in our time? The price of prayer cannot be paid by Pastors and Leaders and the entire congregation. When there is no fervent prayer, no systematic teaching of the Word, and no evangelistic outreaches, the local churches will soon fizzle out.

# Prayer for Selections of Apostle and Ordinations of and Commissioning of Christian Workers

- ***Praying before replacing Judas Iscariot with Matthias***

The early Church also used prayers to select another Apostle to replace Judah Iscariot and when they wanted to appoint or select missionaries to go to the mission fields.

In Acts 1 verse 23-26, we read, *"And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles."*

At this "church conference" led by Apostle Peter, the members of this congregation were told the situation the Church was. Then, they select two believers whom they believed had been eyewitnesses like them.

They took another better step forward, "*and they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship…"*

It was after the prayer that they cast their lots (or they voted). Voting did not come before praying as some churches do in recent time. Prayers always come first for the early Church. At Pentecost, they also prayed. And as we shall see more, that was their pattern of doing this. Prayer and

praying. No wonder they were said to have *turned the world upside down*. That is what can happen again when the Church of Jesus Christ prays first before anything. In all things, prayer first….

- ***Praying before choosing Deacons***

The same thing was done when the first Deacons were chosen. It is no wonder these deacons were not just ordinary deacons. Look at Stephen and Philip—they were among the first deacons, but they were anointed and had extra-ordinary ministries. The first set of deacons were commissioned by prayer of the Church.

Acts 6: 5-7 tells us, *"This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So, the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."*

- ***Praying for appointed Elders of a local Church***

In Acts 14:21-23, we see how the Apostle appointed elders and prayed for them.

*"They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples…*

*Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church*

*and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."*

To the Apostles and early Christians, prayer was never business as usual; it was the real and practical spiritual business. Prayer was *sin qua non.*

- ***Praying before commissioning of Missionaries****.*

In Acts 13:2-3, we see how the Apostles and other Christians prayed before they "recruited" and sent missionaries to the fields. Praying was just a normal lifestyle to them that they needed not to announce, "hey guys, we have a prayer meeting so and so day and time" It looks like anywhere the early Christians gathered, prayer just start. Let us look at this crucial prayer meeting in Acts 13.

*"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said,*

*“Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”*

We were not told this prayer meeting was for the purpose of selecting or recruiting Missionaries. It appears to me that the Blessed Holy Spirit truly appreciated this fellowship with this group of Christians and decided to show them what they did not know before; that is the right people for the next assignment. The Holy Spirit showed them in this prayer meeting that Paul and Silas have been designed for that assignment. Praying brought forth this great revelation. The Disciples agreed with the Holy Spirit and fasted, prayed, and laid hands on Paul and Silas and sent them as commanded by the Holy Spirit. The outreach was super successful. If they did this how much more, we should emulate
them in fervent church prayers always.

## Prayer for Courage in the Face of Persecution

In Acts 5:12-31, we read, “*The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people… more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.”*

What was happening here was fulfillment of promises of Jesus in
Mark 16 and the fruit of the endowment of the Holy Spirit. There were signs, wonders, miracles, healing at *the Solomon’s Colonnade*, which was around the Temple, and on the streets. Peters’ shadow became an instrument God used to heal people who passed by his shadow. Peter was not intentionally directing his shadow on people, they were just passing by and happened to cross or pass over Peter’s shadow. People were not even asking him to pray for them, yet these undeniable miracles were happening. I believe this kind of thing cannot happen and go by without any positive or negative reaction for people or government. Sure enough, there were reactions.

In verse 17, we see the negative reaction to the Disciples, *“Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and*

*put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."*

Thus, the Apostles experience open jealousy. They were arrested. They were put in public jail. But God sent his angels to deliver them from jail supernaturally, and told them to,

*"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."* They obeyed! "*At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people."*

Then there was another set of reaction to the Disciples. In short, they were re-arrested and were beaten publicly.

*"They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go*." (Verse 40).

How did the Apostles and other Disciples react to this humiliation?

*"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah."* (verses 40-42).

Whether as group or individuals, prayer was a vital key to the Apostles and early Disciples of Jesus. They never did anything without putting prayer first. Following this pattern, Stephen was praying in the heat of persecution and dying because of Jesus and the Gospel.

His last prayer was, *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep."* Acts 6: 59, 60.

A notable miracle just happened to a lame man at the Beautiful Gate in Jerusalem through Apostle Peter. Before the miracle happened, "*… Peter said, "I do not have silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!" And grasping him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God;"* Acts 3: 6-10 (NASB).

There were different kinds of reactions to this miracle. First, the

laypeople reacted showing astonishment.
*"While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the portico named Solomon's, completely astonished."* (verse 11).

Second, the religious leaders reacted negatively and with threats as shown in chapter 4.
*"As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in prison until the next day, for it was already evening."*—Acts 4: 1-3.
It looks to me that these religious leaders enjoy imprisoning anyone who is not in line with their beliefs. They put the Apostles in prison again and the next day they brought them out to prosecute them.
*"When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"*

Third, Peter was the "attorney" for the Disciples, he stood to speak. *"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them…"* Peter's defense was nothing but Jesus and his resurrection; in short, he presented the Gospel to these religious leaders.

Fourth, we see the next reaction to Peter's defense with the Gospel. The response of the religious leaders was,
"*What are we to do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them not to speak any longer to any person in this name."*

Fifth, to the above response, Peter and John replied,
*"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, make your own judgment; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

Sixth, these religious leaders were not satisfied with Peter and John response.
Nevertheless, *"when they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the*

*people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened…"* Religious folks often threaten, prayer seems to be far from them. It stills happens now.

The seventh reaction was from the Apostles. The story never ended there. The Apostle went to other Disciples and did something worthy; they prayed. *"When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported everything that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard this, they raised their voices to God with one mind* (one accord, or in unity) …" (verse 23).

Prayer. Praying. Apostolic prayer. Disciples prayer. Christian prayer. That is what God desires that we do in any situation we find ourselves. The early Christians got the divine secret—the power in fervent prayer to God. We can do likewise.

- *Peter was persecuted, arrested, jailed but delivered through prayer.*

In Acts 12, it was prayer for deliverance from prison as result of persecutions for the Gospel that set Peter free.

*"Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, to do them harm. And he had James the brother of John executed with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter as well. (Now these were the days of Unleavened Bread.) When he had arrested him, he put him in prison, turning him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending only after the Passover to bring him before the people. So, Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made to God intensely by the church."*

God's ways are sovereign. He allowed James to be killed

with a sword by Herod, but never allowed Peter to die that same way. In fact, God rescued Peter miraculously from Herods' hand as the Church prayed intensely for him. Did the church not pray for James or did the Church not prayed enough? We do not know. But we know the Church prayed intensely for Peter and God rescued Peter from death plan of Herod. Prayers still work and God is Sovereign. He knows better and no one can question him. We need to do what he asks us to do. *"Call unto me and I will answer you…"* They way God answers prayers may not be the way we want, but he answers us when we pray. He answered this early Church and Peter was delivered supernaturally. The Church

had the answer for Peter's
deliverance very graphical and miraculous.

The account says, "*And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near Peter, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly… And he went out and continued to follow… the angel… Now when they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all [h]that the Jewish people were expecting." And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying…"*

- *Paul experienced persecution because he prayed, cast out demon.*

Serving Jesus faithfully may not always be on a platter of gold. Jesus promised all of us persecution because of him and God's Kingdom.
Paul had one in this story. *"It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave woman who had a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing great profit to her masters by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us and cried out repeatedly, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Highest God, who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation." Now she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and he turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment."*—Acts 16: 16-18 (NASB).

The long story short. Paul and Silas were arrested and jailed. Then, God intervened as they did something very simple but profound. They prayed and sang. God stepped in his supernatural. There was an earthquake that shook the prison to its foundation, prison doors opened, and chains on Paul and Silas were broken. And They were free!
*"Now about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened."*

Unbelievable? This is what we call true-life-story.

The story says, *"When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas; and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Verse 25 -39).*

The Jailer was converted at midnight and was baptized with his household. That looks like family evangelism, right?

"*They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of God to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household." (v.31-34).*

These guys were put into jail for preaching and casting out demons and converting people. They were doing the same thing right inside the prison. The jailer encountered Jesus with his household just because some "crazy Christians" were imprisoned, sang, and prayed in the midnight? Yes. That is the God we have. What God wants for us and from us *is some "midnight…praying and singing hymns of praise to God…"* The kind that *"the prisoners were listening to them"* This is a cool, calm, calculated singing, praising, or praising God. It was a powerful singing and praising and prayer that caught heaven's attention and made God to step in… Do you believe this can happens again? I do. It has been happening over and over across the globe where Christians are persecuted, and the believers are praying. God is faithful. We should be faithful in praying for persecuted Christians and God's will shall be done for on them.

# Prayer for New Believers

Christians need to pray for need believers to be established in faith. New believers need a purpose in their heart to serve that Lord. Pray can help them to stand and fulfil that purpose.

*Peter prayed for new believers in Samaria*.

*"When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived,*

*they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."* Act 18: 14-17.

There is nothing the early Christians did without prayer. Prayer is priority for them. They always prayed for almost everything.

*Paul prayed and was prayed for at his conversion.*

After Paul had an encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, the first thing the Lord told Ananias was that Paul *was praying*. And when Ananias got to Paul, the first thing he did was to lay hands and pray for him.

*"And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight… So, Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like fish scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened"*—Acts 9:1-19 (NASB —emphasis the Author).

Before Paul entered his discipleship class, he was prayed for to receive not only physical sight but for the Holy Spirit who gave him spiritual sight and insights to things of the Lord. No wonder Paul got more insights into things of Jesus. He started his Christian race with prayers—personal prayer (what I call sinner's prayer), and other Jesus's Disciples prayer (I called this pastoral prayer). And Jesus heard those prayers and used them for Paul. Prayer works, whether for old Christians or new converts. We should never fiddle with prayer for new Christians. We should never replace prayer with any other thing(s).

## Praying for Miracles, Healing and Restoration of life

I am a firm believer in whatever Jesus says in the Gospel. Peter was one

of those early Disciples who strongly believed in the words of Jesus. Remember, Peter was an eyewitness of Jesus from day one. Peter was with Jesus when Jesus said, *"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."* –Mat. 10: 8 (AMP). Peter never hesitated to do what his Master instructed and empowered him to do. The Church and believers are commanded or instructed to heal the sicks, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, preach the Kingdom Gospel, etc. Peter did and we can do as well. It takes our prayer and faith.

We read in Acts 9:36-43, "*Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which when translated means Dorcas); this woman was excelling in acts of kindness and charity which she did habitually. But it happened at that time that she became sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upstairs room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Do not delay in coming to us." So, Peter got ready and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the room upstairs; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. (*Emphasis the author).

How many of our church members are sufferings in sicknesses and died because the Church dares not pray in faith for healing and restoration. Not Peter. We need to do like Peter. We need Christian like Peter.

Healing and restoration of life was not only done by the New Testament Christians. We see some account in the Old Testament. Our God is Jehovah Rapha—the Healer. God still restores life—physically and spiritually. Elisha demonstrated this for us in 2 Kings 4: 32-36.
*"When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. So, he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD. Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he*

*stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So, he called her. And when she came to him, he said, "Pick up your son."*

The New Testament says, *"in everything by prayer…"* Prayer to God still works and God is enjoining us to pray to him at all times for all things. Paul showed us the fulfillment of Mark 16 in Acts 28: 7-9. *"Now in the neighboring parts of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us warmly for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with a recurring fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after he prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. After this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and being cured. They also showed us many honors, and when we were about to set sail, they supplied us with everything we needed."*

We do well to constantly remind ourselves of the promises of Jesus in Mark 16 beginning from verse 16.

## Prayer for Farewell for Christians Workers

At some other times, we face the reality of letting a good Christian workers or Pastors or Missionaries go for a new assignment at different locations like Paul. Local churches can have prayer for such a person or group of persons and ask them to pray as well. The prayer will be very comforting and therapeutic even after such people leave us. In Acts 20:36-38, Paul had served the Lord in Ephesus and needed to move to another place. It was like he should not go. But they showed love to him, and he prayed for the believers as well.

"*When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they all began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship."*

It is always good to say farewell with hearty prayer. Some ministers do farewell to the congregation with curse and fighting as if they

are not serving Jesus or not going to the same eternity with those Christians. The same is true of some churches. They will fight the Pastor and if possible, pray he dies. If we start as friends, why would we end as "enemy"? Are we not serving the same Jesus and God? I do not know where we learn this. It was a good pattern to learn from Apostle Paul and his team.

Here is another farewell prayer.

*"When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for the ship was to unload its cargo there. After looking up the disciples, we stayed there for seven days; and they kept telling Paul, through the Spirit, not to set foot in Jerusalem. When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. Then we boarded the ship, and they returned home."* Acts 21:5 (NASB).

Honestly, I always feel good whenever I read these farewell accounts especially seeing they were done in the atmosphere of faith, love, and prayer. Do not we not think that is what we should endeavor to do always and anytime we leave a church to serve someone else? Seriously, I think so and believe all Christians should do the same. God loves a farewell greeting that ends in prayer and love.

## Prayer for/of Repentance

The Church on earth should also create avenue or condition for groups or individual to pray for repentance. One thing that is hard for man to do is to agree with God that what he does is wrong just as God says it is (in his Word).

"*All the ways of a man are clean and innocent in his own eyes [and he may see nothing wrong with his actions], But the LORD weighs and examines the motives and intents [of the heart and knows the truth]."* Proverbs 16:2 (AMP).

And as long as man remains this way, man is eternally lost. That is the reason God makes a glorious way to help man. God provides for all men means to come to his senses through the Gospel. God provides means of forgiveness and reconciliation with him through his Son—The Lamb of God who had taken away the sins of the whole world. There are still

many in our world who do not know because Satan blindfold them. There are many who know but are stubborn and rebellion. There are many who are fighting within them when it comes to anything about God. Whatever condition any man or woman is, God and his redemptive work through Jesus, and the Gospel are the solution for man peace, healing, reconciliation with God. So, man must repent. The Church on earth has a big role to play to help men and women to God. The Church can pray and pray for men and women to repent.

***What is repentance?***

Without any bogus theological exegesis, I can say,

- Repentance is coming to term and agreement with God as we see in his Word.
- It is accepting the fact that, yes, I broke God's commandment, I have disobeyed, I am sorry, I want to make amend, I turn away from my disobedience and obey and follow God's Word.
- I am ready to accept God's term for forgiveness and reconciliation. I am ready to accept what God did through his Son Jesus.
- Repentance is now what God says I am (a disobedient and rebellious person) and I am ready to change and be what God wants me to be.

***How do people come to repentance?***

- God in his sovereignty draws people. God calls people in an unexplainable way, without anyone preaching to them. God will show them the way to Jesus Christ his Son and makes them repent.
- God draws people to himself when the Church and Christians pray for people. God answers his people prayer, bringing folks to them with repentant soul. They may attend church services and be convicted of sins and repent.

  *"Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and*

*acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"*—1Tim. 2: 1-3 (APMC).

- God uses his children to draw others to himself when they demonstrate agape love to those outside the church. Love will make them appreciate God and desire to repent.
  Practical love draws people to God and his Church.
- God uses his children's intentional evangelistic outreaches to bring people to come to himself.
  Paul tells us, *"But how will people call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher (messenger)?"*—Rom. 10: 14 (AMP).

Let us remember that no one comes to God except he or she is drawn by God through God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works on people directly convincing, convicting, and bring them to conversion or repentance. He also uses our witnessing, preaching in churches, books, music, movies, Christian lifestyle or conduct, circumstances, situations, and God's providence to draw men to God.

Jesus says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."*—John 14: 6. And in john 6 verse 44, Jesus makes it clearer, *"No one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to Me, and*
*[then] I will raise him up [from the dead] at the last day."*

That is how repentance happens. It depends on many spiritual factors that are fully in God. God determines and decides when we come to him and repent of our sins and become his children. The time, place or location, our age, social status, past experiences, our background, etc. are in the hand of God. The only thing God expects from us is our willing obedience. We must use our free will to say "yes Lord" when his Spirit prompts us or draws us to God. God draws us but we obey and response to his drawing.

Prayers of the Saints, family members, Pastors, friends, parents, Christians in any community are all significant to others' repentance. When people of God cry to God in prayer, God answers their prayers by touching those we pray for. They

begin to desire God and godly things.

When we pray for others, God will touch them and feel sorry for their sins. They have what Apostle Paul called godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

*"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner."*

That godly sorrow made one sad and to begin to seek for God. It makes one

see himself as a sinner in need of a Savior. Apostle Paul says such sorrow

produces something.

1. It makes you to desire to clear yourself of your sins before God. You want to tell God you agree with God on what he says you are—a sinner. *What diligence it produced in*

*you, what clearing of yourselves,*

2. It makes you to be angry or indignant to sins, Satan, and everything that makes you commit sin or loyal to Satan, the world, and sins. *"…what indignation…"*
3. It makes you to fear God and what God can do in his power if you refuse to obey him. It makes you to fear sins and consequences of sins—hat is eternal separation from God and heaven. Eternity in hell with Satan and demons and other disobedient souls. "…*what fear…"*
4. It makes one to desire God and his kingdom in a vehement

way. That means one begins to have zeal or passion for

things of God. *"… what vehement desire, what zeal…,"*

5. It makes one to seek for revenge the enemy of one's soul—Satan and sins. *"… what vindication!" —2* Cor. 7: 10,11 (NKJV). NIV Bible renders vindication as, *"what readiness to see justice done."* You want God to avenge your enemy. You desire that God will punish the devil who had made your life so miserable probably for a long

time before you came to yourself and repentance.

The Passion Bible Translation makes these verse very understandable.

It renders these verses as, "*God designed us to feel remorse over sin*

*to produce repentance that leads to victory. This leaves us with no regrets. But the sorrow of the world works death. Can't you see the good fruit that has come, as God intended, because of your remorse over sin? Now you are eager to do what is right! Look at the indignation you experienced over what happened and how alarmed you became. What holy longing it awakened, what passion for God, and how ready you were to bring justice to the offender. Your response has proved that you are free of blame in this matter."*

As we pray for others, by and large, they yield to God in repentance. The Church must never shy away from this spiritual responsibility. Salvation is of the Lord but praying for the Saints of God.

# Praying in the Spirit

This theme has been controversial because of lack of biblical and theological understandings in some quarters of Christendom. We need to get answers to some questions on this topic.

a. What is praying in the Spirt means?
b. What does the Bible say about praying in the Spirit by Christians or a local church?
c. How important or less is this practice for Christians?
d. Who can pray in the Spirit and who cannot?
e. Are there spiritual benefits when we pray in the Spirit?

***What is praying in the Spirit?***

What does this mean to Christians? We need a biblical understanding of this concept. Do we have any Christian who practiced this in the Bible or in our time? Yes, we have. All New Testament Christians should be praying in the Spirit. That is only meaningful and acceptable prayer we offer to God. It is like *"walking in the Spirit"* which gives no room for the flesh. Praying in Spirit gives no room for any other form of prayer. When we pray in the Spirit, the Spirit is in control of our prayer. When the Spirit is in control of our prayers, we surely will get right answers at the right time.

The Bible speaks and teaches that there is something as praying in the Spirit. Here is one of biblical references.

"*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."*—Eph. 6: 18 (NIV).

Let us get the grammar behind the idea *of "praying in the Spirit."* The word *"in"* in English Language has many meanings. Let us explore some of them.

- "in" is *preposition* expressing the situation of something that

is or appears to be enclosed or surrounded by something else. Praying in the Spirit means prayer that is surrounded or enclosed by the Holy Spirit.

- *"in"* also expresses a period during which an event takes place. When we pray in the Spirit, our prayer is an event within the Spirit's time.
- *"in"* is an *adjective* used for a person present at a place. When we pray in the Spirit, we are praying with the presence of the Holy Spirit. His presence is with us as we pray. We do not pray without the Spirit present with us. We are located inside or within the Spirit and the Spirit is in position, operation, or power does influence or direct our prayer.
- *"in" is noun* used informally to mean a position of influence with someone powerful. Thus, when we pray in the Spirit, we are praying with him in position and power influencing

or directing our prayers. Awesome!

Other meaning of the use of "in" are,

a. *"in" is used as a function word to indicate inclusion,*
location, or position within limits. This means our life and prayers are included or located or positioned in the Holy Spirit. *"Likewise, the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what*
*we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."*—Rom. 8:26-39 (KJV).

b. *"in" also means the means, instrumentality or medium for or of something or someone. This means the Holy Spirit becomes our means and medium or instrument of and for our prayers. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."—Rom. 8:14. When the Holy Spirit is in us, he often and always leads us to pray to God as God's children.*

c. *"in" also indicates limitation, qualification, or*

circumstance. This means our prayers are limited, qualified, or are based on the circumstances the Holy Spirit is. Wonderfully, the Holy Spirit is never known to have a limitation, or disqualification, or enter any circumstances that will hinder his praying for us. So, when we pray in the Spirit, we are having the best prayer we can ever thought or imagined. *"But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit"*—Jude verse 20.

Jesus teaches us so clearly that our Father gives the Holy Spirit to everyone who believes in his Son Jesus. The Holy Spirit is special gift of God to all Christian.

*"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* Luke 11: 13 (ESV).

The Bible tells us openly that when the Holy Spirit comes in believers' life, he will do so many things for us. Some of these are.

1. We are baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. He convinces us of sins, convicts of our sins and wrongdoing, brings us to repentance and conversion, then immerses or baptizes us into Christ. He draws us and integrates us into Christ's body. *"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."*—1 Cor. 12: 13 (ESV).
2. The Holy Spirit is teaching us and revealing things of God to us. *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*—John 14:26.
3. The Spirit rescues, delivers, provides salvation, etc. from life troubles and problems. Paul says in Philippians 1 verse 19 (ESV),

   *"For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance…"*
4. The Spirit is praying for us with right words, addressing God from within us as Abba, Father. Romans 8 verse 15 (ESV), *"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry*

*"Abba! Father!"*

*What about speaking in tongues: Is it praying in the Spirit?*

If your speaking in tongue is the "tongue" the Holy Spirit gives according to the promise of Jesus in Mark 16:17.

*"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*."

There is no problem with this. I believe in that teaching.

*What is speaking in tongues?*

a. Jesus says it a sign for those who believes in him. *"And these signs shall follow them that believe… they shall speak with new tongues.*

Apostle Paul tells us without ambiguity*, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all"*—1 Cor. 14: 18 (KJV).

b. Luke tells us in Acts 2: 4, *"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."* (NIV).

Here, it is shown that speaking in tongue is one of the signs of being

filled with the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit enabled these early Christians. If we will not make the Bible just an historical book but a living Word of God, this experience is still available for those who believes in Jesus.

*c. In this context, Apostle Paul was referring to speaking in* tongue a form of prayer and worship.

*"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."*—1 Cor. 14: 15 (KJV).

He prayed and sang in the Spirit and in understanding as the Holy Spirit influenced and empowered his spirit.

*d. It is speaking "mystery" to God through his Spirit.*

*"For one who speaks in an [unknown] tongue speaks not to men but to God, for no one understands or catches his meaning, because in the [Holy] Spirit he utters secret truths and hidden things [not obvious to the understanding]*—1 Cor. 14: 2 (AMPC).

*e. Speaking in tongues is one of the manners or all kinds of*

prayers by the Holy Spirit.

"*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."*—Eph. 6: 18 (NIV).

*f. Speaking in tongues one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In 1* Corinthians 12, Paul clearly portrays ideas clearly.

*"Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."—1 Cor. 12: 3-6 (NIV).*

The Holy Spirit has many gifts that he gives to the Body of Christ for spiritual services, he calls us to do. Without the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we can never be effective or accomplish what God wants us to do in this world. Paul goes further to enumerate these gifts and their administration. *"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good*. Here is

the list.

- *To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom…*
- *To another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit…*
- *To another faith by the same Spirit…*
- *To another gifts of healing by that one Spirit…*
- *To another miraculous powers…*
- *To another prophecy…*
- *To another distinguishing between spirits…*
- *To another speaking in different kinds of tongues…*
- *To still another the interpretation of tongues.*

*All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."*—1 Cor. 12: 7-13 (NIV).

I used to wonder why some Bible scholars and theologians, or Christians can believe in all or some of the gifts of the Spirit listed here and cannot or will not believe in the gift of speaking in tongues. They try to explain it away with the idea that the gifts had gone with the Apostles

and are not given by God. That idea makes God not to be the same yesterday, today, and forever as the Bible claims. God is not a historic being neither his gifts. He is not historic when it comes to what the Church needs to accomplish his will and expand his Kingdom. Some theologians tell us it is learning a new language like Missionaries do in foreign land. Learning a new language is not speaking in it tongues; it is learning a new language. We do not learn speaking in tongues, the Holy Spirit gives the gift to believers as he wills. It is experience that can be describe as spontaneous not gradual as when we learn a new language. Do you know how long it takes to learn a new language? Ask our Missionaries or Diplomats. I submit, there Holy Spirit gifts are still relevant and available to Christians today and in the future as they were relevant and available to the Christians in the first
century. The Holy Spirit gives or distributes his gifts severally as he wills. He, therefore, can give you some gifts and give to me different gifts. Nevertheless, we are still children of God, saved and called for specific ministries. I know and firmly believe the Holy Spirit gives gifts that will be relevant to what God has called each of to do. There is no reason to look down on anyone or to feel bad for yourself if the Holy Spirit gives you some gifts different from mine. He knows better. That is what Apostle Peter reminds is in 1 Peter 4 verse 10*, "Just as each one of you has received a special gift [a spiritual talent, an ability graciously given by God], employ it in serving one another as [is appropriate for] good stewards of God's multi-faceted grace [faithfully using the diverse, varied gifts and abilities granted to Christians by God's unmerited favor*] (AMPC).

Paul informs and instructs us in Romans 12: 5-8,

*"So, we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ (the Messiah) and individually we are parts one of another [mutually dependent on one another]. Having gifts (faculties, talents, qualities) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: [He whose gift is] prophecy, [let him prophesy] according to the proportion of his faith; [He whose gift is] practical service, let him give himself to serving; he who teaches, to his teaching; He who exhorts (encourages), to his exhortation; he who contributes, let him do it in simplicity and liberality; he who gives aid and superintends, with zeal and singleness of mind; he who does acts of mercy, with genuine cheerfulness and joyful eagerness." (*AMPC).

He who has the gift of speaking in tongues should use it without being afraid of anyone. And someone who does not have the gift of speaking in tongue, he or she should never feel inferior to other Christians. Unfortunately, there are some groups of Christians whose only theology is *glossolalia*. And if one does not speak in tongue, they look at such with a despicable eye. That is not biblical Christianity. God gives gifts according to his will not according to our will. So, stop looking on Christians who do not have the gift of speaking in tongues or any other gift(s) you might have, and they do not have.

Paul warns us of this anomaly and absurdity of pride when he says, *"If I [can] speak in the tongues of men and [even] of angels, but have not love (that reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion such as is inspired by God's love for and in us), I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."*—1 Cor. 13: 1 (AMPC).

In summary praying in the Spirit entails prayer that is born out of inspiration and control of the Holy Spirit. It can be in form of praying in our known languages or unknown languages as the Holy Spirit gives us the gift of speaking in tongues. It is prayer that comes from our spirit under the influence and control and leading of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. We pray in the Spirit when we are taught how to pray by the Spirit, when the Holy Spirit groans within us, When the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and others. When we pray aloud or silently but according to the will of God. It is praying with our most holy faith. It is prayer born out of love to have fellowship with God and communicate with him always. It is not the Pharisee arrogant and proudful prayer. It is prayer that comes from humility impacted by the Spirit of God as we yield to him. It is the best form of prayer either alone or in group or in family. I pray we all understand this biblical lesson and avail ourselves of the golden opportunity to pray in the Spirit in all manners of prayers and supplications.

## Prayer for Revival in the Church and for Christians

One of the spiritual factors for revival of churches and in Christians' life is prayer. The idea of revival connotes something that previously had life but for one reason or the other that life is fizzling out or had gone out

completely and now there is need to bring such life back to the normal. We see this in Christendom. We have it in Church history that a once bubbling with spiritual life group or local church or individuals slide back unconsciously, get lethargic and lukewarm, cool, or cold spiritually.

- ***Praying for Backslider Christians and Churches***

What is a singular evidence of this spiritual lukewarmness or coldness? The book of Proverbs provides this answer. *"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways…."*—Proverbs 14: 14 (KJV). When a Christian or local church turns aside or slide back from walking with the Lord, he or she will be doing his or her own things; those things outside God or that are not in line with the Scriptures. Such a person or local church will begin to fill self with individual's own ideas and way. If he or she or church does not repent and come back on track, Satan can take full advantage and make life very miserable for such a person or church. Satan will ensure such backsliding Christians do things they will not ordinarily do. They will begin to fall into temptation. The words of Prophet Hosea come to display in that situation. *"Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning. Was I to write for him my laws by the ten thousand, they would be regarded as a strange thing."*—Hosea 8: 11, 12 (ESV).

Do you not see how true it is that when a Christian or church falls off the track of grace is like casting off good things. It can be temporarily or for short time. Or it can be for a long time. Hosea says, *"Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him."*—Hosea 8: 3 (KJV). The enemy always takes advantage of Christian or church who walks afar from the Lord. If that Christian or church does not come back in time, "*the enemy shall pursue him."* The devil will be after them making effort to destroy completely.

The picture Hosea paints for us can be for a singular Christian, group of Christians, or a whole church. Just as an individual can backslide, so a church can. As a church leader can go about creating strange altars and offering strange fire because of spiritual lukewarmness or backsliding so an individual can. As a seasoned and fervent minister can cast off, so an individual Christian can. This is the reason the Bible encourages us to pray one for another and to pray for our spiritual leaders. We all are vulnerable to the enemy's attack. We are not immune

to temptations and falling into sins. We are strongly admonished to pray one for another so that we can be healed; *"pray for each other so that you may be healed"* (James 5: 16). The healing James was speaking about here is not only physical. It includes spiritual and emotional healing. It is holistic healing for spirit, soul, and body. And prayer can help us to receive such divine healing. Pray one for another is not just an encouragement, it is a command from the Lord that we should always obey.

*Casting off good things* means a lot. It includes the following list.

1. Become inactive in faith or trust in God.
2. Putting praying to God aside.
3. Abandoning the Word of God.
4. Neglecting or deliberately refuse to go to church.
5. Not showing more love to others.
6. Stopping the discipline of fasting.
7. Not interested in giving and stewardship.
8. Indulgence in sinful habits that one had early dropped.
9. Hiding from children of God.
10. Debating and arguing with the Word of God blindly.
11. No more commitment or consecration to God.
12. Becoming apostatized.
13. Becoming syncretic or fall into traditions.
14. Becoming a gnostic.
15. Becoming an antagonist to faith once professed.
16. Becoming indifferent to faith we once defended.
17. Not interested any more in spiritual things.
18. Becoming worldly; having worldly friends.
19. Conduct and lifestyle becoming not as Christian.
20. Neglecting God altogether.
21. Commercializing the Gospel

Do we see the need for praying one for another? The enemy is roaming around looking for someone to devour, steal from, destroy his or her life, or to kill spiritually and physically. We all need prayer to live a victorious and triumphant life in Jesus. We need to be alive and alert; watchful and prayerful. We need abundant life of Jesus in a constant manner, not a trickle or drop. And if we see anyone in problem and in need of restoration or revival, we all need to do spiritual CPR and bring such

person back to life. "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."*—Gal. 6:2 (KJV). We bear others' burden well in praying for them. Even in the Old Testament, God made provision for restoration of backsliders.

God told the Israelites*, "If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed*"—Lev. 4: 27, 28 (ESV).

People can easily come to the awareness of their intentional or unintentional errors or sins as we pray for one another regularly. Our prayers can be used by the Holy Spirit to convict Christian folks who are missing the mark or transgressing. Our prayer can bring revival to people who are spiritually dying or cooling it off. Let us not stop to pray one for another whether we see each one another or we are far away from one another. Prayers does not know distance, so is God.

*"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any sin, you who are spiritual [that is, you who are responsive to the guidance of the Spirit] are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness [not with a sense of superiority or self-righteousness], keeping a watchful eye on yourself, so that you are not tempted as well."*—Gal. 6: 1 (AMP).

Leonard Ravenhill wrote sometimes ago, "A man may study because his brain is hungry for knowledge, even Bible knowledge. But he prays because his soul is hungry for God." ... "The greatest miracle that God can do today is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world and make him holy, then put him back into that unholy world and keep him holy in it." When a soul does not have that hunger for God, which may come suddenly or slowly depending on the negative forces influencing the person, the desire for prayer and other spiritual thing will be dwindling or going away. In some folks it is seen in a gradual format while in others it can take a rapid or spontaneous way. It is prayer that can take a dying soul back to God. Ravenhill also said, "no man is greater than his prayer." It means when we pray more, we are better off. If we do not pray, we are worse off. Let us beware of becoming cool and cold in prayer life. How great it will be if the church and Christians can regularly pray like prophet Habakkuk,

*"O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy*"—Hab. 3:1 (KJV).

Jonathan Edwards said some years ago, "prayer is as natural an expression of faith as breathing is of life." Without breathing we are dead. Without prayer any Christian or church is dead. And the solution for spiritual deadness either in a local church or individual Christian is prayer. Edward told us again, "there is no spiritual awakening without the power of the Holy Spirit." Edwards also argued for all believers to engage in monthly *"concerts of prayer"* for worldwide revival and the conversion of the unreached peoples of the earth. I believed regional church should come together to organize this prayer concerts. Pastors and ministers in our cities should come together and organize city-wide prayer concerts. Can you imagine what the Lord can do in our cities, towns, and regions if Christians can come together and have this monthly concerts of prayer? Are we ready for revival in our nations? Prayer concerts will not be out of place. Christian leaders should put aside their dogmatic differences and create time for some things of eternal value; concerts of prayer will surely produce results that will be eternal. Think on it.

Jonathan Edwards said, "It is God's will through His wonderful grace, that the prayers of His saints should be one of the great principals means of carrying on the designs of Christ's kingdom in the world. When God has something very great to accomplish for His church, it is His will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of His people; as is manifest by Ezekiel 36:37, and it is revealed that, when God is about to accomplish great things for His church, He will begin by remarkably pouring out the spirit of grace and supplication (Zechariah 12:10)." The truth is that the Spirit of grace and supplication is always ready and available for us. We only need to seek to be fill by him, be led by him, and energized by him for intercessory prayer for the church and people.

- ***Praying for global revival and spiritual awakening***

Jonathan Edwards and his spiritual children epitomized praying for global revival and spiritual awakening. We can and should pray for global revival for the worldwide advance of the gospel. Those who followed Jonathan Edwards advanced his original vision for prayer, spiritual awakening, and missionary advance. So, we can and should have vision for prayer and

world revival. History has it that between 1780 and 1820, entire denominations experienced revival, sound doctrine overcame soul-deadening error, numerous new benevolent ministries were launched, and English-speaking evangelicals became passionate about fulfilling the Great Commission. It could happen again. I believe the 21st century church should endeavor to know how God worked in the past. This can help us ask some key questions of ourselves in the present. The questions we should be asking are.

- Are we praying for revival in our own spiritual lives, our families, and relatives?
- Are we praying for the salvation of the nations?
- Are our churches setting aside a specific time for focused — even extraordinary — prayer for a global awakening through the advance of the gospel?
- Do we long for the Lord to move among us as he moved among those
  who came before us?
- Are we ready to pay the price for this spiritual enterprise of prayer that will change churches, individuals, communities, and nations?

Without doubt, “there is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God and advance the kingdom of Christ as by prayer,” said Edwards. The same is true of the Church.

## Contemplative Prayer

We have come to a phase in Christendom when lots of Christians have left some valuable disciplines and practices. Example of these abandon disciplines is meditative prayer, quiet prayer, and mindful prayer. I have seen a lot of teaching and training with New Agers and Buddhism on mindfulness, meditation, quietness, etc. The world of Yoga embraces and engages the art of quietness, contemplation, mindfulness to a great extent. I have studied and discovered this has a great origin in the Bible and should have a good place with Christianity. Out of curiosity, I checked out the meaning of the word “Yoga” one day and I was amazed by the meaning and its spirituality. And I found that the word yoga, has a great inclination to what Christians are meant to do on regular
basis.

- ***What is Yoga?***

Many Western Christians have been lured into the idea of yoga in their quest
for spirituality. Some have left biblical practices and now delving into New Age and Ancient Asian philosophies and religions unconsciously or ignorantly. Yoga is one of the practices many Christians are venturing into without knowing the details or consequences on the spirit and soul. Bible never requires of us to mix our faith practices with others practices from other religions. The Bible has enough of godly spiritual disciplines. We need to just study and understand our Bible. We also need to look at Jesus lifestyle and spiritual practices and follow him. He is our Example, Mirror, and Pattern. If we do not look at Jesus, who else can we be looking at?

Let us see some idea in yoga and how it has some similarity with Christian contemplative prayer. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, meaning "to yoke," or "to unite." The practice aims to create union between body, mind, and spirit, as well as between the individual self and Universal Consciousness. Is not this the chief goal of contemplative prayer? In Christian contemplative prayers, we aspire to focus on God and his Word and his Spirit. Our body, mind, and spirit should be connected to the Divine. This is what yoga does—to yoke or to unit or to create union between body, mind, and spirit, as well as between the individual self and Universal Consciousness. Whatever is that Universal Consciousness, it is lesser than or never equal to the blessed Holy Spirit. We have no ambiguous synonyms for the name of our God or his Spirit or our Savior. The blessed Trinity is Persons we can relate with, communicate with, and fellowship with, enjoy their presence, or depend on—always. Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years, and whilst many different interpretations and styles have been developed, most tend to agree that the ultimate of yoga is to achieve liberation from suffering. Although each school or tradition of yoga has its own emphasis and practices, most focus on bringing together body, mind, and breath as a means of altering energy or shifting consciousness.

In Christian meditative prayer, Christians aspire to connect with the Holy Spirit who leads and direct them in prayer.
The Scriptures says, *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"*—Rom. 8:14 (KJV).

God told Joshua in chapter 1 of the book of Joshua and verse 8, *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."*

Meditation, contemplation, or been quietly thinking and praying with the Word of God is highly subscribed for us in the Bible.

David says, "*But his delight and desire are in the law of the Lord, and on His law (the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God) he habitually meditates (ponders and studies) by day and by night"—Psalm 1:2 (*AMPC).

In addition, we read, *"When I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night…"*—Psalm 63:6.

The idea of *you shall meditate in it day and night; habitually meditates (ponders and studies) by day and by night; upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night…"* all points to the practice of contemplation, solitude prayer, alone with God in a quiet environment. We see this in Jesus' life. We can see some reasons why Jesus preferred solitude, alone with God, quiet place, contemplative prayer, and meditation in the Bible. Some of them are highlighted for us by Ward Cushman.

1. To prepare for a major task**.**

*"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry."*

This was at the beginning of his earthly ministry. What an example to follow for those who are called to the ministry of the Gospel.

2. To recharge after hard work.

*"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. So, they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."*—Mark 6:30-32 (NIV).

3. To work through grief.

***"****After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone…"*—Mat. 14: 23. This was

after the death of John the Baptist. After Jesus learned that his cousin John the Baptist had been beheaded, He went away by Himself. Yes, even the Son of God grieved over fellow human being.

4. Before making an important decision

*"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles…"*—Luke 6: 12-13.

After this night praying, which I believe was a contemplative prayer, Jesus came and chose the 12 Apostles. Such a task requires knowing the mind of God. Early in his ministry Jesus spent the whole night alone in prayer. The next day Jesus chose his 12 disciples.

5. In a time of distress.

*"Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground…"*—Luke 22: 39-44 (NIV).

It was Jesus usual practice to have solitary prayers. Some hours before Jesus' arrest He went to the Mt. of Olives and went a short distance away from His disciples to pray. He was in great
emotional agony knowing what he was about to face.

6. To focus on prayer.

"*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed"*—Luke 5: 16 (NIV). Many times, in Jesus' ministry He spent time in solitude, alone in prayer. He also encouraged his disciples to cultivate that habit. After Jesus sent the 12 disciples out to do ministry, when they returned, he encouraged them to separate from the people who were following them to rest. If there is anyone we can see in contemplative prayer and follow his pattern, it is Jesus our Lord. And there are reasons the Scriptures have those records for us. As per Yogic writings, the practice of Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with that of the Universal Consciousness, indicating a perfect harmony between the mind and body, man, and nature. The New Testament equally and

unequivocally teaches we can lead a life of spiritual union with our Father in contemplative or meditative prayer like Jesus did. We can have our body, mind, soul, and spirit focused or concentrate on God and his power and promises with such a transformation to our life that is difficult to explain. It looks like the goal of yoga which is to achieve liberation from suffering. Even though the Scriptures do not teach us that any kind of prayer liberates us from any kind of suffering, we know that when Christians pray, something positive happens to their life—physical and spirit. Different schools or tradition of yoga has its own emphasis and practices, most focus on bringing together body, mind, and breath as a means of altering energy or shifting consciousness. Similarly, there is spiritual impartation of spiritual energy and shifts in our spiritual position when we pray. No one ever remains the same when prayer is practiced rightly. God brings those divine changes in us.

Even though contemplative prayer is far different from yoga, Christians who naively pursue yoga practices should know that contemplative prayer brings indescribable blessings to our life more than yoga can do. Having communion with God in prayer helps to improve not only our physical health and happiness, but also transformations into the image of Jesus. Our minds are not just modified as yoga practitioners claim they experience in yogic practice, our minds are renewed and refreshed as we meditatively pray and focus on God our Father. What else do we want that we cannot get? I wonder why yoga is for Christians.

While yoga may be described as a physical exercise with physical activity consisting mainly of postures, often connected by flowing sequences, sometimes accompanied by breathing exercises, and frequently ending with relaxation lying down or meditation, contemplative or meditative prayer is a spiritual exercise that may take any posture. One can sit on the floor, bed, grasses, on log of tree, couch, or sofa, or on anything to pray to God. There is no specific posture that is recommended, yet we obtain great result. What is important in contemplative prayer is our hearts, minds, quietness, solitude, Scriptures, sometimes so soft music, and preparedness to listen to God and not just talking. We may see ourselves speaking loudly without using our mouth and tongue; we speak in our hearts and minds and the voice is as loud as speaking with our tongues and mouths. Our thoughts are as loud or even louder to God as our words. It is divine mystery we need to

appreciate in contemplative prayer.

- ***Contemplative prayer requires training and practice.***

Focus on the Family ministry agrees that there is nothing unbiblical or anti-Christian about solitude, silence, and contemplative prayer, at any rate, as they have been practiced within the context of Christian history. As a matter of fact, these disciplines are part of a time-honored tradition. They have been central to the Church's spiritual life for centuries. God communicates with His people in many ways: His word, the Holy Spirit dreams, visions, his voice, a burning bush, a talking donkey, and through His messengers the angels, and many other situations and circumstances. In contemplative prayer we experience the voice of God speaking to our hearts clearly than any other place. We need to learn how to hear God's voice in our environment that is filled with cacophony of voices—mostly useless or destructive voices. Contemplation or meditation can help us.

The Bible teaches us, "*Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before."*—1Thes. 4:11 (NLT).

The King James Bible renders it as, *"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you…"*

Quiet life, quiet souls, quiet minds, quiet hearts are part of Christian lifestyle. It is a habit we must cultivate. It may be practically impossible to engage yourself in meditative prayer if you do not or have not learn to live a quiet lifestyle. It takes conscious efforts and practice. Unfortunately, many Christians do not have such a life. They have been in the avalanche winds of tumultuous life in mind and physically. When I was a new Christian, my spiritual leaders taught me what is quiet time—this was morning devotion that involved Bible study, meditation in the Word, praying alone, listening to God response or reply to you as you remain still and quiet before the Lord. These spiritual activities in regular basis laid the foundation for my Christian life. I never regret I was taught to do so. And up till now, I still have my quiet time and would be on my knees waiting to hear what God has to say to me. It can be instruction to follow or some obedient act to do, or some assurance of answers to my prayers. Sometimes it would be just having the feeling of joy and peace

and inner strength you cannot explain. I enjoy my quiet time and I encourage any believer in Christ to never quit it or to start the practice. It will graduate into a lifestyle that no believer will ever regret. It enhances our contemplative prayer.

- ***How to pray a contemplative prayer***

Jesus says openly, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep… I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own…"*—John 10: 11, 14 (NKJV).

In other words, those who belongs to Jesus knows him when he speaks to them. No doubt he knows his own. Before we can enjoy any kind of prayer, this living relationship must exist between us and Jesus. Jesus does not know and will not answer strangers. So, before beginning your prayer, ask yourself these questions and be sincere with your answers.

a. Do I know God well?
b. Do I know His Word and His character?

To know Him well is to know His voice and not be fooled by an imposter. It is being able to discern what is of God and what is not. If you have studied Scripture, know the Lord, and know what you believe, you are ready for contemplative prayer.

The Christian contemplative or meditative prayer entails the following things.

1. *A quiet place*

Locate or create a quiet and comfortable place to read and to pray—a location free from interruption or distraction. Just as Jesus did when he removed himself from the crowds to pray. When I was working in University of California, Los Angeles, I located the University Garden created for biological studies, especially ecology. It was created by the bank of a stream but re-designed for sitting and reading and having discussion by teachers and students. Many religious students have turn it into a spiritual garden. I did too and I used to go in there for my contemplative prayer every day during my one-hour break. Jesus did the same in Mark 1 verse 35.

2. *Ensure you have some godly resources with you.*

Choose godly materials that bring glory to Jesus. For example, I was going to my spiritual garden with the Bible, and I will locate the word of God I want to meditate or pray with. That scriptural verse(s) or

chapter(s) from the Bible helped me to focus on my contemplation and supplication. It is my believed that we have fed our soul with the Scripture that relates to the chosen ideas, theme, principle, or something we want to contemplate on as we pray. That is important because we are not going to the “prayer and contemplation room” as a *tabula rasa*—that is an absence of preconceived ideas or predetermined goals, a clean slate. Sometimes, we can and allow God to give us what is needed for us. We must never be in haste in practicing this discipline. And whether we come with a clean slate or mind, or preconceived Word of God, we can still talk to God and receive answers from him as we meditate and pray. It takes practice.

3. *Close your eyes if you can and meditate.*

Closing eyes may help us not to be distracted with some natural things around if we are in the wood or forest or mountain side or in our room. Even in our own living room or parlor, photographs and portraits on wall can distract us as we try to pray and concentrate on the Divine. Call to memory and endeavor to fill your heart with the Word of God which had been given to you before or just freshly discovered as you study during this prayer period. Try to focus your mind on God and his Word. Read it, ponder, and reflect. The idea of the word meditate is that of saying something over and over in a slow and steady way until something new comes from it to us; until we begin to have new inspiration; until we begin to hear God telling us something deeper and fresher than we knew before. Meditation means to involve thinking deeply or focus one's mind for a period, in silence or with the aid of chanting. The Strong Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible in Hebrew transliterate meditation to be, to murmur (in pleasure or anger); to ponder, imagine, meditate, mourn, mutter, roar, speak, study, talk, utter, etc. One or some of these action words will be used in our prayer of
contemplation. Psalm 77 verse 12 says, *“I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.”*

4. *Use concordance to find similar and overlapping verses.*

If you are in your room and where you have access to reference materials such as Dictionary or Thesaurus, or concordance of the Bible, you can use them to get some meaning of biblical words and phrases. Thus, you study, mediate, and pray. I learned this early in my Christian life and I have stuck my neck and life into it. Study, meditation, and

prayer have enhanced my connectivity with God and his words and empowered me in prayer, especially
contemplative prayer.

5. *Exploring ways to apply what you unveil.*

The best approach to this practice is by asking yourself questions as,

- How would my actions, attitudes, or relationships be different if I put this verse or characteristic into practice?
- What is God expecting me to do and how do I do it?

Again, read, ponder, and reflect. Wait quietly and listen intensely with your spiritual ears to hear what God is telling you.

6. *Pray in Jesus' name*

Never go to this place of solitude without praying. This is done with the understanding that we can enter the throne room of God with our requests and petitions because of the cross. Pray with a humble countenance in the knowledge of who God is and who you are. You can verbalize your prayer with ultimate seriousness or pray intensely in your heart and mind, bringing them in harmony with the Spirit of God. Pray with the authority given to us by Jesus; pray in his name. This is not yoga class, so, pray in the name of the Lord of lords and King of kings. Meditation without Jesus is yoga. Meditation without praying in Jesus' name is just like contemporary spiritual practice where people are taught to connect to nothing but an abstract Universal Consciousness. Tell me what or who is this? There is this ideology that Universal mind or universal consciousness is a metaphysical concept suggesting an underlying essence of all being and becoming in the universe. This is just ideological or philosophical absurdity that Christians should avoid totally. Why? Because we have a personal Savior, Redeemer, and Lord who can be related with, spoken to and have fellowship with. Pray therefore in the name of the Creator of heavens and earth, pray in the name of Jesus—the name above all names and all things in heavens and on earth.

7. *Give yourself some time to listen to God.*

One cannot overemphasize this aspect of contemplative prayer. Give yourself the time to move from your head to your heart. Be still, be quiet, just be. Wait. Keep your eyes closed, your body still, and your mind on Jesus. You may (or may not) sense a message from the Holy Spirit. This message or word must line up with God's character and the Bible. If not,

it is not of God. Many Christians study Scripture with only their minds and pray without listening to the promptings of the Spirit. When praying, talking, and listening to God, believers should never empty their minds but maintain mind focused on God instead. Christian meditative or contemplative prayer is very transformational. One will experience spiritual changes that words cannot describe. Just try it. It is safe.

## Prayer in Written Format

As I study the Bible (as a Christian should do), I have come to understand that prayer takes many shapes and shades—prayer has many dimensions and layers. God in his grace hears our prayers in whatever context we are and no matter the method of approach we use. God is not limited by human factors in prayers. Human factors are like prayer liturgy, postures, places, pattern we use, who prays, when we pray, how much time we use in praying, types of prayers we have, etc. God has his Sovereignty when it comes to answer to prayer no matter who prays and where we pray from. That is God's factor in prayer. He created prayer, hears us, and answers us according to his own Sovereignty.

If you are brought up with the Pentecostal Movement or Church, prayer in written format may be anathema. I was involved with Pentecostalism to a good extent, and I enjoyed the spontaneity and extemporaneity and impromptusness of praying. When the Spirit "is moving" no one has right to stop him or any time to write down prayers; prayer just flow from minds and hearts and said with the mouth. Interestingly, Pentecostal prayers and praying are most of the time loud, ecstatic, spontaneous, extemporaneous, coupled with unplanned speaking in tongues. Sometimes, I wonder if some of my friends in Pentecostal churches understand the teaching of the New Testament about speaking in tongues and interpretation in the church or congregational context. I joined the movement and did what they did but as I studied the Bible, I have understood how the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the members of Body of Christ, the use of the spiritual gifts, and how we can get the best from the Lord by properly yielding to the Holy Spirit, the Owner and Giver of gifts. The book of Corinthians chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14 is clear on this. Nevertheless, the Bible as the Word of God should be studied and applied appropriately.

Apostle Paul says, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*—2 Tim. 2:15 (KJV).

To avoid undue argument with one another, the Bible and the Spirit of God are what we all need. With humility and open-heart we can know the truth that will set us from wrong practices or errors.

The history of how Saints began to write prayer is beyond the scope of this exercise. Christendom has come to embrace written prayer in one form or the other. Back in the Old Testament we see the prayers of the rabbis, the religious teachers, and leaders. They had what is called *Shema* which means "hear" which a confession is composed of three quotes from the books of Moses; i) Deuteronomy 6:4–9, ii) Deuteronomy 11:13–21, iii) Numbers 15:37–41) with attendant blessings and which the Israelite recited daily. We also see how some prophets like Daniel referred to the Scripture in their devotions. When Jesus came, he referred to the Psalms, and Moses books and the Prophets in his teaching. The Psalms have lots of prayers that can make us believe that many of the people of God would read or sing the Psalms in their devotion.

At the time of Jesus there were prayer par excellence, called the *tefilla* or *ʿamida* or standing prayer, (called *shemone ʿesre* or the "18 benedictions"), which every Israelite recited two or three times a day. To these must be added the benediction before eating that raises the meal to the level of the dignity of a religious act. Christianity tends to preserve the doxologies and benedictions from its Jewish heritage. It adds to them the Jesus Model of prayer, psalms, hymns, and canticles, the first specimens of which are furnished by the New Testament (e.g., the *Nunc dimittis*, "Now let
your servant departs").

As the Church grew, theology and liturgies of worship were developed and collected by the Church Fathers. These collections included those used on Sundays as well as other days of the week. They were readings from the Bible, collections of brief prayers such as invocations, petitions, and a litany (general prayer) for the intentions of the universal Church. During the Holy Communion or Eucharistic services, there would be the consecration of the bread and wine to be used in the sacred meal. This consecration prayer itself was called the

Eucharistic (which means thanksgiving) prayer, and a long prayer in which the element of thanksgiving is dominant. Addressed to the Father, through the mediation of the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. This prayer developed, like the Jewish liturgies, from praise, to thanksgiving, to the memorial (or anamnesis), and finally to an invocation of the Spirit (epiclesis). Originally improvised and spontaneous, this liturgical prayer became fixed in stereotyped forms, first in the West, then—though with more flexibility—in the East in written format to be read by the religious leaders.

The first Christians retained the custom of praying three times a day, reciting the "Our Father" (Lord's Prayer). Special times for prayer are morning and evening. Christ's custom of praying at meals (as a devout Jew) is also maintained. This framework can and does favor the life and spirit of prayer that make a Christian existence, according to the words of Clement of Alexandria, a 2nd–3rd-century theologian, "an uninterrupted celebration."[12] Bible readings, silent prayer (in the West especially), brief fervent invocations, and the repetition of formulas like the *Kyrie eleison* ("Lord, have mercy") in the East have enriched spiritual life and have led monks and laypersons to contemplative prayer, as is shown by the growth of mysticism in both the West and the East.

Also, we see the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus referring to Psalms in their prayers. Even if they had not physical copies in their hands, one may feel they did look at them the way they quoted the Psalms verbatim. In the early Church after the Apostle, the practice of using written prayers was embraced and continued with the early Church Fathers. Some people have told us that written prayers are deficient, disingenuous, and described as nothing more than "the traditions of men." Nevertheless, written prayers are not human traditions but are liturgical and spiritual and are beneficial for the following reasons.

First, one can say that written prayers usually contain deep reservoirs of theology and Christian doctrines. You will agree with me that theology is meant to be read, studies, prayed and sung. Written prayers provide us with these multi-facet expressions of our theology. When prayers are written, one can see in black and white deep and weighty theological realities that can provoke or incite deep affections for God. Without doubt, written prayers are an avenue for our affections to be moved toward the great object of our faith, God himself.

Second, written prayers can be used to create a structure for worship and adoration. I know many times people do not like to pray publicly out of fear of what the hearers will think or say. When people begin to pray publicly and extemporaneously their prayers either goes too fast, becomes almost inaudible, or even becomes heretical because the moment creates such an emotional high within the person who prays and those who hear the person. If the theology of the person who prays is different from those who hear, then the prayer may be considered inappropriate theologically or outright heretic. Written prayers afford the person to pray casually yet meaningfully what they or the hearers need to hear. It is still speaking to God regardless of whether you used ink on a piece of paper or thought about what to say as you prayed. If any bias exists against written prayers, it is helpful to point out that the book of Psalms and other portions of Scripture are full of just that written prayers! The Church of Christ on earth in our time has come up with three great books full of written prayers.

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer[13]
The Valley of Vision[14]
A Diary of Private Prayer[15]

May God bless you with new depths and breadths of communion with him as you explore these great prayer books.

Third, written prayers us with a real expression of worship during times when words fail you. Consider you experienced a situation when you have been greatly blessed by the reading of repetitive prayers during times of conviction or contrition. For example, I have found myself reading Psalm 51 as a prayer for repentance of my sins when literally lack any words other than “Lord, have mercy.” Written prayers have become an expression of truths I personally know that are felt and real in my current state but have become verbally inexpressible because of my sins. The articulation of written prayers during those moments reminds me of the grace and mercy found in Christ. They are a way that a believer can be reminded of the truths of the Gospel by another way during moments of moral failure. Spurgeon was right when he said, “Prayer girds human weakness with divine strength, turns human folly into heavenly wisdom, and gives to troubled mortals the peace of God.” Any kind of prayer can achieve that goal.

Fourth, written prayers align the one who prays with the traditions

that came before them. The way we do Church, the way we speak about God, and the way we go about our religious lives are Church history topics. We are a product of someone else. We are always influenced by someone or something. History as a story written by the finger of God and his works in our lives likely is not some brand-new happening in Christian history. Written prayers from the past heroes of old (Heb. 11) places the one who prays in the lineage of people who walked faithfully with God. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1-3) both on this earth (the Church militant) and in the presence of God (the Church triumphant) who have prayed prayers that are worth repeating.

Fifth, written prayers can teach us how to pray. There is no shame in being like Jesus' disciples who came to the Lord to learn *how* to pray (Luke 11:1-4). Even further, written prayers can teach us *what* to pray (Matt. 6:9-14). Many times, prayer can dwindle down into mindless repetitions and selfish petitions instead of earth-shaking intercessions for great needs or white-hot acclamations of glorious truths about God. Written prayers from godly men and women can help us keep the focus of prayer on Christ instead of ourselves.

Sixth, written prayers teach us about who God is and who we are. We can learn about God's character, and that prayer is all about God's grace and not what we have done. They teach us biblical and theological truths and not just what we happen to remember that day, but they can go much deeper. Second, written prayer teaches us about the place of emotions in the Christian life. Third, written prayers can be tested over time. We can see how effective they are and how and when God answers our requests.

Seventh, written prayers have great historical values. Some of the written prayers we have the Christian church has been using for hundreds of years, some even longer. For example, we learn from our Christian brothers and sisters both past and present. We learn from things they were going through, but we also are reminded and learn the timeless truths about God and humanity. We learn what their priorities were e.g., the Apostle Paul's prayers reveal where his heart was at and Don Carson's book *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* is extremely helpful on this. We can learn from others in our church family and their written prayers. An idea you may want to try at your church is, as you begin a new sermon series e.g. The Gospel of John, have someone pray

immediately after the sermon a prayer they have pre-written, then, make prayer the person prayed in church available in the next week's bulletin and on the church website. Do this until the end of the series, collate the prayers together and distribute them to everyone at church. You could also do a version for children. This way you are helping use the gifts of others in the church family and it is helping them develop their gifts. It also helps people get to know one another. Those written prayers potentially help lots of people reading those prayer learn how to pray. They teach us what and how to pray.

Eightieth, written prayers help teach us what matters to God. Several years ago, an English pastor was in Sydney, and he was visiting a conference where he sat in on lots of small groups praying. He commented afterwards, "I have noticed in Sydney you are very good at thanksgiving, but very short on confession." Like this English pastor observation, written prayers can teach us what to pray. They teach us what matters to God. They help us in areas where we may be lacking, blind spots we may have.

Ninth, written prayer can help our prayer concerns become larger. You try this exercise. Grab a pen and paper and begin to write you prayer list or requests. Then convert those requests to prayer in written format. You will discover how much you may end up writing as prayer to God. Written prayers help us not be so selfish. They can help us to be inward looking. They remind us to pray for those affected by drought, to pray that we will share Jesus with others boldly and lovingly. But written prayers are helpful again in that they go another step. Written prayers are helpful again in that they go another step. We may use the acronym A.C.T.S or S.T.O.P to help our prayers.

A. C. T. S as. A = Adoration (Worship); C = Confessions (of faith and sins); T = Thanksgiving; S = Supplications (and petitions).

S.T.O.P as. **Sorry**—Repenting of our sins to God; **Thanks**—Giving praise and thanks to God; **Others**—Praying for others; **Please**— Petitioning to God for what we need.

We can be praying for ourselves every day but never pray for those affected by drought. Written prayers help our prayer concerns become larger, in that we end up growing in our love for others, because as we pray for different people, we grow to love them. Do you want to

love someone? Then pray for them. For example, you may begin to pray this week for Aboriginal people for the first time regularly in your life. If you do, you are most likely by December will have grown to have a deep love for Indigenous Australians as a result. To keep the memory of that prayer, write it down. Written prayers help us focus and so help us *pray until we pray*. You may have heard that phrase – it is some advice from the Puritans and what they meant is that Christians should pray long enough and honestly enough, at a single session, to get past the feeling of formalism and unreality that attends not a little praying. We are especially prone to such feelings when we pray for only a few minutes, rushing to be done with a mere duty. To enter the spirit of prayer, we must stick to it for a while. If we pray until we pray, eventually we come to delight in God's presence, to rest in his love, to cherish his will. Even in dark or agonized praying, we somehow know we are doing business with God. But sometimes we do not even feel like even starting to pray. Sometimes we are distracted. Discouraged. Feeling spiritually dry. And this is where written prayers can help us. They help us focus and so help us pray, and so help us pray until we pray.

In addition, written prayers teach others, whether the written prayers are one off or repeated. When repeated they become memorable so all people can use them at other times. And this is especially important for people who either cannot read or have difficulty in reading. With regular use of some written prayers in church, they might remember the prayers and want to use them for their own personal use. You might want to use written prayers in your Bible study group to teach people how to pray, both in leading people in public prayer but also to teach them how to pray privately.

Plus, written prayers help us express our unity. Good models of written prayer are very accessible and the person leading us in the written prayer does not have to be a so-called prayer expert if they are using someone else's written prayers. They are using the gifts and wisdom of others. When we pray them together, we express our unity as we all can say AMEN at the end. I think it would help many people in our churches be more prepared to lead in prayer at church if we offered them a variety of written prayers. Having some written prayers may make it much easier for some and so they would be more prepared to serve their church family that way, and in turn these written prayers would also help

shape their own understanding of prayer, and maybe in time it would help them be more confident to write their own prayers one day for church.

It is interesting to know that written prayers refresh us. Some may say using written prayers in church is dry. But the irony is, if you are feeling spiritually dry, feeling like your prayer life is stuck in a rut, one of the best things you can do is to begin writing out your prayers or use pre-written prayers, the prayers of others, or prayers that you have written in the past. It will hopefully refresh you and remind you of the great privilege of prayer and the greatness of our good God. If you are feeling spiritually dry currently, then maybe try and use some written prayers and I hope it refreshes you. It is my desire that everyone who reads this book will live a life that transcends routines in liturgy of prayer but enjoys the grace of prayer in many dimensions.

# Praying Aloud

You may probably be familiar with some Old Testament saints
praying aloud to God. God allows and accommodates any kind of prayer. Glory be to his name. We have many accounts of Jesus praying aloud. The same picture we have of the Apostles and early Disciples. I am bold to tell you I love praying aloud. Praying aloud is another dimension of praying that many people are comfortable with. I know many people are not comfortable with it because their denomination liturgy of worship and praying do not include or teach that. However, the Bible teaches praying aloud. God hears loud prayers and well as he hears and answers quiet, meditative, or contemplative prayer. God hears and answers loud prayers as well as written prayer or any biblical prayer. Let us expand on this.

***Some examples of Saints and persons who prayed aloud.***

- *King Solomon*

In 1Kings 8: 22-54, we see how King Solomon humbly prayed to the Lord but aloud or loudly. I want to call your attention to the fact that when ministers or leaders must pray to multitude of people, they often do it in such a way that people will hear them; that is one of the reasons King Solomon prayed aloud in the Temple. He did it so graphically that we do not miss out anything.

*"Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, and*

*said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father…"*

See some of gestures or posture that are often associated with praying aloud as displayed by King Solomon.

a. Standing up (sometimes before people or altar)
b. Spreading of hands up and toward heaven
c. Speaking audibly out in supplication

Parents can do this at home in family prayer meeting.
Pastors can do this in congregational praying.
Peers can do this in small group meeting.
Person(s) can do this in individual prayer.

I do pray aloud when occasion demands, or need comes, and I see
I am exhibiting these gestures and lots of energy and emotions. It is something so exciting and beneficiary to us as we shall see.

- *King David*

In Psalm 142 verse 1 we see Kind David praying aloud. The need of the hour for David required him to express his prayer to God loud and clear. He was running away and hiding from Saul in a cave. David prayed saying, *"With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD."* When we study the Psalms, we will see many of the writers praying aloud. This is something that God is not condemning or rebuking in their lives. In like manner, God is doing with us when we do it rightly and graciously. Avoid some man-made theology of prayer!

- *The Apostles and Early Disciples of Jesus*

In the Book of Acts of Apostle, 4 verse24 we read this exciting
account of the urgent and intense prayer of the Disciples. *"When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign*

*Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them…."*

This was not a contemplative or meditative quiet prayer. It was like an "uproar prayer." Did God hear and answer them? Absolutely yes. The fruits of their ministry show us that God answer that loud and noisy prayer of the Disciples.

- *Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ prayed aloud in many cases. Here are some examples of his loud prayers. Some Christian folks think and believe Jesus was a gentle-butter-won't-melt-in-his-mouth person. That is not true. Jesus was like some of us; outspoken, excited about life, dynamic, friendly, social, creative, relational, and good-to-be-with person. He is our Savior and Example who often prayed aloud. In Hebrews 5 verse, we read another account of Jesus' loud prayer. *"While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God.*

This verse says Jesus *"offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears."* The verse concludes saying God heard his prayers because, with that intensity and loudness, they were still with deep reverence to God. The loudness of our prayer does not mean we are not revering God. Or let me say, even if we pray loudly, it does not mean to de-revere our loving God and Father.

Jesus had another example in Matthew 26 verse 39.

*"He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."*

The idea of hearing him, using the word, "saying" does not connotes quietness. You say something that other could hear, then you are talking loud enough. Jesus did that in prayer.

- *The Prayer Pharisee and Tax Collector was loud.*

Yet, another example is seen in Luke 18 from verse 10 to 14.

*"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people— robbers, evildoers, adulterers —or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look*

*up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

The Pharisee prayed audibly. The tax collector prayed audibly. What is the difference in their prayer? Jesus tells us directly. It was not loudness but the heart disposition. While the Pharisee has proudly disposition, the tax collector demonstrated humility and reverence to God. Basic lesson: we can
pray aloud and yet be humble and revere our God.

***Why do we pray aloud or loudly?***

Trisha Keehn[16] highlighted five reasons we should be praying aloud, and I like those insights. Here are they.

*a. External declarations can change your internal dialogue.*

When we pray for things aloud, we change our internal dialogue and posture. Praying like, *"Jesus, you are enough"* or *"God is greater than my grief"* will build your faith and help change the way you view things.

*b. Loud prayer keeps you awake.*

Jesus reminds us, "*Our spirit might be willing, but our flesh is weak*." If you are prone to falling asleep during prayer, like Jesus' disciples did in Mark 14:37-38, praying aloud will help you stay awake. You are more likely to stay awake through prayer when your brain is listening to what your mouth is saying.

*c. Practice for when you are called upon in public.*

Like anything, we practice behind the scenes to get better for those moments we are in public. It is uncomfortable to be asked to pray for people and not know what words to say. Praying aloud privately helps us get comfortable with the sound of our own voice. Repetition gives us the confidence to approach God in public. Sometimes we need to set forth example or standard in your house. If we want our household to serve the Lord, we must set an example through our relationship with Jesus. Kids need to hear us praying outside the church walls. The same is true if you live with an unbelieving
spouse, parent, or friend.

*d. Encourages each other.*

Praying in a community of people draws the Lord in and builds our faith.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus says there is power when we pray in groups, and
there is purpose when we make declarations aloud.

*e. Praying aloud is a bold move in your faith.*

When you unashamedly confess Jesus as your Savior, the enemy's grip on your problem loses its power. Praying aloud is an internal decision speaking a bold declaration that Jesus sits on the throne, high above your struggles.

***How do we jumpstart praying aloud?*** *(If you have not done it before)*

1. *Create or write out your prayer outline.*

I often use an outline for your prayer. I learned early in my Christian life the use of the acronyms for many things. One of such is to pray using the A.C.T.S. model. This means.

- *Adoration*: Praise God for who He is.
- *Confession*: Confess your sins and ask for His forgiveness.
- *Thanksgiving*: Thank God for His protection and provision.
- *Supplication* (an appeal to God): Make your requests known.

2. *Make a prayer list.*

Intentionally write down what you want to pray about before you
get started. Some people use a journal to keep track of your
prayers and answers to them. This will encourage your faith and help follow up with an entry about God's alternate plan.

3. *Reading Scripture aloud.*

Many Psalms are prayers. So, it is a good place to start. For example, have a look at Psalm 30, Psalm 51, Psalm 63, Psalm 91, Psalm 139, and Psalm 145. Reading prayer scriptures aloud is as good as praying. You turn those prayers to your own prayer and God lovingly hears them and answers appropriately.

4. *Do not write long/lengthy prayer.*

Do not get caught up in the length of our prayers and struggle to come up with words to fill the silence. There is no rule on how long your prayer should be. And there is no benefit in babbling. God sees the heart of your prayers. Stretching them out for the sake of filling time is unnecessary.

5. *Be you: Pray like you normally do.*

God created you to communicate in a unique way with him. Do not get entangled with the thoughts of saying the "right" things, like right words,

using “fancy” Christian terms, or praying like someone else. Prayer is meant to be a personal conversation with God. Like you would have between friends, family, or a mentor. Let us go of how you think you should pray and just be you.

6. *You can have some soft music on*

You can us the lyrics of the songs to temporarily replace your words when you have nothing to say. As you learn the lyrics, begin to sing them aloud as prayers. Prayer changes us more than it changes things. Do we know that we can solve lots of problems through prayer faster than engaging is telephone conversation with a friend? By my experience, I have come to know that praying aloud has transformed my faith, and how I react to existential problems or troubles. When I pray aloud, I see myself declaring victory by faith.

## Singing Prayer

In the year 1985, a music evangelist in my country released an album. This song was very eschatological and completely a prayer. The entire content of the album was prayer to God. The Evangelist highlighted all the problems and challenges politically and economically, socially, and spiritually in the world and then asked the Lord to come quickly. His point of view was that until Jesus comes back the world will remain the way it—void, full of violence and wickedness. He used the story of Noah to support his singing prayer and it was universally welcome in my country and abroad. Thus, we can sing our prayer. We can pray and use song or music to express ourselves to God. The Bible has so many examples. Remember prayer embraces adoration to God, confession of our sins, thanksgiving to God, and supplication. At some point in our prayer, we see singing coming into play and that will be very meaningfully.

In both Old Testament and New, we see examples of praying in form of songs or singing. We need to learn this and practice it. Sometimes, praying with just verbalization may be unexciting and boring as we come to a point when we lack words to express ourselves. Singing at this time will be very helpful and meaningful.

Here are some examples from the Bible.

*Moses and the Israelites sang as prayer to God.*

Exodus 15 verse 1, says, *“Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this*

*song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea…"*
That looks like thanksgiving prayer expressed in songs, right?
They got victory and sang to the Lord, appreciating what God
did for them.

*King David singing prayer.*

In Psalm 95 verse 1, David encouraged us to sing-pray to the Lord. *"Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!"* That is what David did always as we read his Psalms. In fact, the Psalms are songs of worship with lots of prayers to God.

*Apostle Paul practices of singing praying.*

In Colossians 3 verse 16, Paul tells us*, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

I tell you, when the Word of Christ dwells in you in full, you can do many great things with them. One of them is singing and praying creatively. Have you ever found yourself singing with the Scripture when you are praying and making the Scriptures your prayer points? In Acts 16 verse 25, Paul and Silas turned the prison to worship and praying center and mighty miracles happens. *"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them*…"

Read the story to the end, which singing praying brought them out of that jail that night. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 6 verse 18 that there are "all (manner) of praying"

He writes to us; *"Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints."*

*John's revelation of singing praying*

In the Book of Revelation, John shows us that in heaven Saints are singing and praying. In Revelation 15 verse 3, John writes*,*

*"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"*

That looks like a worship time. And the best way the Saints express themselves to God is by singing songs of worship—a form of prayer. Honestly, if believers can avail themselves of all these golden opportunities in praying, no one should say I do not know how to pray, or I cannot pray as I wish. Our problem is we have limited ourselves to one pattern of liturgy or theology or practice of prayer we probably learned from our denominations. Let us go back to the Bible and learn godly

dimension and prescription for prayer. They are very descriptive and comprehensible if we can lay our hands and hearts on them. God never asks us to do the impossible.

## Chanting Prayer

There is chanting in heaven—every day! Revelation 4 verse 8 says, *"Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty— the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come."* (NLT).

Angels are constantly chanting to God in worship. So, we can worship and pray to God by chanting. Many people have many meanings to chanting. The word *chant* simply means a repeated rhythmic phrase, typically one shouted or sung in unison by a crowd or individuals. I came from a traditional African religion where I saw priests in shrines or traditional religionist chanting on their charms or to evoke some ancestral spirit or during religious rituals. There are debates by some Christians is chanting is biblical. Chanting is biblical especially in the ritual of Christian prayer. Like so many things not specifically defined in the Bible, the answer comes down to motive.

It could be observed that chanting has so many variations that it is difficult to answer directly whether a Christian should chant. The variations of chanting include,

a. Religious circle prayers.
b. Cheers like at sporting events.
c. Basic two-note repetitive singing.
d. Simple and complex melodies and harmonies.
e. Various forms of speech, language, battle cries, protest shouts, and singing.
f. Political chanting, etc.

Essentially, in praying, chanting is a highly charged, focused and repetitive words or phrases. It is an invocation using carefully selected word or words because of their inherent power. For example, the words of the Bible are not magical but supernatural and spiritual and they are imbued with energy, or power and are made more effective when properly intoned as in chanting. Chanting of sacred text, the name of God/Spirit, etc. is a commonly used Christian spiritual practice. Like

prayer, chanting may be a component of either personal or group practice. Diverse spiritual traditions consider chant a route to spiritual development.

An example, we see Anglican chant, also known as English chant, which is a way to sing unmetrical texts, including psalms and canticles from the Bible, by matching the natural speech-rhythm of the words to the notes of a simple harmonized melody. Chanting is a spiritual discipline believed to improve listening skills, heightened energy, and more sensitivity toward others.

In addition, the Roman Catholics sometimes use chanting in worship, and other liturgical traditions use chanting, example is the Lutherans. The *Asperges*, a chant based on Scripture, is biblical. However, the *Ave Maria* and *Salve Regina*, are not from the Bible. They are prayer chants to Mary the mother of Jesus. I do not know your theology or liturgy of worship. However, we see examples of chanting in the Bible and in the early part of Christian church history which extends to our current period. Many may not agree to this because they probably have been taught otherwise or not have been taught at all. People ignorance does not preclude biblical practice that
has great meanings.

The prayer services of many ancient Monastery did mostly consist of chanting the Psalms from the Bible by virtue of an ancient practice called the Divine Office. In some present-day Monastery such service has a practice particular to itself that is comprised of hymns, Psalms, prayers, and scriptures. These services are typically accompanied by music which has its roots in ancient liturgy. The music used largely derived from the tradition of Gregorian Chant. They adapted many of the Gregorian melodies to fit the English language, although they do retain several the chants with the original Latin texts. In addition to the divine Office, each day they also celebrate the Mass (the Holy Eucharist)[17].

The challenge many modern Christians have is that they lack knowledge and are not eager to explore to know. Their Bishops or Pastors provide them with what they should do and whatever is not included in the leaders' theology or worldview seems not to be embraced or included in the followers' theology and worldview. Nevertheless, so many people practice chanting but criticize it. This is what I mean. I have

been in churches around the world, and I saw Christian's "chant" unknowingly. You bring the topic to some Christians and see their reaction. Are you a Buddhist? They may ask you. How do Christian's chant? Have you been to a church where the following practices are done on regular basis? Interestingly, many never see it
as chanting in praying or in worship.

- Shouting of *Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, glory to thee our God***.** (Repeat 3 times or 7 times or 21 times or endlessly. That is chanting!
- Repeating *"Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy."* That is chanting.
- Proclaiming, *"Glory to the Father, to the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now*

*and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."* That is chanting, friends.

- Reciting the Lord's Prayer: ***"****Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen."*

That is chanting by definition and practice.

- Reciting Psalm 23 or any other Psalm in worship or prayer time. That is chanting.
- Christian leaders telling their members, *"Say these three repeatedly for 10 to 20 minutes each day early in the morning"* or for a period. That is chanting. They would say, "longer practices yield the best results. You can also practice them again at night before going to bed for even better results."
- What about what many churches call "our theme for the year." For example. *"This year is my year of double portion blessing."* They will add the relevant Scriptures and the church will be required to memorize these and chant periodically during church service or when having personal prayers. Chanting. Chanting.
- When a scriptural verse has a deep meaning to you and you

embrace it as golden and read it aloud many times daily wherever you are, friends, you are chanting.

Chanting is not a mystical word or practice. It shows how we appreciate some truth or words, and we want to evoke the power in and of those words or truths. When I tell my wife, *"I love you"* (which I do many times a day), I am chanting. The more I chant the words *"I love you"* the more I see the power of love working in me towards my wife. I see myself doing anything or everything that shows nothing but love. In the same note, my wife will be more comfortable with me and will like to reciprocate or mutualize the love. It works. That is making our relationship works in ways we cannot describe. The same goes with God.

When I chant every day. *"Jesus, I love you"* or "*Praise be to the Lord"* or *"Thank God,"* I am not only evoking myself to be in a better relationship with the Divine, but I am also asking to make his love more real and meaningful to me. It is just like I tell my wife, "*Darling, I love you."* In many cases she will react meaningfully and spontaneously, *"I love you too."* Sometimes, my wife will chant back*, "I love you more."* God does that too. Jesus does that too. Tell him in hearty chanting, *"I love you Jesus"* and I tell you sincerely, Jesus replies to you spontaneously, *"son, I love you more."* I can see Jesus' chanting to me every day*, "Jonathan, I love you forever!"* My unconscious response should be chanting it back, *"Lord Jesus, I love you forever."* Done deal.

Chanting a song or a prayer in honor of God, to show him thankfulness or to worship, to seek His direction or help, can be a beautiful expression. Some hymns, such as *"Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee"* were said to be originally used as a chant. We know that chanting is common in some Eastern religions such as Buddhism, in some practices that originated there (such as in yoga) and in some Native American rituals. Words and motives used in pagan religions are unbiblical. When a person or persons chant to connect with evil spirits, that is harmful. Also, spiritually dangerous is chanting, singing, or repeating mantras to open the mind to undefined spiritual influences. The motives, lyrical content, and object or subject of a chant must be defined and explored. When its honor or dishonor of God can be discovered, then the chant can be deemed right or wrong.

*Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every*

*situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God—NETB*

# Chapter 6
# Prayer's Bigger and Larger Sphere: Intercessory Prayer

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God-NASB— (1977).*

Prayer is primarily a method of communication with God. This can be person, family, group, church, community, or by citizens of a nation. Prayer has great benefits for those who venture into it. Prayer equally has great benefits for people or individual we pray for. This takes us to a bigger, wider, and larger dimension of prayer.

## Prayer for Authority/Government/Leaders

It is one of Christians' spiritual responsibilities is to pray for leaders and people in authority. When last did you pray for your leaders? If you have not been praying for your leaders, you need to start praying for them and stop complaining and speaking evil of your leaders. Remember, *"Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people."*—Exodus 22: 28. Paul reminds us of this word in Acts 23 verse 5, saying, *"… for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"* Many Christians are guilty of gossiping, slandering, backbiting, speaking evil, and cursing leaders—spiritual and political leaders. That ought not to be so. We need to repent of this sin. The Bible teaches us to extend our prayer beyond ourselves. The Bible wants us to rather enlarge our sphere of prayer to cover our church leaders, workplace leaders, political leaders, national and world leaders. Sometimes, I think lack of prayer from Christians can be attributed to some problems in our society and our world. God wants to

use us to get involved in his works around the world through prayer. However, we intentionally or unintentionally not obey God and fail to be involved in this divine assignment.

*Call to prayer for leaders.*

*"I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings and all who are in high places..."*—1Tim. 2:1-5 (WEB)

We see the call for prayer as a priority for Christians. The Bible admonishes us to pray all prayers—petitions, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks. These prayers should be for all men. Then the list is provided as,

- For kings—political leaders.
- For all who are in high places—other leaders.

Why do we have to pray for political leaders and others in high places? The answer is provided clearly for us.

1. That we may lead a tranquil and quiet life…
2. That they may lead in all godliness and reverence…
3. Prayer is right and acceptable before God our Savior…
4. Through our prayers many will be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth according to desires of God—God wants all people to him—1Tim. 2:1-5.

The Bible asks all Christians to obey, submit, and pray for their spiritual leaders—Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Pastors or Bishops, Evangelists, Ministry leaders, Deacons, ministers in any capacity of God service.

Paul tells us this in Hebrews 13 verses 15-18; *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things."*

If you do not pray for you pastor, never you complain when he begins to act dishonorably, falling into temptation of women, greedy for money, covetous, become insensitive and unloving, losing faith, cannot hear again from the Holy Spirit, teaching and preaching heresy, or become lukewarm and lethargic spiritually. Our prayers for our spiritual leaders help them to live an honorable life in all things.

Times and again, Paul wrote in his epistles, "*pray for us;"* "*pray for*

*me,"* etc. If prayer for him is not important and needed Paul would not have requested for prayers. Do you notice the same thought with Jesus when he was facing the ordeal at the latter part of his life before his crucifixion? *"Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?"*—Mat. 26: 40 (NKJV). In another word, Jesus was saying, you could not be supporting me in prayer for just an hour. We see that the context of Jesus when he uttered those words was a context of prayer. He was in prayer, and he needed some prayer support from his disciples. Unfortunately, they were sleeping—just like some of us are doing presently instead of praying for our spiritual leaders. Instead of praying to support our leaders, we are murmuring, complaining, gossiping, isolating from them, etc. We fail to realize or remember our prayers have eternal consequences on our leaders and ours. We shall be rewarded for the labor of love in praying for our leaders.

Hebrews 6 verse 10 reminds us, *"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.""*

Prayer is a form of ministering to the saints. Prayer is a form of ministry to our leaders. Prayer is a form of pure labor of love toward others and God says he would remember that at a point in our spiritual experience and life. The reward may be now or in eternity, I do not know. But I know God sees me when I labor in love praying for others and my leaders—spiritual or political or those in high places. Prayer is a spiritual investment. It has unspeakable and undeniable dividends or profits.

*Making prayer for leaders simple*

I make this easy for me by making a list of the leaders I want to pray for. Some of us have people who influence our lives positively, but they are not close to us. I call this *proxy leaders*. These are figures that can be used to represent the value of something—theology, liturgy, ethics, teachings, ideals, etc. I have been taught by many leaders or mentors. I have a spiritual leader who is my mentor. However, I have some ministers that I enjoy their materials like books, tapes, DVD, sermons, etc. I reckon them as my *"substitute leaders"* or "*representative leaders."* I do pray for them and their ministry. I suggest you make a list of names of such individuals and begin to pray for them.

Second, it is not out of place to know the name of our community

leaders, kings, commissioners, mayors, governors, ministers, congressmen and women, president of our nation, CEO of our organization and other companies' CEO in our community. It is very good and scriptural to pray for these set of leaders. We do well to pray for our children school principals, teachers, and administrative staffs. We do well we pray for our military and para-military leaders. And we are in line with the Bible when we make a list of world leaders especially some global organizations and their leaders and pray for them. Does this sound strange? I do not think so. Our prayers for world leaders and national leaders can positively impact our world evangelistic efforts helping us to reap rich harvest for the Lord and making the world to live in peace and fear of God. Why can not we pray for nations and world leaders as Christians? So, enlarge your sphere of influence; enlarge your prayer influence; pray for the world leaders.

# Prayer for the Churches/Church Growth

We are not admonished to pray for our leaders, we are encouraged to pray for Universal Church and local assemblies. We have examples of Jesus praying for his Church and some Christians serving God with Paul who were described as laboring in prayer for local churches and believers. Let us look at some.

- ***Jesus prayed and is praying for the Church.***

In John chapter 17 we see one of Jesus' priestly prayer for the Church. What kind of prayer did Jesus pray for his Church?

1. Prayer of affirmation and confirmation of what the Church is and have received from him. John 17: 6-8, Jesus prayed saying, he manifested God to the Disciples (the Church) in the world; Disciples belong to the Father and have received and believed the Father's word; they know that all things are from God; and have come to know Jesus was sent and came forth from the Father.
2. Prayer for protection from evil in the world. "*Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me*…;" *"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."*
3. Prayer of perfection, unity, and conformation to God's nature. *"…that they may be one as We are…" … "And the glory which*

*You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."*

4. Prayer of sanctification and commissioning for evangelism. *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth…. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."*
5. Prayer for Disciples to have joy. *"That they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves."*
6. Prayer for love and final glorification with Jesus. "*Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

In addition to this prayer, the Book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is still praying for his Church as her Most High Priest.

*"Therefore, He is able also to save forever (completely, perfectly, for eternity) those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede and intervene on their behalf [with God]."*—Heb.7:25 (AMP).

This is the present-day ministry of Jesus Christ. He is praying for the Church, the redeemed, the called out, his Disciples.

- ***Paul prayed for saints and various local churches.***

*The church in Rome*

There seem to appear many prayers from Paul for the church in Rome. Here are some of them, *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being reported all over the world. God,*

*whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I always remember you in my prayers; and I pray that now at last by God's the way will be opened for me to come to you." (*Roman 1: 8-10.]
*"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)*
*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."* (Romans 15:13)

*The church in Galatia*
Paul also prayed for the church in Galatia.
*"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers." [Galatians 6:18]*

*The church in Ephesus*
Paul prayer for the Ephesian Church go this way.
*"For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*
*and his incomparably great power for us who believe… "*Eph 1.
*"For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom his*
*whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray*
*that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or*

*imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." [*Ephesians 3:14–21]

*The church in Philippi*

Paul offered hearty prayer for the Philippians church.

*"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*." [Phil. 1:3–6].

*"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."* [Philippians 1:9–11]

## The Colossian church.

Paul also prayed for the Colossian church.

*"We always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
*when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and*

*brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." [Colossians 1:3–14].*

*Paul did not leave the Thessalonians behind in prayer.*
*"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. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it*." [1 Thessalonians 5:23–24]

- ***Epaphras prayed for local churches.***

Epaphras was praying for the Colossian church.
*"Epaphras, a member of your own fellowship and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you, his greetings. He always prays earnestly for you, asking God to make you strong and perfect, fully confident that you are following the whole will of God."* Col. 4:12—NLT
Christians have the spiritual obligation to pray for their local churches. There are a lot to pray for in our local churches. Churches have the spiritual obligation to support one another in prayer. One of the present-day Christian churches is isolation. We love to build empire and campuses and those become the only sphere of influence a local church has. In my understanding
of the New Testament, the Church of Christ should be,

1. United.
2. Networking.
3. Caring for one another.
4. Praying for each other.
5. Embarking on joint social projects that will advance Christ.
   like school, hospital, businesses, services, etc.
6. Doing missions and evangelistic outreaches and discipleship in a cooperative way.
7. Standing up to fight spiritually any opposing forces
   militating against it.

Christian churches do not work together to achieve the above because we fail to pray together or pray for one another. Some people are so afraid of unity that they have called it a new name. That name is *ecumenical*. In the process of avoiding been ecumenical some end up in isolation and downward growth. My dictionary defines *ecumenical* as

representation several different Christian Churches. We can be ecumenical when it comes to many things that are common to all of us. Things like prayer, missions, social justices, evangelism, social projects like education, building school, etc. Ecumenicalism is not a bad idea when we see the teaching and prayers of Jesus for his Church. The devil has told some Christians to hate other Christians. We see this by the way those Christians and churches will not do anything with other churches or Christians around them. Ecumenicalism is promoting or relating to unity among the world's Christian Churches. Is not this Christ's priestly prayer? We need to stop being myopic and parochial in our outlook and embrace love and unity, peace, and progress. Remember, in unity we all shall stand, in division we all fall apart. Is not this the reason the earthly church of Christ seems to be powerless and has lesser and lesser influence in our community, nation, and
the world daily?

During the time of Paul, the institution of denominations was not present. The sinful nature of man always wants to do something very carnal and ungodly. Jesus' ideal is not denominationalism which is close in opposite meaning to ecumenicalism. In the Book of Corinthians, we see how some Christians would have started denominationalism. How? Paul made mentioned of an apparent route to denominationalism in the book of first Corinthians. He wrote about it twice. This shows us it was a serious issue that needed to be addressed. Thanks to God Paul removed who cut off the bud and removed the nub. This is what Paul says about division, disunity, segregation, taking sides of one leader or one group.

"*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul;" another, "I follow Apollos;" another, "I follow Cephas;" still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* 1 Cor. 1: 10-13.

What was happening here? Disagreement in what they say and do; division among believers; disunity in mind and thoughts of believers; quarreling among believers; hero worship; segregation and propensity to

denominationalism. Paul did not have that mindset. So, he immediately told them to stop. It is not Christlike. It is not good for the Church of Christ then and now!

Again in 1 Corinthians 3:4-6, the issue was spoken and written about by Paul. He wrote to the Corinth church,

*"One says, `I belong to Paul.' Another says, `I belong to Apollos.' Does not that show that you have the spirit of this world? After all, who is Apollos? And who is Paul? We both work for God. You believed because of the work we did. The Lord gave each of us our work to do. I planted the seed. Apollos put water on the seed. But God made the seed grow*."

Down the church history account, it appears believers slide back to this issue—*the spirit of this world.* And today, we have some many denominations, liturgies of worship, theologies, doctrines and dogmas, different kind of church polity and administration, etc. that are affecting the purpose and plan of God for the New Covenant Church. We need to go back to the teachings of Jesus and Apostle Paul and get re-aligned with Christ's plan. We had better understand this and pray well and fall in line with Jesus' eternal purpose for his Church. There is one God, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one Spirit, and one Church, and one Heaven we all are saved to go for eternity. If we do not live that life here, I wonder if we can make it to that one Heaven made for us.

The local churches need lots of prayer. Christians need lots of prayer. No one does that than fellow-Christians and fellow-churches. We are our brother's keeper. We are to uphold one another in prayer to God for revival, restoration of divine life of the Church. I believe we can all agree on praying
and intercession even if we do not agree on many things.

# Prayer for the Community

From our previous discussion, you will agree with me it is good
to pray for you community. Is that not good neighborhood? Praying for your neighbors—old and young, acquaintances, strangers in your area, newcomers to the street you are, isolated family who will not even interact with no one, etc. is a godly thing with eternal reward. In addition, if you do not pray for the members of your community, is not possible that some people or youth can be used by the devil to become gangs who will

be breaking houses in the street, become liquor and drug addicts, turn to pedophiles, or jobless and homeless and because social challenges to your street? Oh, I never see it that way, I hear you saying. Is not that what God saying when he says, *"I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men…"?*

Why should I pray for all men? The same reason you pray for leaders around the world. The answer is...

1. That we may lead a tranquil and quiet life…
2. That they may lead in all godliness and reverence…
3. Prayer is right and acceptable before God our Savior…
4. Through our prayers many will be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth according to desires of God—Gpd wants all people to him—1Tim. 2:1-5.

There are many things and people to pray for in our community.
Some of them include,

- People and families living in your community. We are not the same. The world is a mosaic of different culture, sexuality, religions, social statuses, political views, economic statuses, racial inclination, etc. Prayer can keep you safe living with these challenges. Prayer can help them to come to God.
- Businesses around you. Some are decent some are not. When people are out to make money, many loves less, and do not care for others' welfare. Consider a company releasing mercury to the community and ignoring the effects. Mercury is carcinogenic. There may be such companies around your area. Pray can change things.
- Religion activities in your community. If there is no church, pray for one. If there are other religions that the presence can cause chaos, pray about that. God knows what to do to handle them.
- Schools—elementary, high schools, colleges, university, technical schools, etc. The social impacts of schools in an area could be very great—sometimes negatively, sometimes positively.
- Sporting activities in your area. Do you have parks for

recreations, stadia for sports? You had better pray for all of these because devil is not sleeping and can use these to cause chaos.

- Movie theaters, nightclubs, and bars. These may look naturally for some people. However, they can provide lots of leads that can be influencing the Gospel negatively.
- Downtowns and metropolis. Do you live close to downtown in your city? Do you live in an urban or metropolitan city? Do not you think you need to pray? On the even of New Year 2021 a person decided to bomb a strategic place in Nashville, Tennessee, USA. He chose downtown. He destroyed many things. What is we all praying for our cities' downtown?
- You know your community more than me. Add to this list things, places, and people you can pray for in your community. That is a kind of ministry that many people will be unaware of, but God can use it to make positive changes in our community and reward us now and in eternity.

Do you know this teaching is more and more scriptural every time I think about it? God told Prophet Jeremiah in chapter 29 of his book and verse 4 to 7.

*"This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."*

You may not be in exile. You may not be out of the place you were born. But you have a community wherever you are. You live, married, bought, or rented a house, you have a job around, your children live with you, you kind of feel at home where you are now. God says to you, "*… seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into…. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper"*

God knows where you are now. So, pray for your community regularly. It

is a godly and Christlike thing to do. Expand your sphere of praying today.

## Prayer for Nations/the World

Your best form of patriotism to your nation is prayer. Do you love your nation? Pray for her. I know many people who claim to be patriotic but would go and destroy the Capitol house—the very headquarters of national government. They do this in the name of political protest. Really? Is that patriotism? Is there not better way to express our grievances than destruction of public properties? It will be surprising to you there were Christians in this unedifying acts and deeds. Are you a patriot Christians? Pray for your nation. We all have a nation we probably love so much. Then, pray for your nations. Some of us have double citizenship, then our spiritual responsibility increases. We must pray for our nations if God allows us to have such experience. If you cannot or do not see it needed to pray for you country, then keep your mouth shut about whatever is going on there. Instead of complaining and grumbling or murmuring, why not pray for you nation and let God know how you feel and what you hope to see in your nation economically, politically, socially, and spiritually? Expand your prayer sphere today pray for your nation.

What do we pray for in our nations? So many things. Here are some few ideas to ponder and pray on.

1. Spiritual atmosphere and activities
2. Leadership in all spheres of life
3. Political system of the nation
4. Economic terrain and issues
5. Social projects like education and health
6. Negative satanic influences; territorial spirits
7. Geographic condition like bad weather so often
8. Evolving negative cultures
9. Church and gospel ministries
10. Negative unseen religious influences
11. Homemade and foreign terrorism
12. Evolving and emerging technologies
13. Local civil disturbances and external invasions or wars

Politicians do not bring conservation of biblical moral values. Our White Houses do not have the redemption of our citizens. Technologies do not

necessarily make us better morally and spiritually. Education is good but can be used against us and our children. Culture evolves daily and sometimes goes to the negative side of values and ideals. There are so many things to pray for in our nations. If we expand the above points, we will be surprised we get another 2000 pages book. Let God lead us to pray for our nations. Let us yield to God's Spirit prompting is to pray for our nation. It is a ministry.

***Pray for our World!***

Perhaps because I am a missional person and I have a call to missions, or
because I am a missionary, I often think in term of global prayers, global evangelism, global missions, globalization of the Gospel, etc. You may not be called to be a missionary but as a Christian you ought to be missional and your prayer should be globally missional. That means you and I need to pray as global and missional person. We need to pray for our world. Our world
needs our prayer.

Oswald J. Smith authored a book in the 70s titled, *The Cry of the World*. He explained the needs of the world and how Christians can be instrumental in the hand of God to meet those needs. He called for Christians to get involved in evangelism and prayer for the world. Things have not changed since then. In fact, it seems to be getting worse everyday for our world! The world needs our prayer. God has set us here to be his stewards and that include being intercessors for the world.

Maybe you have been wondering what you could do that will impact this world. I have an answer for you; begin to pray for the world. You do not need any denominational endorsement to do that. You do not need Seminary or humanity degree to do that. You can start to pray for the world at any age and until you see Jesus. What a life-long ministry! There are lots of Christians out there who are waiting for God to give them a dramatic call to ministry whereas, God has given them a versatile ministry that they can never finish in their lifetime. It is the ministry of prayer; the ministry of intercession; the ministry of praying for their community, society, nations, and the entire world. You are
asking how that can be done? Here are my suggestions.

First, study your Bible and see what God says about the

world and her needs. The Bible is a timeless book, so it still speaks about our world. When I see Christians looking worried about what is happening in our world, I quickly point them to what Prophet Daniel wrote about the last days; I encourage them to listen to Jesus on what he has for us to know about the end-time; I direct them to listen to Paul speaking about last days; and I encourage them to read the book of Revelation. A good understanding of prophetic portraits of the end things will challenge us to pray, make us to panic less, and give is hope as the end-time events unfold. Biblical end-time events will motivate us to do two things. First, intercede or pray for the world. Second, evangelize the lost. That is what God wants us to do in this end-time.

Second, make yourself available to the Lord. God says, *"I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men…"*
All men mean all people in the world. Tell God you are ready to do exactly that, and he will give you grace and strength.

Third, get a map of the world and paste in on your wall in your office or wherever you can see it on daily basis. As you pray and ready to pray, seeing the map will motivate you. The Holy Spirit can use the map to inspire your prayer for the world. And whenever that inspiration comes just obey; begin to pray.

Fourth, be intentional about it. Make a timetable of prayer, putting different continents and nations on different days of the week. You cannot pray for the entire world in a day meaningfully. However, when you have a plan, you can prayerfully work out you plans and goals. You can even adopt a nation for regular prayer based on the need and leading of the Holy Spirit. For over 12 years I have been praying for the nations and people in East Africa almost every day. I served there as a missionary for a short time and God opens my eyes to see the needs—spiritually, socially, economically, politically, etc. From that time, I have the burden to pray and support East Africa nations and people.

Fifth, get resources about nations and there needs. The
United Nations and her auxiliaries have a lot of information about needs around the world. Go to their websites to get information that can guide your prayer for nations of the world.

In addition, listen to news daily. It will take you some minutes and anywhere you discover around the world that are having problems like

natural disaster, terrorism, hunger, flood, fire, earthquakes, wars, etc., you can pray for comfort and peace. You can pray that God will be merciful and help stop some of these catastrophes that happen due to human selfishness and thoughtlessness.

Read books that have information about world problem and use the information in your prayers. As a missionary, I have a couple of missionary resources about our world. One if them is *Operation World* published by OM (Operation Mobilization) in 2001. I really admire and embrace the role and
purpose of OM. These are,

a. Knowing and glorifying God.
b. Living in submission to God's Word.
c. Being people of grace and integrity.
d. Serving sacrificially.
e. Loving and valuing people.
f. Reflecting the diversity of the body of Christ.
g. Evangelizing the world.
h. Global intercession.[18]

A close look at these roles and purposes should convince any Christians of what Jesus would have him or her do. In the light of this discussion, the last two things on the list stand up tall: world evangelism and global intercession. The wonderful thing about this book is it endeavors to present each nation of the world with her geography, population, economy, political situation, religion settings, different cultures and ethic groups and languages. The book shows us as Christians where we need to focus to pray for any nation in the world. And it arranges the nations to specific days and dates of the month. This is great resource for any Christian who wants to do
something of eternal value for our world—prayer of intercession.

There are many resources online and in hardcopies that can help us get the needed information about our world. We can also use the information we obtain as we travel across the globe. If God so loves the world, then Christians need to pray for the world. I believe God will have us pray for the world. By so doing we are co-workers with God in the work of soul winning. The Bible says, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that wins souls is wise."*—Proverbs 11:30 (KJV).

"*The fruit of the [uncompromisingly] righteous is a tree of life, and he who*

*is wise captures human lives [for God, as a fisher of men—he gathers and receives them for eternity]."* (AMPC).

If you are a Christian, you are the righteous and should have fruits of life if you are not compromising your faith and beliefs. Then, living a life that is not compromising will help you to do two important ministries—praying and evangelism. We can be the wise who *captures human lives [for God, as a fisher of men—he gathers and receives them for eternity)* through our prayers and evangelistic outreaches.

# Prayer for Healing the Sick and Well-being

The promises of healing fill the entire Bible. Here are some in the Old Testament.

*"If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you."* Exodus 15:26 (NKJV).

*"So, you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. "No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days*-- Exodus 23:25-26
(NKJV).

*"And the LORD will take away from you all sickness and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known but will lay them on all those who hate you.*
Deuteronomy 7:15 (NKJV).

*"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* Psalm 103:2-5 (NKJV).

*"He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds."* Psalm 147:3.
*"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, this is*

*Zion, whom no man seeks after. :6 Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth"*—Jeremiah 30:17.

*"Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth."* Jeremiah 33:6.

In the New Testament we have examples of healing promises and Jesus' healing ministry. Let us look at some of them.

*"Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness…Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."* ~Mat. 10: 1-8.

*"He* (Jesus) *said to them,*

*"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons. They will speak in new tongues. They will pick up snakes with their hands, and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all. They will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it."*—Mark 16:15-19.

*"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. James 5: 13-18 (NIV).*

Healing is part of Jesus holistic ministry which he wants his Church to continue. Healing is part of God's redemptive work for the sons of man. Healing is a ministry that is relevant and possible now. God has power to heal and restore sound health to his people. On many occasions, God uses healing as a steppingstone of people into his saving grace; he heals people even before to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus in their life. Jesus and his Disciples healed and commanded us to heal the sick as well. If Jesus commands us, we do nothing but obey him. We are not the healer, he is! Healing is one of the ministry mandates given to Christians.

***Examples of healings in New Testament***

*"…how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of*
*the devil because God was with him."* ~Acts 10:38

*"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them."* ~Mat. 4: 23-24.

*"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues,*
*proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness"*—Mat. 9: 35.

*"There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up."* ~Acts 9:33-34.

*"The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet in Solomon's Colonnade.* ***13*** *No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the*

*Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed."*—Acts 5:12-16 (NIV)

*"God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and the evil spirits left them."* –Acts 19: 11, 12 (NIV*).*

***How to Pray for Healing***

God calls us to healing ministry. He gives us wisdom and understanding through his Word on how to do it. Reading the Bible, the following factors must be considered when we want to pray for the sick.

1. *The Sovereignty of God.*

God has power to heal whoever he wants to. His decision is final about it. If God has a sovereign reason a person will get healing, let his will be done. My understanding of the Bible shows me that it is not always God's will to heal. Sometimes He has other plans. All things work together for the good purpose of maturing us to look just like Jesus. (Look at Romans 8:28). If a person is not a believer and you pray and he or she is not healed, do not feel bad. Leave that to God. He has the reason for not healing. Jesus did not heal every sick people while here for the same reason you do not see healing on just anyone.

2. *Depend on God's promise for healing as you pray.*

In Jeremiah 1 verse 12 (AMP), we read, "*Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am [actively] watching over My word to fulfill it."*

*"As the rain and snow come down from heaven and stay upon the ground to water the earth and cause the grain to grow and to produce seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry, so also is my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It shall accomplish all I want it to and prosper everywhere I send it.*"—Isaiah 55: 10. 11 (TLB).

Praying for healing should not be done based on our emotions or ego or person gratification. You and I are never the healer; Jesus is! We should never go out of God's Word and promises. He promises healing in his Word and God is ready to make his promises good if we walk with

him in obedience and faith. Stand on the promises of God when praying for healing.

3. *Prayer and Faith in God/Jesus is very important.*

Jesus is seen severally saying to people, "*According to your faith [your trust and confidence in My power and My ability to heal] it will be done to you."*—Mat. 9: 29 (AMP).

There should be active faith from the Christian who is ministering healing and one expects that the person we are praying for demonstrate faith to receive. In case the person cannot show faith due to weakness and the toil of the illness, God uses the faith of his or her family, friends, or whoever is standing by him. If this does not happen, God heals by his mercy and sovereignty. James tells us*, "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven…"*—James 5: 14, 15.

The prayer in/of faith' can be exercised as a healing prayer only with an understanding of God's will and intentions. We need to know that the prayer of faith does not demand a leap into the unknown. It is not positive thinking. It does not mean believing something so strongly that we make it come true—or that God must do what we want. The prayer of faith does not rest on human emotions, feelings, or desires. It is based on the Word of or from God. Emotions do not heal. Shouting does not heal. Jesus heals and our faith in him brings the healing.

4. *Praying and fasting may be needed at times.*

There a story of a man came and knelt before Jesus because Jesus Disciples could not heal his son.

The narrative says, *"Sir, have mercy on my son, for he is mentally deranged and in great trouble, for he often falls into the fire or into the water; so, I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't cure him." Jesus replied, "Oh, you are stubborn, faithless people! How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to me." Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him, and from that moment the boy was well. the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast that demon out? Because of your little faith," Jesus told them. "For if you had faith even as small as a tiny mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move!' and it would go far away. Nothing would be impossible. But this kind of demon won't leave unless you have prayed and gone without food."*—Mat. 17:14-21—TLB.

Two reasons giving by Jesus these healing and deliverance could not take place are, lack of faith and going without food (or fasting). That is very interesting to me. Spiritual power for healing and miracles requires our going without food or fasting? Jesus says so. Perhaps, we may learn the biblical practice of fasting look like and embark on it. We may need to consider our individual health conditions before we go on fasting. Nevertheless, fasting is highly recommended by Jesus for us to have spiritual power that can cast out devils and heal the sick or illness.

5. *There may be need for prayer of agreement or calling church elders or leaders or other Christians.*

*"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them… And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven."—James 5" 14-15.*

"*Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven."*—Mat. 18:19 (NKJV).

Jesus encourages us to work in team, cooperation, or collaboration. This is what is called agreement in the New Testament, especially in prayer. Sometimes we need to work as a team in praying for the sick. We have what I call combined faith or corporate faith and corporate prayer. Calling of elders for prayer connotes a sense of agreement with our leaders and a sense of cooperative faith. We call also on other Christians for this kind of prayer or any other. Jesus also recommends two Christians in agreement can ask God for anything in prayer. Jesus assures us, *it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.* You can be alone ranger in many things as a Christian. However, in prayer you might need the additional faith of others. This combination of faith means a lot to God. It can make God answer our prayers.

6. *There can be time for anointing the sick with oil.*

Anointing oil does not heal. Jesus does. However, Jesus teaches us and expects us to anoint the sick for healing. When Jesus sent the Disciples out to preach, part of what they did was anointing the sick.

"*So, the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to turn from sin. And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil."—Mark 6: 12, 13 (TLB).*

The theology of anointing for healing, miracles, signs, and wonders is heavily debated in Christendom. The Bible is true and *"Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever."* What Jesus did many years ago, he has called all his followers in our time to do now? Why the argument and sheer explanation of God's power away with our theology?

When God says, *"I am Jehovah Rapha",* Some people say miracles and healing had gone with the Apostles of Jesus. What? Let God be true and all else be liars. Look at the words again. "I am Jehovah…" It is never in past tense! If I read, "I was Jehovah," I would have believed the God will claim to serve and pray to is just an historic God like my ancestral gods in my African village. But God is *"I am"*—ever alive, ever real, ever powerful. We can relate with him and trust him for healing. We can also call him to heal us when we are sick. And he heals by many ways. If Jesus says, *"heal the sick…,"* we had better obey that. If Jesus tells you, "*Anoint the sick…"* you had better obey. If the Disciples anointed the sick and the were healed, who make us different? We call the same Lord in prayer, and he is not partial. "*Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."* The anointing is in the name of the Lord and not anyone else. If we respect that God will honor our faith.

7. *Healing and confession of sins*

*"Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."* – James 5: 14-16

Do you pray for someone, and it appears nothing happens? Do you desire healing, and you feel unqualified for prayer? Do you feel your prayers for healing is not getting answer? The problems may be two-folds. First, check your life; do you have unconfessed sins in your life as a minister or Christian and you are praying for someone healing or yours? Check your life. Ask God to examine you and reveal the problem. You may need to repent of your sins to God or confess it openly to your leaders or elders or seasoned Christians. The words of David are as inspiring and effective today as it was when it was written. David says, "*He would not have listened if I had not confessed my sins."* Psalm 66:18 (TLB).

What David said is just what James says in the New Testament. We need to confess our sins to God and ask him for forgiveness. Only

God forgives sins and helps is to live above sins. But there will be times when we should confess our sins to each other. When someone does this, he is not looking for mockery but forgiveness from the person he confesses his sins. He is also looking for spiritual encouragement that develop into cooperative prayer for forgiveness and healing.

Jesus teaches this lesson to us in Matthew 18 verse 15*, "If you brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."*

But someone can ask like Peter, *"how often should I forgive a brother who sins against me? Seven times?" "No!" Jesus replied, "seventy times seven!"*—Mat. 18: 21,22 (TLB).

Even though Jesus was teaching on forgiveness here, it goes to affect our prayer. For if we sin against someone or a Christian we are sinning against God. If we go to that person, it is obvious he will forgive, and God will forgive as well. That is why the Bible says, *"confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed…"* This healing is spiritual and emotional because we are sincere and open to each other. I believe this healing for both sides of the one confessing sins, and the person we sin against. And if there is any other illness, we can use the forum of forgiveness of one another to pray to God for better healing experience.

Remember Jesus also teaches us, *"… if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift…"*—Mat. 5: 23-24 (NIV).

This issue of sinning against one another is as serious as sinning against God. It means if we sin against a Christian brother or sister or anyone else, we are sinning against God. God will not accept our gift, offerings, tithes, donations, whatever name we call it, unless we reconcile by confessing that sin to that person. Sound conservative? It is just Jesus teaching we need for answer prayer.

*8. There may be need for Holy Communion and prayer*

The Holy Communion has many tremendous in effect when Christians participate in it. Christians can use it as a point of contact for the healing of the sick. The Holy Communion represents eating the body of Jesus and drinking his blood—these are all covenant materials for the New Testament. The Body of Jesus was beaten for our healing.

*“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*—Isaiah 53: 5 (KJV).
*“"Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." ... By his wounds you are healed” 1* Peter 2:24, KJV.
The Blood of Jesus was given and shed for our redemption which includes our spiritual salvation and healing for our body.
*“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace…”* Eph. 1:7 (ESV).

The bread and wine of Holy Communion can used to pray for healing based on what they represent do for believers. We need to understand the spiritual application of the Holy Communion. Let us see it.
*“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died”*—1 Cor. 11: 27-31 (ESV).

1. The Holy Communion can be taken unworthily when we live in sin and fail to repent. It is taken worthily when we are right with God. When we take it worthily, we can experience healing, peace, and comfort from the Lord.
2. If we partake of the Holy Communion without discerning the Lord’s Body, we can be *“weak and ill,”* and some can even die. The opposite to this is also true. When we take the Holy Communion with proper understanding of our Lord and his wills, and we live a life pleasing to the Lord, the Eucharist can bring healing, strength, and abundant life.

I serve as a Chaplain-Missionary, and I see how some Christians experience peace, healing (spiritually and physically), comfort, and joy of the Lord when they requested for Holy Communion, and they were ministered to. There are many ways God does his healing for his people. We never should limit God with our theologies and liturgies.

9. *God has many ways he heals people: Do not limit him.*

*“The depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For whom hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever.*
*Amen*.”—Rom. 11: 33-26 (KJV).

God is rich in wisdom and knowledge. His judgments and ways are unfathomable—they are past finding. When it comes to healing the sick, God has the best answer. Here are some things we know about the power of God to heal us when we are sick.

1. *God created all living things with some auto-healing mechanism —healing factors.*

That is why when you cut the back of a tree, it gets “healed” in no time. That is why when a dog has a wound all it must do is to have access to the area and begin to lick with its tongue. Healing comes up without any medicine. When you have a small cut or kitchen accident, you do not just go to doctor’s office. A lot of natural healing takes place sometimes, we are not aware. Sometimes you have some symptoms and before you know, it disappeared. You body fights and healing take place.

2. *God heals by medicine and medical science.*

Prayers for healing are not intended to replace medical attention. Going to a doctor does not invalidate earnest faith. Occasionally, we see some Christians who are afraid that seeking medical help symbolizes a lack of faith. These people need instruction. Medicine and medical science are gifts from Omni-Scent God. If you deny medicine, why do you use computer? If your faith can bring you healing with medication or surgical procedures, go for it. If you need medication or surgery, it is never a sin. Wisdom is better than weapon.

3. *God heals us through joyful disposition and attitude.*

*“Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.”* James did not tell us which kind of trouble. However, we know trouble can be diseases, illness, depression, oppression, etc. The first recommendation for us is prayer. Awesome. Then, there is room for singing songs of praise. We need to see that the Scripture says, happy people should sing songs of praise. Ok. What does this mean? When you are happy and you sing, you use such disposition

to keep mental, emotional, psychological, or pathological illness at bay! Do you
hear what Nehemiah says?

"*Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

Joy bring strength. In other words, when you are joyful, you are full of strength. This means you have wellness—spiritually and physically. One can say you are healthy and remain healthy. No illness. No disease. You better be intentional at making yourself happy, joyful, and prayerful.

In addition, wise Saints in the Bible had told us, "*A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones."*—Proverbs 7: 22 (NKJV).

Other versions say, *"A cheerful heart brings good healing,*
*but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*" (NET).

"*A happy heart is good medicine, and a cheerful mind works*
*healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones"* (AMPC).

One of the reasons God gives the emotion of happiness and joy is to produce healing and wholeness in us. Keep yourself happy and joyful. Be fill with the Holy Spirit and his fruit and you will be experiencing unspeakable peace, joy, strength, good health, and healing when sick comes. Try this for 7 days and feed me back.

4. *God blesses some Christians with "gifts of healings."*

We read in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 9, that some Christians have these gifts (note is written in plural: "healings."). God uses a variety of healing methods—some immediate and some resolving over time. We see healing gifts with Peter. Peter said to the lame man, *"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."* (Acts 3:6). The cripple man walked. Peter's shadow was used as instrument for healing by God. Paul had similar gifts. He prayed for healing and his apron was sent to make contact far away and they were healed. Our Lord Jesus is an epitome of this gifts of healings. God heals through people gifted with this gift. Sometimes hands are laid on the sick:

*"His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery.*
*Paul went into see him and, after prayer, placed hands on him and healed him." (Acts 28: 8).*

Sometimes, a healing occurs immediately, like with the man born blind as we see in John 9; at other times, it takes a while, like when Jesus healed a blind man, and the job was only half-finished: *"I see men as trees walking"*. Jesus then went on to finish the job. (Mark 8:24).

5. *God heals through our praise.*

When we learn to praise God in our prayer, we are provoking him to do wonders and miracles. How? The Bible says, "*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*"—Psalm 22: 3 (KJV).

The NKJV says, *"But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel."* It means God lives as King in your praise. God come to dwell in our praises. When he comes miracles happens. God cannot dwell with you and your praise, and you continue unduly in your sickness and pain.

Moses tells us in Exodus 11 verse 15, "*Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?* Other version says, *"Who is like You among the gods, LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?"* NASB.

Do you want to experience wholeness and keep sickness at bar? Practice some of the free spiritual exercises. Be joyful. Give thanks always. Praise God constantly. Live righteous. Be a genuine worshipper of God. Learn to give.

Wrap everything us with daily prayer to God.

6. *God gives grace to cope instead of healing us.*

Yes, we can pray. Yes, we can be joyful. Yes, we can praise. But when we do not receive healing after all these, what shall we do? God delights to heal, and he heals. God promises healing and performs his promises. God gives gifts for healing and these gifts can manifest and bring healing. We need to look farther than those we see. God gives graces to cope with illness, sickness, and diseases. I am not an advocate of the idea that God punishes us with diseases because we sin. It is possible but not always. When we do not receive healing as we desire and pray, let us know we need to seek God's face to know why. Sometimes, he just gives is grace to cope. He has reason(s) for that we cannot question. Paul had what he called "*thorn in his flesh"* and asked God to remove it. If it not physical sickness, I bet it was psychological or spiritual sickness. Paul prayed to the Lord three times to remove those thorns or to heal him.

What was the Sovereign answer of God? *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."*—2 Cor. 12: 9 (NKJV). What Paul needed was God's grace not "surgery" of any kind. When God says his grace is sufficient, it means stop praying for healing and start praying for grace. I have learnt like Paul that God will sacrifice our body every time if that is what it takes to mature our inner spirit. We spend so much time praying for our bodies to be well. God is much more concerned that we are praying for the maturing of our innermost spirit, which is eternal, than pleading for the healing of bodies which only last for a short time.

## Prayer Petition to God

When I graduated from high school, I was involved in our school old students' association. I was very active, and I was made the secretary of the association. We set out to promote the goodness and progress of the school by whatever good cause we could embark on. I was among the second set of the school. The had just two set of graduates and we started the association. It was an exciting assignment giving to me as the secretary. I did everything a secretary of an association should do as young as I was then. That was in 1982 and 1983.

The principal of the school was still working when I graduated. He was a very strict man and looked moral. Then the bubble burst. The Old Students' Association was told the principal was having affair with some students. Our parents were annoyed and did not know what to do. We took the report and investigated and found out it was true. Then, the Association decided to write a petition to our state government reporting this incidence and asking for removal of the principal. As the secretary of the association and committee I drafted the letter, it was approved and signed by the officers. I was one of the officers who signed the letter. We sent it to appropriate authority and within few weeks our petition was granted, and the principal was removed from our school. The rest is history.

When I became a Christian, I began to learn what is meant to make petition to God and this event reinforces my understanding. Petition is a very strong legal word and action. That is what the Bible says we should do with God. We petition God. Do we write or say our petition to God? What does this mean? A petition is a formal written request,

typically signed by many people, appealing to authority with respect to a particular cause. To petition means to make or present a formal request to (an authority) with respect to a particular cause. Thus, our petition to God is an appeal, a request, asking, a calling on, a begging, an implore, etc. to God for something we need or desire to change.

Petition can be done by a person or group of persons. That means our prayers as petition can be presented to God singly or by group.

A single person can write petition to God.

A family can petition God.

A congregation can present petition to God.

A community to make petition to God.

An entire nation can implore God for a matter of concern in the nation.

People with questionable character hate petition against them. So, Satan hates our petition to God against him. On the positive side, God is interested to receive and treat our petition and grant us what we request for, fight our battle, and defend us, or protect us from what may be humiliating us. God says, "*Come now, and let us reason together,"*—Isaiah 1: 18 (NKJV). Other versions of the Bible render this as,

*"Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob."*—Isaiah 41:21 (KJV).

"*Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King."* (NIV).

"*Present your case," says the LORD. "Submit your arguments," says the King of Jacob."* (BB).

*"Present your case," the LORD says. "Bring forward your evidence," The King of Jacob says."* (NASB).

When we present our petition for God, it must be done with the following items.

1. Confidence or boldness.

*"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. 4: 16 (KJV).*

2. Strong reasons—setting forth our arguments.

"*Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.*"—Isaiah 43:26 (KJV)

*“Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted.” (*NKJV).
“*Meet Me in court, let’s argue our case together; State your cause, so that you may be proved right.”* (NASB). I like the way NASB renders it. When we petition, we go to God’s court to present our case. We must be ready to prove our case base on God’s constitution given to us—the Bible.

3. Humility is a must for us.

Remember we are before the Almighty God. We *must* revere and respect him. He is our Father and our King. “*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”—James 4: 10* (NIV). That is how Moses did it.

4. Faith is a *sine qua non.*

No one goes to God without faith in Him. God is not an abstract thing. He is a living Person, and we relate with him by faith. He is invisible yet we trust him. It is matter of faith through and through. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he, that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—Heb. 11: 6* (KJV).

5. Patient, perseverance, and hope are needed.

When we deal with a natural court, we deal with the judge with patient and hope—expecting a positive out especially when we know we go to court with a case that has substantive evidence. The judge or jury can postpone the hearing and verdict, sometimes unexpectedly and very disappointedly to us. While our hope in God does not disappoint or fail us, our patience must be in place. *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”*—James 1: 3-5 (BRG). Jesus gives us an illustration about perseverance and hope in Luke 18. *“And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint…”* Jesus presents prayer as a petition to a judge. The woman in this story had faith, hope, and perseverance. With her importunity or persistence, she got what she petitioned. Initially, the judge was adamant, but the woman prevailed with her persistence and perseverance.

*“And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And*

*the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bears long with them? I*
*tell you that he will avenge them speedily…"*

Jesus says our Father is a Judge but not a human judge, wicked judge. God will always listen to our petitions and answers us speedily. I love that. And he will give us the best answer—answer that will bring glory to him and peace and comfort to us. So, do not be afraid to write your petition to God. Do not be afraid to tell God what is happening in your life that you do not like or want. Do not be afraid to let God know how and what is messing around in your life. Petition God. Pray. Be hopeful. Be patient. Persevere. Be thankful.

# Prayer of Supplication

Supplication is another form of prayer slightly different from
petition. It is the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly. In petition you present your case and argue with your Father. God graciously allows that. In supplication you beg God earnestly and humbly. Although it is a noun, supplication comes from the Latin verb *supplicare,* which means "to plead humbly." While a supplication is often thought of as a religious prayer (it **is** used 60 times in the Bible), it can logically be applied to any situation in which you must entreat someone in power for help or a favor.

I have a daughter who uses this strategy to request something from me. She will look for time I am in good mood and, by my feet, gently, and humbly, and speak softly as she makes known her request. In most cases, she often prevails over me. When I see the way she presented the request, I discover the best choice for me is to grant her request. She is not forcing me. She is not coaxing me. She is not pressurizing me. She just loving, humbly, and gently makes her requests known to me with hope or high expectation. That is how the prayer of supplication works. God loves an attitude of humility mixed with faith as we pray to him. Here is an example from Old Testament.

- *Solomon's Prayer of Dedication*

*"Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven; and he said: "LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and*

*mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.' And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father."*—1 Kings 8: 22-26 (NKJV),

Notice the posture, attitude, and wordings of Solomon's prayer. He was humble, praising God, recognizing what had done, and what he promised for his father (David). Then he presented to God his request. One can see the sense of dynamic relationship Solomon has with God.

Then next chapter shows us God visited Solomon at night and let him know he answered his prayer of supplication.

*"And the LORD said to him: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel."* 1 Kings 9: 1-5 (NKJV).

- *Daniels' Prayer to Understand Vision*

In Daniel 9 from verse 3 to 8, we read,

*"Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O*

*Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. "O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. "*

Again, have a closer look at the words of Daniel in this prayer. There is no arrogancy. He was humble. He presented his desire after he repented of sins that he probably did not commit. He took the responsibility for the sins of his people. He begged God for forgiveness and asked the Lord for revelation and understanding of a vision that seemed cloudy to him. God answered by sending an angel to him. The angel was Michael. Hear what the angel said to Daniel as answer to his supplication,

*"Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore, consider the matter, and understand the vision…"* Daniel 9: 20-27.

Lots of men and women of God used this prayer of supplication to obtain something from God. Abraham used it in interceding for Lot, Sodom, and Gomorrah. David made lots of supplication. Jeremiah did. Job prayed this form of prayer. Hannah prayed this form of prayer. We see Paul making supplication for churches. This is a significant form of prayer we can learn to embark on. God loves a humble heart. God answers prayer of supplication. This is another dimension of prayer that we can do to enlarge our prayer lifestyle. When we put these arrays of biblical prayers into use, prayer will never be a boring spiritual discipline, neither can will have problem with how to pray. Prayer is never meant to be a monotonous exercise.

*Be careful of nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God—KJV*

# Chapter 7
# Unusual Prayers

*Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God—AMP.*

If you study the Bible carefully, you will see that people of God prayed in different ways—usual and unusual, loud, and silent, short, and long, in their houses and on the street, in places of worship or on the beach. We are all familiar with conventional prayer liturgy and theology. However, we see some prayers in the Bible that I described as unusual—they throw some questions to some beginners in faith and walk with God; they seem to be out of order; they look like what should not be presented to God. It is interesting to know that God is not a casual Person.

God does some unusual things. God does some uncommon things, and he expects us to follow is pattern. When Jesus says, *"go and*

*preach the Gospel…, teaching them to observe all things I have taught you…"* there are lots embedded in that. Jesus did so many unusual things and this includes his unusual prayers. We are going to see and learn or refresh ourselves about praying unusually to the all-wise, all-powerful, and all-knowing God. God answers unusual prayers.

# Imprecatory Prayer

Imprecatory prayer is one of the unusual prayers in the Bible. When I was fresh in the seminary and this topic was introduced by one of my professors, the entire class was flabbergasted. How could Christian pray that kind of prayer? As I grow in the knowledge of God and understanding the Word of God, I see that there is a place for this kind of prayer for Christians. Does God
answer such prayers? Absolutely yes!

Etymology of the word imprecatory is from the Latin *in-* + *precari,* which come to English word to pray: *imprecor,* means to call upon, to invoke on a person. Or from a Latin word meaning to "invoke evil" or "bring down bad spirits upon." Again, to some of us in the school and practice of love, such a prayer looks weird and out of place. But wait, let us see it together. Imprecation has been described as the act of calling down a curse that evokes evil on someone**.** The idea is if you really do not like someone you can shout out an imprecation at them. More than simply the use of bad language (although that can be involved, too), an *imprecation* is a damning curse wishing them nothing but ill.

### *Imprecatory Prayer in the Old Testament*

From the Old Testament, we see the occurrences of imprecatory prayers. Imprecations are seen in the prophetic literature. In the book of Hosea, we some of these imprecations that made people to call Hosea the prophet of doom.

*Prophet Hosea*

*"Give them, O LORD—what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels. Ephraim is stricken; their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit. Even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death. My God will reject*

*them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations."*— Hosea 9:14-17 (ESV).

Why would this prophet utter this kind of statement of ill-wishes to God's people? The simple answer is, "*My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations."*

I noticed that even some parents go that direction when a child becomes so disobedient and rebellious. Some even go as far as to disown their children because of the unbecoming lifestyle. Our lifestyle can made God to allow curse on us instead of blessing. Did God rebuke Hosea for these imprecations? No. In fact what he said apparently come to pass because the people did not repent.

*Prophet Micah*

Micah had similar imprecatory prayers. Look at this example from this prophet.

*"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets."*—Micah 7: 1, 8-10 (KJV).

If you read the entire book, you will see what brought about this "holy anger" that inspired the imprecations. The prophet firstly, cursed himself in verse one, and showed us how he would bear the indignation from the Lord. He then goes ahead to describe the wickedness around him. During all these his enemy was mocking him. He ended up cursing them or evoking ill will on them. Did God hear Micah? The story of the people he

was cursing indicated that.

*Prophet Jeremiah*

Prophet Jeremiah also use these imprecatory topoi. In Jeremiah 18:18-23, we see Jeremiah's imprecatory prayer and reasons for it.

*"Then they said, "Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the divine word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with our tongue and let us give no heed to any of his words." Do give heed to me,*

*O Lord, and listen to what my opponents are saying! Should good be repaid with evil? For they have dug a pit for me. Remember how I stood before You to speak good on their behalf, so as to turn away Your wrath from them. Therefore, give their children over to famine and deliver them up to the power of the sword; And let their wives become childless and widowed. Let their men also be smitten to death, their young men struck down by the sword in battle. May an outcry be heard from their houses, When You suddenly bring raiders upon them; For they have dug a pit to capture me, And hidden snares for my feet. Yet You, O Lord, know All their deadly designs against me; Do not forgive their iniquity or blot out their sin from Your sight. But may they be overthrown before You; Deal with them in the time of Your anger![19]*

In another place, Jeremiah said,

"*Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise. They keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it now be fulfilled!" I have not run away from being your shepherd; you know I have not desired the day of despair. What passes my lips is open before you. Do not be a terror to me; you are my refuge in the day of disaster. Let my persecutors be put to shame, but keep me from shame, let them be terrified, but keep me from terror. Bring on them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction."*—Jeremiah 17: 13-18 (NIV).

Is Jeremiah a man of God? Absolutely yes. Is he a prophet of God? Right. Why should a man of God utter should words or pray such prayer? Read the text again. The prophet reasons are obvious. Some folks were mocking him. They were persecuting him. They were terrifying him. They were not making life and ministry easy for him. I want to say, Jeremiah cannot fight physically. So, he resorted to spiritual fight—imprecations!

*Prophet Moses*

Moses used imprecations! For Moses, obedience to the Lord brings blessing. Disobedience to the Lord will evoke curses which he spelt out in Deuteronomy chapter 28. Here a part of that conditional imprecation.

"*If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name—the LORD your God—the LORD will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants, harsh and prolonged disasters, and severe and lingering*

*illnesses. He will bring on you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you. The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed. You who were as numerous as the stars in the sky will be left but few because you did not obey the LORD your God. Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess. "*

Moses is shown describing a litany of curses that would befall the Israelites for rebelliousness. Many of the same curses were later warned about by Joshua some 100 years after Moses's death.

*King David*

David engaged imprecations over his enemies. In David's imprecatory Psalms, we see how he invoked judgment, calamity, or curses upon his enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God. As a sample, Psalm 69:24 states toward God, "*Pour out Your indignation on them, and let Your burning anger overtake them."* Those in which the psalmist pronounces a curse over are the enemies of God and God's people. When David prays, *"May no one be left to show him kindness, may no one look after his orphans, may his family die out, its name disappears in one generation,"* he was praying for his enemies. (Psalm 109:12-13). Such imprecations should be the ardent expressions of a mind in anguish and written under divine inspiration. They were not only statements of the human author, asking God to punish evildoers, but in prophetic terms foretold the divine intention, i.e., what God was going to do to those who resisted his will. As a sample, Psalm 69:24 states toward God, *"Pour out Your indignation on them, and let Your burning anger overtake them."* Other major imprecatory Psalms include, Psalm 69, 109, 139, etc.

***Imprecation in the New Testament***

The New Testament narrations contain of imprecations.

*Jesus used imprecations.*

We see Jesus Christ, the Lord quoting from Psalm 69 in the Gospel of John 15 and verse 25*; "But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason"*.

In Matthew 23:13, Jesus said, *"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye*

*neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."* The word *woe* means *curse!* Jesus repeated similar thing in Matthew 26:23–24.

*"And he answered and said, He that dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born."*

Every careful student of the New Testament knows the end of the person who betrayed Jesus.

*Apostle Paul on imprecatory prayer.*

1. In Romans 11:9-10, Paul was citing Psalm, saying,

*"And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."* And in Roman 15 verse 3, Paul says, "*For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."*

This verse was like a some of the imprecations that were prophetic but finds fulfilment in Jesus.

2. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:22, "*If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."*
3. *In Galatians 1:8–9, Paul says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preaches any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." In Galatians 5:12, Paul says, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you."*
4. *In 2 Timothy 4:14, Paul writes of a man who made things hard for him. His name is Alexander the coppersmith. Paul says, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: The Lord reward him according to his works."*
5. *John the Beloved Apostle. In Revelation 6:10, John tells us, "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O Lord, holy and*

*true, dost thou do not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”*

We need to remember that *"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."* The Bible is not against Christians using imprecation. It must be in context of our experiences as Christians.

***Reasons to Pray the Imprecatory Psalms***

The imprecatory (or cursing or vengeance) Psalms are probably the most difficult obstacle some Christians face when taking up the Psalms as their own prayers. Benjamin Kandt gave a us a carefully sought reasons why Christians can use imprecatory prayers. This is a summary.

1. Jesus taught us in the Lord's Pattern Prayer teaches us to pray similarly: "*Your kingdom come; your will be on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). The coming of the Kingdom includes the conquering of the King's enemies through our prayer warfare (2 Thess. 1:5–12).
2. Christians have warfare to do. Since "*we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but…against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12).
   Therefore, we can pray them against Satan and his legions.
3. Jesus bore the vengeance that the Psalms asked for. Bonhoeffer noted, "The imprecatory Psalm leads to the cross of Jesus..." In this way the crucified Jesus teaches us to pray the imprecatory psalms correctly.
4. Imprecatory prayer can be self-applied. We can pray them in self-imprecation*, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live"* (Romans 8:13), asking the Spirit to carry on his war against the flesh within us, until everything that opposes God is destroyed.
5. We have examples of imprecatory prayers in both Old Testament and New Testament. For example, the saints in heaven: *"They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* (Rev. 6:10).
6. Paul prayed imprecatory prayers: *"If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!"* (1 Cor. 16:22) *"If*

*anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed*" (Gal 1:9).

7. Because in a world of topsy-turvy justice. True justices come the above through our imprecations. "Imprecations are appeals to the Judge of the earth to play the part of Judge"—Peter Leithart.
8. Praying the imprecatory Psalms leaves vengeance up to God. In the same breath, Paul teaches us to *"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them" …* he also says, *"never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God"* (Romans 12:14,19).
9. Through imprecations, we show our trust in God who says, *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* (Romans 12:19), However, we need to ask him.
10. Imprecatory Psalms are the songs of the oppressed, always prayed from a position of vulnerability and weakness, not dominance or triumphalism.
11. To curse enemies does not necessarily mean hell. For David, it primarily meant death, ill-health, sufferings, etc.
12. We are ultimately praying against God's enemies, not our own personal vendettas or battles.
13. We are simply asking God to keep his covenant promises to Abraham and his offspring: *"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gen 12:3).
    We are the inheritors of this promise to bless and to curse: *"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise*" (Gal 3:29).
14. We are following Jesus' example who *"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly"* (1 Peter 2:23).
15. As James Hamilton points out, a central theme in the Bible is God's glory in salvation through judgement. We are certainly allowed to pray for this.
16. Because with social justice, we must acknowledge that the liberation of sex slaves comes at the incarceration of the enslavers, the lifting of the poor is the bringing down of their oppressors, equality for minorities includes penalty for hate crimes. This is what

we are praying for in the imprecatory Psalms.

17. Because cutting out parts of the Bible is more like Jefferson than Jesus. Refusing to pray the entire psalter amounts to a rudimentary form of Neo-Marcionism, a heresy condemned by the early Church.
18. It would be hard to divide the most beloved of the Psalms from the curses. "In almost every case the imprecation that we find objectionable sits alongside a spirituality that we would envy, as in Psalm 139" *(Alec Motyer, in Gordon Wenham's* The Psalter Reclaimed*, p. 134*).
19. We are not taking matters into our own hands but rather expressing trust in the God who *"works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed" (P*s. 103:6).
20. It must be understood that our prayers for Jesus' return imply imprecations. We read, "*the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might"* (2 Thess. 1:7–9); this will result *in "blood (flowing) from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 184 miles"* (Revelation 14:20).
21. Praying imprecatory Psalms may be the way that early Christians had *"steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring*" since *"God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you"* (2 Thessalonians 1:4–6).
22. The Psalms would not be a true mirror of the human soul without portraying our anger and rage. "The Psalms explore the full gamut of human experience from rage to hope. Indeed, it would be very strange if such a robust spirituality lacked such a dimension of vengeance, for we would conclude that just at the crucial point, robustness had turned to cowardice and propriety" *(*Walter Brueggemann*, Praying the Psalms,* 63*).*

***How to Pray Imprecatory Psalms***[20]

*First,* pray them first against Satan.
*Second*, pray them against your sinful nature.
*Third,* pray them against the world systems of corruption and oppression.
*Then,* pray them lastly against enemies, God's enemies then yours.

# Prayer for Enemies

Another unusual prayer we find in the Bible is praying for our enemies. Praying for our enemies is akin to imprecatory prayers. The little difference is imprecatory prayer can be applied to oneself and the enemies.

- ***Who are our enemies?***

Jesus says, *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ..."*—Mat. 5:44.
This thought helps us to know the reality of enemies in our life. What kind of prayer we should pray for our enemies? Jesus did not tell us directly, but other parts of the inspired Word tell us. First, who are these enemies? Let itemize them.

1. *Spiritual enemies.*

*"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*—Eph. 6:12.
We see here, our enemies are not primarily humans. They are evil spirits or demons and Satan. They manifest as principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts in heavenly places. In some contexts, they are witches, wizards, wicca, familiar spirits, seductive spirits, ancestral spirits, any spirit against the God and his people.

2. *Human enemies*

There are situations we see human beings making themselves enemies of others. For example,

a. the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus time made themselves enemies of Jesus.
b. Alexander the coppersmith made himself enemy of Paul Apostle.
c. Saul made himself the enemy of David.
d. We have seen in our time a mother-in-law becoming an

enemy of daughter-in-law.

e. Siblings can become enemies of one another. Jesus says, "*And a person's enemies will be those of his own household."* (Mat. 10:36).
f. We have seen some races constituting enemy of other races. Some believe they are *"white supremacists*" and therefore see others races and inferior and their enemies. This is the reason we have genocide or ethnic cleansing in some countries. This is the reason many people hate others and can do anything to eliminate.

*3. Enemy because of religions*

We have seen some religion adherent seeing other religion adherent as enemy because of differences in faith and practices. There are so many religions in our world and if your religion does not teach tolerance and accommodation or love for other people despite their religion, you are in real problem. There are some kinds of denominational enemies. Here some denominations see others as their enemies; some religious sects see others as their enemy. The list is on and on.

*4. Political enemies*

As good as democracy looks for some people and nations, it creates lots of political enemies. One party becomes an enemy of another party. Politicians become enemies of other politicians, nations becoming enemies due to political ideologies, etc. We can keep a long list of how human beings have been creating enmity with one another. It is unthinkable and total absurdity when one sees how this evolves.

Evidentially, for Christians, praying for the enemies is nothing but talking to God about your enemies who are making life unbearable to and for us. Paul says, *"God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you"* (2 Thessalonians 1:4–6). In 2 Timothy 4:14, Paul writes of a man who made things hard for him. His name is Alexander the coppersmith. Paul says*, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: The Lord reward him according to his works."*

Prophet Jeremiah says*. "Let my persecutors be put to shame, but keep me from shame, let them be terrified, but keep me from terror. Bring on them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction."*—Jeremiah 17: 13-18 (NIV).

Jesus says, *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you,*

*do good to them that hate you,* *and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; ...”*—Mat. 5:44.

What does this mean? This kind of love is what I call “judgmental love.” Proverbs 25 verse 21-24 says, *“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.”*

What kind of reward God gives to those who care for their enemy? The reward of labor of love; the reward of bearing pain and providing care for someone who is against you. What kind of reward God gives to your enemies? King Solomon says, “… *heap coals of fire upon his head…”* Thus, act of showing love to our enemies is imprecatory. It brings judgment on them. When Jesus says we should pray for our enemies, I do not believe he meant we ordinarily wish them good luck, for our good deed heaps coal of fire on them. There are times we can do this loving but judgmental acts. And there are other times we stand to fight our enemies in imprecatory prayers. Our prayer for enemies will be depending on our condition and situation. Jesus never prayed “God bless you” to his betrayal! Paul never released blessings on Alexander the coppersmith. Whichever way we look at it, God will rather use your prayers, no matter how beautiful it, to judge your enemies just as he uses your good deeds of providing food and drink, to heap coal of fire on your enemies.

Let us remember, when Aaron and Mariam and some Israelites constituted enemies to Moses in the wilderness, Moses prayed for them! In Numbers 16 verse 1 and 2 and 3.

*“Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them… And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face…”*

Moses prayed. Yes! Moses prayed for his *“enemies.”*

*"And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them… "And Moses said, hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me…"But if the LORD makes a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."* Numbers 16: 29-33 (KJV).

Indeed, we can pray for our enemies. How?

1. Pray for their change of heart. "*The Lord does not delay and is not tardy or slow about what He promises, according to some people's conception of slowness, but He is long-suffering (extraordinarily patient) toward you, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should turn to repentance."*—2 Peter 3: 9 (AMPC).
2. *Pray for grace to endure. In 1 Peter 2:23, "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."*
3. Pray for justice or judgment! Imprecatory prayer. *"Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me!"*—Psalm 35: 1 (AMPC).
4. Pray for vengeance from God. '*Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* (Romans 12:19),

Please, learn to pray for your enemies according to your situation.

# Prayer for Special Situations and Conditions

There are many cases or situations or conditions in human experience that
require Christian prayer. I am a Chaplain and I see these situations and conditions every day. There are medical conditions, emotional and spiritual experiences, financial and economic hardship, relational challenges, family matters, professional problems, many negative social situations, etc. that Christians can be called on to pray or intercede. We will examine some here.

### *End-of-Life Prayer*

As a chaplain in hospices and hospitals, I have met families who have their loved one at the end-of-life. Some have terminal diseases and have been told by their doctors the number of weeks, days, or months they can live. It is emotionally traumatic and humanly painful when you are told when you may die. It seems to me in my experience as a spiritual care provider, no one loves to hear when he would die. We see death as a natural phenomenon that no one should tell us when it will come. Realistically, death comes to all and in various ways, under different circumstances, and conditions. Death is inevitable, so, whether we are told by a physician, or it comes naturally, we all will experience death.

It may look hard to pray for a sick person at the point of death. Some persons may be comatose, others may be unconscious and non-verbal. Some may lose vocal capacity but can see and hear, other may not be able to see again. Some are very frail and fragile due to the toil of the illness. I have seen folks who told me, “I do not know why God still keeps me here; I wish a die or pass away.” I have seen folks who are begging God to take their life because they feel they are done with life. Dying process takes different shape and shade for different persons. Some are calm other may be agitating. Some can be so disoriented while others are oriented and peaceful. How do Christians who is not a chaplain or minister pray for this uncommon situation. It is humane to hear someone has passed away and you go to mourn with the family. It is another ball game to witness someone passing through dying stage. It gives me mixed feelings—the feeling of hope if the person is a Christian (my biblical worldview), and that of sadness for losing someone; the feeling that the person is transitioning from present world pain to the life beyond the cloud. If the person is a Christian, I feel hope of resurrection

and eternal life. If the person does mot know Jesus, I have sad and painful feeling because we may not see again in eternity. How do one pray in this situation?

There are many theories of dying process. This is not the place for that. We are looking at how a Christian can pray for someone at his or her end-of-life. The American Psychological Association says, “Death and dying can be stressful for dying people, their loved ones and care-givers. Psychologists can help. They can assess mood, mental functioning and pain; treat depression, anxiety and other mental health problems; provide end-of-life counseling to the dying and their families; and advocate for good medical care.” Even if many Christians are not psychologists, they can borrow leaf from this idea. Christians can provide end-of-life counseling and prayer for the dying person and their families. The problem is that many Christians never prepare for this ministry or are not trained to handle such
incidences.

In whatever condition or stage a dying person is, there are many things a Christian can do so support. There are five senses in human body. Each of the senses fades away as one is undergoing dying process. Scientific research has told us that hearing is one of the last senses to lapse before death. Often before death, people will lapse into a coma. A coma is a deep state of unconsciousness in which a person cannot be aroused. Persons in a coma may still hear what is said even when they no longer respond. Being there at the end of life for anybody calls us to remember that hearing is the last sense to go in the dying process. This means we should never assume the person is unable to hear you. We can therefore talk to the dying one as if they can hear you, even if they appear to be unconscious or restless. One of the studies to investigate hearing in palliative care patients who are close to death provides evidence that some may still be able to hear while in an unresponsive state. Electroencephalography (EEG) was used to measure the dying brain's response to sound. The findings may help family and friends bring comfort to
a person in their final moments.[21] Details is hard to know.

So, when I can be with a dying person, I speak to them at a close range—near their ears—hoping they hear me. I pray for comfort and for God’s mercy. I tell them I love them, and their family love them. I ask the

family to speak to them as close as they can be and express their love. If there is any problem, they want to speak about they can say it and ask for forgiveness—if that is needed. As a minster of the Gospel, I have the opportunity of supporting someone going through dying process and their families. It is not a pleasant experience.

What does a Christian, or minister pray for in this situation? How does chaplain provide ministry?

1. Christians, minister, or chaplain provides emotional support through hopeful and encouraging words, caring disposition, unjudgmental words and actions.
2. Christians, minister, or chaplain provides therapeutic presence —just get to the person or family and stay with them without judging them. Sometimes, silence is the best ministration.
3. Christian, minister, or chaplain offers faith-based prayer. Prayer is not

for healing or magical happenings. The Christians believe God heals. God can raise the dead. God can transform life. And God allows people to pass away too. God allows people not to experience the miracle of healing but the miracle of death. Other faith may believe differently and that is ok for them.

4. Christian, minister, or chaplain provide bereavement counseling to the family of the deceased person. Sometimes this begins early before the death. We call this anticipatory grief counseling. We can begin praying and comforting before someone passes away. And we continue with the prayer during the mourning period and over some period. At this time of grief and mourning prayer is very therapeutic. Presence is therapeutic. Words of encouragement and comfort are therapeutic. Love and caring are very therapeutic.

Even though ministers of the Gospel and Chaplains are trained in pastoral care, any seasoned Christian can be an instrument of prayer to God and to bring comfort and peace and coping skills to anyone grieving or mourning. It is another dimension of prayer we must be open to as Christians. The Bible says in the book of Romans 12:15. "*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."* NIV.
*"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."* NASB.
"*Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who wee*p."

NLT.
We can rejoice prayerfully and mourn or weep prayerfully.
We can pour out your grief.
We can ask God for comfort.
We can pray for healing—emotionally, spiritually, physically.
We can ask God for peace.
We can ask God for hope.
We can ask God for courage.
We can ask God for grace to cope at such a hard period.

***Praying for Alzheimer and Dementia***

Praying for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or dementia could be very challenging. Medical scientists have defined and described this illness in concise was. An understanding of the condition can help Christians know how to pray or present a therapeutic presence to patients and family members.

Here is the description of dementia.

Alzheimer or dementia is a progressive disease that destroys memory and other important mental functions. Brain cell connections and the cells themselves degenerate and die, eventually destroying memory and other important mental functions. Memory loss and confusion are the main symptoms. It is an irreversible, progressive brain disorder that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills, and, eventually, the ability to carry out the simplest tasks. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia — a continuous decline in thinking, behavioral and social skills that affects a person's ability to function independently. In most people with Alzheimer's, symptoms first appear in their mid-60s. It is a progressive neurologic disorder that causes the brain to shrink (atrophy) and brain cells to die. No cure exists, but medications and management strategies may temporarily improve symptoms. [22],[23]

How can a Christian or gospel minister or chaplain pray for someone whose brain is so degenerate as to affect his memory, basic mental functions; with confusion and poor thinking skills; with inability to carry out simplest tasks; with lack of social and behavioral skills that make the person unable to function independently? Here are some practical tips (of what I have learned and practiced in my profession).

1. *Do everything in faith and by faith.*

This is important because the person may not be able to comprehend what you are doing or saying, but God does. Remember, *"… without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*—Heb. 11: 6 (NKJV). The is the divine principle or truth to rely on. God honors our faith in him when we have such a situation, especially someone who has no faculty to process thoughts again.

2. *Be empathetic and compassionate.*

Like Jesus, let empathy and compassion move you to help the person in this condition. Imagine speaking words to someone and all he or she could do is to stare at you or not pay attention but doing something different. It is never such person's fault. Be empathetic; put yourself in such person's shoe. Be compassionate. Let your love go beyond what you are seeing. Compassion will motivate you to go out of their way to help the physical, mental, or emotional pains of another and themselves. Compassion is often regarded as having sensitivity, which is an emotional aspect to suffering. Compassion and empathy make me weep when I do not plan or think I can do so.

3. *Be present with such people.*

The presence ministry is a must for people with dementia. What else can one do? This person cannot comprehend your heartfelt prayer of faith. He cannot understand the Bible you are reading. Sometimes, they cannot fully enjoy the song or music you are playing. But one thing they can do; they can see you and your touch of love; you look of compassion; your non-judgmental presence, your just-be-there attitude to support. Is not this what Jesus saying to us, "… *lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world…"* To do this, one must not be a hasty person. One must not be a multi-task person. When you are with dementia person, do not do anything else except to be with that person. I describe this as therapeutic presence. You are like a vigilante person. With you calm and loving presence, they can use the little memory and sense in them to see and understand your love and concern. Your presence is equal to your prayers. Your presence is your care and love. Your presence is the best at most times.

4. *Provide some music or songs to those who love that.*

Before the onset and full diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, some persons love music or songs. Remember, music and songs can be some kinds of

prayer depending on the content and inspiration behind them. Some people love hymnals, church music, Christian songs, songs on instruments, or the melody. I do not know why the desire and appetite of music or song lingers in some persons who have dementia. Ask for the songs they love and play on tape or in video, they response pleasant and stick to it. Such songs provide some emotional and spiritual therapy we may not be able to measure or quantified. Research shows us that long after many abilities have slipped away, music and prayer can sometimes remain. Both are learned early in life and have so many repetitions in the years that follow, that a person even in the later stages of Alzheimer's can spontaneously participate.

5. *Prayers are therapeutic*

God can do all things. He is Omnipotent. He can heal any disease if he so desires to do so. As follower of Jesus, I believe in divine healing and health. I do pray for healing with people, and I have seen God healing them. At other times, the healing does not come the way humans think or pray for.

i. Healing can be spiritual—salvation, deliverance, and hope of life beyond here.
ii. Healing can be miraculous act of God on our physical body, restoring good health and strength or parts of the body.
iii. Healing can be the manifestation of comfort and peace despite the presence of the disease condition.
iv. Healing can be God providing coping skill and wants is to say, "thy will be done, oh Lord."
v. Healing can be God expecting us to say, "your grace is sufficient for me…."
vi. Healing can be through medical science—medications, use of lenses to see, hearing aid, using special sign languages to communicate, technological methods to overcome conditions, surgery, or physical therapy or physical exercise.
vii. Some people will not receive healing or any kind for reasons known to God. *"There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains*

> *and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground."*—Heb. 11: 34-38 (NIV).

What is so important to such people that we must learn from is that *"these were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."*—Heb. 11: 39, 40.

Having this in mind will help us to have a balance theology of healing. If we pray and nothing happens, learn to say, *"thy will be done oh Lord."*

Prayer, like music**,** can often reach the deepest part of a person's soul. It is no different for someone with Alzheimer's Disease. How do we pray with someone who has Alzheimer's? Familiarity with the prayer is a key element for helping an Alzheimer's patient. For example, for a Catholic with Alzheimer's disease, the Rosary can be a comforting prayer simply because it uses three familiar prayers that are central to Catholics: 1) the Our Father, 2) Hail Mary and 3) Glory Be… The Rosary is a prayer form that can be effective in any Catholic Christian tradition, but it could be difficult for an Alzheimer's patient to learn the Hail Mary. What religious tradition does a person with Alzheimer's come from? What might she/he have prayed as a child? Using such tradition to support will go a long way providing comfort and peace.

6. *Reading Bible and books*

There are older patients whose childhoods were spent reading books and the Bible. Such persons might find great comfort in scriptures, Gospels or Psalms. This can be read by some who still can do so. To others, someone can read for them trusting they are able to understand what they hear. At some other times, this text can be heard through audio-visual methods. Some folks have benefitted a lot from such practical ways. Perhaps there is an old childhood prayer book around that is marked with favorite prayers. They might offer some assurance or peace, especially if

read by a familiar voice.

7. *Therapeutic touches may be helpful*

The power of touches is not fully comprehended by mankind. Touches can be
therapeutic to some; however, others do not like it. Try to understand that and even be courageous enough to ask the question, can I touch you? Touch is therapeutic to me! I am a person who appreciates touch and like to touch (appropriately). For persons with Alzheimer's disease condition, this could be very helpful. Touch is also an important part of praying with an Alzheimer's patient, especially as communication becomes more difficult. If we place a chair next to the bed while praying, we can hold a hand, squeeze a shoulder, or caress a face. Touch can be a "doorway" for letting words through when someone cannot concentrate for long. Jesus teaches us to engage the power of touch with his examples in the Gospels. "*And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with diverse diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them."* (Luke 4:40—ASV).
We see this often with Jesus as he ministered healing and comfort to people. Touches can be in form of laying of hands, hugging, embracing, eye contacts, holding someone hands, placing hands on shoulders, etc.

8. *Praying using religious imagery.*

Using religious imagery can be a powerful tool for those who have a debilitating disease. A family member might stare or simply cling to a religious image. Sacred objects can give a "spiritual" context to a conversation or time together. It can be anything from holy water we bless, blessed palm branches we hold or fold into crosses, a medal or scapular we wear or pin on, a crucifix or cross we place before us. Holy cards with images of Jesus, Mary or the saints can be important objects to take out or hold to some folks. They might already be in our loved one's prayer book. In the right setting, a lit candle or even incense can draw people deep into the faith memory of many people. Beginning and ending a "prayer time" with any of these "sacramental" acts or symbols can signify, deep in one's spiritual memory, that something holy is beginning or ending.[24]

*Examples of prayers for dementia persons*

Palms 46 verse 10 says, "*Be still, and know that I am God…"* Having the assurance that God is in control, we can remain still or steadfast in faith and pray like this, "Father, please help_____ (insert his or her

names if you know them) who is going through this deterioration of health. Lord they ---- not understand why they have this condition, but I pray that in the unknown mysteries of the world they can remain still and know that You are God. Dementia does not take away their identity in You, for You are the Good a Shepherd, we are Your sheep and Your child. Thank You for Your tender mercies towards those with this condition, we pray, in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen."

Isaiah 26 verse 3 says, *"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you."* We can pray like this, "Dear Lord, your Word says that you will keep the minds of those mind are fixed on you in perfect peace. At times it is hard to recollect certain things, and is a struggle to push through this condition, but we thank you for being our everlasting peace. We pray that you are always at the center of our mind, because when we have you, we have everything. Your divine peace is what surpasses all understanding, Amen."

"Matchless God, we give you thanks because you are good, and your mercies endure forever. Lord you are our Good Father, our Light in the darkness; everything good comes from you above! The joy that you have given us is the medicine to my heart. Lord we pray for (_____) suffering from dementia and we pray against a broken spirit in this difficult time because that is like dry bones. Have your divine way in us, in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen."

Psalms 61 verses 1 and 2, *"Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth, I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I."*

We can pray like this, "Dear Savior, from the end of the earth we will cry out to you. When our heart is overwhelmed lead us to the rock that is higher than us. We cast all our fears onto you, we cast our anxieties onto you and receive your spirit within us. We cannot face this dementia without you, as not having you would be like having a broken leg without a cast. Savior we know you hear our cries; you are the rock that is higher than us"

1 Peter 5 verse 7 says, "*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."* We can pray like this. "Eternal God, we cast all our cares upon you because you care for us. Lord, we adore you because you want our burdens to be light. You will not let us face dementia alone, because

you are always with us. Father we pray that in this journey we remember that although people may not understand, you do. You see our heart and our mind clearer than anyone else or any doctor. You are our best friend and the greatest physician; we love you Lord. In the name of your Son, Jesus we pray. Amen."

We can also pray like this, "Pour your grace, O loving God, upon all
suffering with dementia. It is frustrating not to find a word; it is fearful to lose one's memories. Bless them with patience, a loving and supporting family, and days of hope and accomplishment. In Christ's name we pray. Amen"

We need to remember that the Holy Spirit will lead us to pray aright even when we do not have the words to say. As we listen and wait on him, he will always help us to pray according to the will of God for person who have dementia.

***Praying for Individuals with Mental Health Conditions (MHC)***

What is a mental health condition? The National Alliance on Mental illness defines MHC as a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others[25]. Mental health is a wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior. Examples are clinical depression, anxiety, bipolar, attention-deficient-hyperactivities disorders, dementia or Alzheimer disease, Schizophrenia, Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), autistic spectrum disorder. There may be others not listed here. It appears mental health conditions are increasing daily in our society, and this calls for Christians to prepare to help those who are experiencing such conditions. We cannot pretend we do not see them, or that they do not touch our life.

There are many psychological, psychotherapy, and psychiatric approaches to care for these conditions. It is my believe that the spiritual care will be a great layer—a good layer for that matter—if Christians take up the challenge. While MHC can be somatic in origin, it can also be spiritual, psychic, mental or combination of all these factors. Incidentally, spiritual inclined MHC will not response to any other therapy than spiritual care.

Satanic attacks do not need medicine or psychological counseling but

spiritual therapy. Prayer is one of the spiritual therapies that Christians can make use of to help individuals with MHC. How do we pray for individuals with MHC?

Certain things must be considered practically when it comes to MHC.

First, MHC does not mean someone is just "crazy." No! No normal person wants to be acting crazy. For some, it is congenital—they were born with MHC. To others, life happens to them, and they are entangled by the snare of MHC. For instance, look at the military person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Or look at folks who had auto crashes or industrial accidents or domestic accidents that affect their life.

Second, MHC is not a sign of weakness. The consequences of MHC are weakness of body and brain. If people affected are properly helped, they

can regain their strength.

Third, MHC can be treated medically and psychologically. There are many ways scientifically to help persons with MHC. There are clinical and non-clinical therapies. What kills people most is to hide the conditions and prevent or deny it is not there. The early the discovery and cry for help, the much better the help to receive. MHC happens to all races and cultures. MHC do not discriminate any color or race.

Fourth, MHC can be placed in God's Hands. We have

place so much emphasis on medical and psychological treatments. We place premium on clinical and some non-clinical treatments. Our society rely so much on science that we neglect spiritual care. Jesus shows us he has power over spiritually inclined MHC. Jesus says, *"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."* (Mat. 12: 28). Jesus teaches us to pray for the sick and those who have MHC that are satanically induced. Jesus says to his followers *"In my name shall they cast out devils…"* (Mark 16: 17). From my experience as a Pastor and Chaplain, some MHC are spiritual —demonic, satanic, and initiated and controlled by power of darkness. These are power beyond ordinary folks. While other approaches of treatments are encouraged, spiritual care like prayer and fasting for exorcism or deliverance from the power of darkness should not be winked at. As a Christian pastor when I perceived any manifestation of MHC is spiritual, I tried to handle it spiritually in prayer. I believe any Christian can do this to any person with MHC.

## Praying for Prisoners

Isaiah 61:1 tells us*, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners."*

Christians have the Holy Spirit in their life do the following ministries.

1. to bring good news to those who are oppressed.
2. to bind the hearts of some that are broken.
3. to proclaim freedom or liberty for those in captivity—spiritual and physical.
4. to pray for the release of those who are in prisons—spiritual and physical prisons.

I am glad the last part mention *"the release to the prisoners*." So, we can pray for the release of people who are in prisons. To be in prison can mean being in spiritual prison or bondage of the devil. That is one thing we are called to do: ministering the release for those in spiritual prison. We do this through prayer in the name of Jesus. Jesus tells us to cast out devil in his name. That is releasing the prisoners.

Also, we can help those in physical prisons or jails. We should be very careful and not make us supreme judge on other people in jail and hope they rot and decay there. God may have other plans for them when he releases them. Our carnal nature will tell us those in prisons are receiving the rewards of the sins or crimes. While we may be right, God may have some higher and better thoughts and plan for such people. Jesus gives us description of the day of judgment when he shall return to reward his own people. Rewarding will be based on what we did for others and his Kingdom while we are here. If someone is not in his Kingdom by trusting him, such a person is not saved
and counted as a goat or wicked person. Hear what the Lord says, "*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: … I was in prison, and you came to me*."—Mat 25: 36.

You probably have heard of prison ministry by some Christian churches. I am actively in such ministry, and I understand what it is. The stigmatization of people in prison by those who are outside is palpable. We tend to re-judge them after the law has already judged and

condemned them. What Jesus expects of us is compassion, mercy, empathy and not judging them. Does it not look paradoxical that God can allow some people to have prison experience for a reason? Jesus says, *"I was in prison, and you came to me"* Can God be in jail? Yes. How? When any of his children is in jail God is in jail with him. Some may be in jail as unbeliever and God uses the jail to bring him or her into his Kingdom. How can that happen? When Christians visits prisoners; when Christians pray for prisoners, when Christians go to meet God in jail by virtue of any of his children in jail. Christians are not immune from jail. For example, *"Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church."*—Acts 12: 5. It was prayers of the saints that God heard and used to bring supernatural
release to Peter.

Paul went to prisons many times. Example of Paul and Silas in prison is recorded for us in Acts 16 verses 22 and 23. *"The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully."* Paul and Silas knew the secret of praying even in the prison. Prison walls do not stop saints' prayer. So, *"about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose."* (Acts 16: 25).

They were released because they prayed, and other Christians were praying for them. God sets the prisoners free when they and their faith community or family or friends or church pray.

Prospects of God's Kingdom are not immune from jail. It is in jail that God will meet such people and they will experience transformation. Some may be in jail for crime they committed. Others find themselves environment by virtue of their work. We see this clear example of a man in jail environment due to his work. He was a jailor.

*"The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.*

*He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household*."—Acts 16:27-34.

This jailor was saved because of his work area. His salvation was designed by God to be through his workplace. When he saw how God delivered Paul and Silas supernaturally, the jailer shouted, "sir what shall I do to be saved"? And Paul provided the gospel answer. The man repented and his household that night and they were also baptized. What led to this? Paul and Silas prayer and worship; the prayer the Saints were offering for that prison because of Paul and Silas.

Tell me, how those coincidences can happen? When Christians come to meet them in jail. Prison ministry is one of the ministry Jesus wants us to do. How do we do prison ministry? By going to prisons physically and by praying for those in prisons. We can touch life of people in prison by praying for them. If you cannot visit prison, your prayers can visit prisons! Therefore, pray for prisoners.

***How do we pray for in the prison?***

Someone suggested this prayer for Christians in the prison. "Lord, I ask you to strengthen them (the prisoners). Help them to continue fixing their eyes on Jesus' despite the hardships they face. May they see their life in prison as an opportunity for them to preach the Gospel to other inmates and lead them to your kingdom. In Jesus' name, I pray." Without doubt, prisoners need strength and faith to keep their eyes and heart on Jesus, grace to endure hardship, grasp opportunities to witness for Jesus to fellow innates, to have a contrite and repentant heart and a transformed life while in prison, and possibly gracious release. Prayer can make government grant amnesty or clemency to prisoners and make the free like other people**.** Clemency or amnesty can make prisoners come out of jail before their term ends. We are hopeful that they would have learned their lessons. Each year some head of state or presidents or governor of a state grant pardon and let prisoners go free. God can

use our prayers to touch the hearts of leaders to set people free from prison. Imagine if Paul and Peter were left in jail for the rest of their life… We should not let our judgmental spirit blinds us to the mercy and grace of God. God can pardon whom we call criminals and ostracized or crucified. What we are expected by Jesus is*, "I was in prison you came to me"* through physical visits and spiritual means, through our prayers.

We must have these thoughts in mind if we will pray effective for those in prison.

- Visit a prison near you and pray with inmates.
- Read about the rules and regulations of countries where Christians are

incarcerated to know what to do and how to pray for them.

- Make it a habit to regularly pray for prisoners.
- Create an experience for your family and small group by visiting jail together.
- Do Bible study on words such persecution, afflictions, trials, jail,

prisons, etc. This will provide a biblical perspective and understanding of the way to see and pray for prisoners.

- Send prayer letters or notes to those in prisons.
- Pray for ability of prisoners to look up to God for healing, recovery, peace, patience, and salvation.
- Pray for inmates to look inward for openness, understanding, courage, and boldness.
- Pray that prisoners will look outward for resources, connection, discipleship, and guidance in their situation.
- Prayerfully visit jail and distribute Bible to inmates.

Many prisoners appreciate people coming to visit them, talk with them, pray for them, witness about Jesus to them, give them Bible, show compassion and empathy to them, not judging them anew but show mercy, demonstrate hope is available for them beyond their present situation, see them still as human beings. Christian can do all of these.

Another thought for our prayer is the fact that prisons and jails are becoming places where the spread of the disease is increasingly growing. These places have some of the highest numbers of different illness and disease conditions. The people who live in these places are incredibly at risk. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they are unable to

maintain the protocol of 6 feet of separation. In some prisons, inmates do not have access to reliable treatment or preventive medicine, and the mental health of those living in these circumstances are severely impacted. This calls for Christians to pray for all those who are experiencing incarceration, awaiting bail or trial. We should also begin to pray for those they interact with. These are the jailers, those in the kitchen, the administrative workers, the lawyers, police, parole officers, etc. We should also extend our grace of prayer to their families. Can you imagine any of your relatives, sons, daughters, husband, wife, in-laws, uncle, auntie, niece, cousin, nephew, grandkids, etc. in jail? I believe your love for them will move you to pray for them. I assure you; God is happy with that prayer of faith, and he will give us answers so we can praise him and worship. Prayer for our prisons and prisoners and the staffs. It is another
dimension of our prayer.

## Praying for the Homeless and Strangers

No one plans to be a homeless in life. We all have a home where our parents give birth to us. How come many people lose that family, home, and do not have social connection with parents, siblings, relatives, etc.? The social challenge of homelessness is almost an epidemic in some parts of the world. Homelessness is a social phenomenon all over the world, especially in our cities. This is not to scare you; anyone can be homeless! It can happen to any person. It is not difficult to be homeless in some part of the world, especially where the culture is that of individualism. In the culture that promotes individualism or isolated living, to be homeless is very easy. In places with the culture of individualism, the moment you are 18 years of age, you are expected to leave your parents and start your own life. Experience shows it is never as easy as that. In the places with culture of community living, people seem to be a little more connected and assist and support one another. When a person has an existential challenge, the community especially the immediate family will rally around to help, support, and endeavor to bring the person out of the problem. It does not seem to one can be homeless because the family or community often find a way to help members who have some life's
challenges.

This is not the case in culture with individualistic view of life. At 18 years old, you move out of your parents and begin to start your life. Many young one never gets it straight as they thought. Some struggle and make it, others fail to make it. Those who are unable to make it as an individual get entangled with negative peer pressures and mess their life. Some cannot go back home because they probably left home in a less respectful and un-honorable format. So, the struggles continue with the hope to get out one day. Unfortunately, some never make it even. They become jobless and not too long become homeless. To be a homeless person, all you need is to be jobless for few weeks. If you fail to pay your house rent due to loss of job, some rental agency will not show you so much of mercy. They will serve you eviction notice and if you do not meet the deadline for payment, you are out—perhaps on the street.

Some people become homeless because of the choice of lifestyle. I have seen some folks who become homeless because they miss the path of obedient to law and ended up on the other side they never thought of. Some people naively try liquor, drugs, or some other addictive things. The choice they made ruin them. Their habits become an addiction and addiction become a plague that other avoid. They lose their job, destroy their family, end up in jail, and when they are out of jail, they could not get a job. They could not get a job in some society because some crimes are defined as “felony” and many companies will not give a felon a job. Some instead of seeking for help in any way, they keep on in the habit and lifestyle which makes life harder and harder. Do we judge these folks? No, brethren! They
have been judged already.

1 Timothy 5 verse 24 says, “*The sins of some men are conspicuous (openly evident to all eyes), going before them to the judgment [seat] and proclaiming their sentence in advance; but the sins of others appear later [following the offender to the*
*bar of judgment and coming into view there].”*

They are suffering. Just as that verse says, they have been caught in their crimes (or sins) and they have gone to human judgment according to the law of the land. The goal of punishing criminals is to correct them now so they can live a decent life. It is a way of granting people the second chance to life. God does that too. In fact, God gives all people more than two chances! Any felon needs help—from above and

from fellow human beings. Any ex-convict needs our help and not condemnation. Because our society fails to help some felons and ex-convicts they go back to crime, they become homeless, or vagabonds, or more criminal than before. They become hungry because there is no means to get food. They become thirsty because they have no means to get water, they become homeless and strangers in our community. They become naked, and sick. Some ended up in prison many times or stay there for the rest of their life. To such people Christians have a debt of prayer. We owe them our prayers. We owe them our support of love, compassion, and mercy if we want to keep our position of sheep in the right hand of the King.

Jesus tells us, "*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison*

*and you came to me*."— Mat 25: 34-40.

From the above verses of the scripture, I have learned many things.

- I have the mandate to feed the hungry and if I cannot feed the hungry

directly, I can pray that God provide food for them in a miraculous way.

- I have the mandate to give drink to the thirsty and if I

cannot do that as I should, I can pray to God to provide water for the thirty.

- I have the mandate to take in strangers and if I cannot do that for

some legitimate reasons, I can pray that God help the strangers to get a place to lay their heads.

- I have the mandate to clothe those who are naked and peradventure I

cannot provide clothes for the naked, I can pray that God provides clothes for the naked.

- I have the mandate to visit the sick in hospitals, clinics, nursing

homes, hospices, in their homes, and if I cannot do that, it is a

wise thing to pray to God to raise his children who can visit those who are sick. Jesus says *"the harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of harvest send laborers to the field."* You and I can pray, and we should pray as Jesus told us.

- I have the mandate to visit the prisoners in jails and if I cannot do that as expected of me, I can pray for those in prison. I can do "*you came to me" in* the prison through my prayer.

We can do a lot for the Lord with our prayers. God calls us to pray to him always. God promises to answer our prayer—all manner of prayer. Dare us to pray as God demands and expects us, we shall see the manifestations of God and his power on
mankind.

We are called to care for strangers. How? Through

hospitality and our prayers. Here are express instructions for us on the importance of hospitality.

- Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home Rom.12: 13 (CEV). Contribute to the needs of God's people [sharing in the necessities of the saints]; pursue the practice of hospitality. (AMPC).
- Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 1 Peter 4:9 (AMP).
- But hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled. Titus 1:8.
- When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your
- God. Lev. 19; 9, 10.
- When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat

the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God. Lev. 19:33.

So, how do we take care of strangers, foreigners, immigrants, etc.?

i. We should be hospitable.
ii. We should not mistreat them; we treat them justly.
iii. We should be sensitive to their needs.
iv. We should love them.
v. We should provide for them if they are in need.
vi. We should be praying for them.

If you cannot do anything for strangers, foreigners, or immigrants in your community, please do pray for them. You can be a stranger or foreigner somewhere tomorrow. Can you imagine yourself being a refugee or an asylee in another country? Can you imagine yourself be an economic immigrant in a place you have never been to? Please, learn to pray for strangers and help as much as you can. Such sacrifice God is please with.

## Praying against or during Natural Disasters

Natural disasters! We do have them across the globe. No one looks or desire natural disasters. We do not even prepare for their occurrences. They come on us mostly unexpectantly. And they can be very destructive and devastating in effect. They destroy properties, farms and crops, landscape, and lives. They become something of national economic importance. Nations now plan for disaster before they have. There are environmental protection agencies, disaster relief programs, environmental strategy and policy programs, risk management outlines, survival programs, emergency protocols, etc. We must embrace the fact that natural disaster can happen for us. We plan, budget, and look up for them. Our geography information scientists, or meteorologists are doing their best to provide almost every 15 minutes information about what the weather will be. Sometimes, our best plans about natural disasters are not enough even if we are devoid of what to do to manage them.

***What is natural disaster?***

A natural disaster can be described as a major adverse event often caused by natural processes of the planet Earth. Disaster, as defined by the United Nations is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society, which involve widespread human, material, economic or environmental impacts that exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. [26]

Natural disasters cause loss of life or property damage and leaves some economic damage afterwards costing much money. And often human activities also cause natural disasters. Examples are climate changes and deforestation. An adverse event will not rise to the level of a disaster if it occurs in an area without vulnerable population. In a vulnerable area, however, such as Nepal earthquake in 2015, it brought disastrous consequences and left lasting damage, which can require years to repair.[27] It is the damage to humans and their property which counts most. Therefore, one can say: disasters occur when hazards meet our vulnerability. If a strong earthquake happens in area not habited by men, it is usually not seen as a disaster.

Natural disasters are also called natural hazards. These are naturally occurring physical phenomena caused either by rapid or slow onset events.[28] Natural disasters can be categorized into the following.

- Geophysical (e.g., Earthquakes, Landslides, Tsunamis and Volcanic Activity)
- Hydrological (e.g., Avalanches and Floods).
- Climatological (e.g., Extreme Temperatures, Drought and Wildfires)
- Meteorological (e.g., Cyclones and Storms/Wave Surges)
- Biological (e.g., Disease Epidemics and Insect/Animal Plagues)

What can Christians do about natural disasters? Do Christians have a role to play. What does God want us to do about our natural disasters? Let us continue in the interesting journey of discovery. There are many disaster management strategies in place. They are mostly scientific but not spiritual. However, we need to understand that our life is not just physical but spiritual. What is constantly happening to us is not just physical or scientific; some are spiritual or spiritually induced. I believe Christian should have enough theology to know that what is happening around the world is not only physical but spiritual. Can natural disasters be induced by spiritual force or power? Yes! There are some Christians who do not have enough scientific knowledge that natural disasters can be induced by human activities. There are Christians who do not believe in global warning and its consequences or effects on men. Maybe we encourage them to study to be approved of God and men.

Man's ecology or environment is greatly influence by what we do

every day. Humans are increasingly influencing the climate and the earth's temperature by burning fossil fuels, cutting down rainforests and farming livestock. This adds enormous amounts of greenhouse gases to those naturally occurring in the atmosphere, increasing the greenhouse effect and global warming. For clarity, fossil fuels are petroleum products and charcoals. The more we depend on them, the more dangerous side of natural disaster we are moving toward. Amazingly, God has shown us we can get energy from the Sun and winds and water without destroying our environment. More than this physical science understanding, Christians can influence the occurrence of natural disasters using spiritual power and graces. This can happen in three ways.

1. Pray to God to help our government make informed decision and

policies on environment care and management. When God gives our leaders divine wisdom and understanding they will make good decisions and policies that will support our environment and limit natural disasters. How dangerous for a nation not to believe in global warming and fail to make policy relevant to it.

2. Pray and support those who are affected by natural disasters in different parts of the globe. Our prayer can bring comfort and peace and courage for those devasted with natural disasters.
3. *Remember our Lord Jesus is the Master of the Universe. Does Jesus have power over nature, and natural disaster? Absolutely yes. We forget or ignore this in many parts of the world. Do Satan influence nature and natural disasters? Yes. Can Christians pray about nature and natural disasters? Yes. Do you remember the story of Job? Do you remember how Satan induced the natural disasters to destroy his family, farm, and his body? What helped Job? Prayers. Do you remember when the Jesus and his Disciples were in a boat and there arose vehement storm? Jesus as sleeping on a pillow despite the storm, but his Disciples was panicking. The Lord was woken up and he commanded the storm to stop, and all storms become calm. In Luke 8 from verse 24-26, "The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the*

*raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."*

The problem Christians have is that we are influenced by the worldly things around us that we forget who Jesus is and what he can do when we pray. We have mixed so much with the worldly society that our faith does not focus on the supernatural again. We see like those who do not have Jesus. We act like those who deny Jesus. We speak like them. Our outlook of life is not biblical. Where we suppose to pray, we manifest fear and unbelief. We have little or no faith at all—no faith to pray to stop or prevent natural disaster from happening. We listen to weather forecast and look up to it to happen as it is said by the meteorologists. Unfortunately, there are many things these professionals do not know. Whoever foresaw the California fires or mudslide or floods? Whoever predicted the Tsunamis in Japan or China? Who ever saw devastating effects the COVID-19 pandemic would have on humanity? But God knows all, and he wants to let us know about things to come if we are in position of prayer and active attention to his Holy Spirit.

Even, when some Prophets of God hear God and provide us with what God told them, many Christians will ignore and listen to our scientists. That may not be sinful but neglecting God's Prophets is neglecting the words of God for us and we end up bearing the unwelcome consequences.

When I was a boy, I saw my dad praying for rain when it appeared the rain was not coming in time, and he has started planting. I saw and heard the congregants in my village Baptist Church—the congregants were mainly farmers—praying earnestly for rain. Alas! God answered their prayers. If Christians can pray for any other things (as Jesus taught us), why can we not pray against natural disaster? If we see Jesus' commanding storm to stop, and it did, why can we not exercise our faith to pray again any predicted or forecasted natural disaster looming on us? I believe we can do. Let us change our mindset; let us be more active in our faith and demonstrate to the world that our God still reigns over nature. If Elijah prayed to change weather condition, I believe we can.

## Praying against Generational Curses

Do curses run down a family or generations? The Bible shows the answer. If it does happen that curse run in a family, or society, or community, or nation, what can Christians do about it? Christians can pray and revert the curses. Let us see what the Bible says?

*"Like the sparrow in her wandering, like the swallow in her flying, So the curse without cause does not come and alight [on the undeserving]."*—Proverbs 26: 2 (AMP).

There are causes for curses. Curses are like wandering birds looking for a place or person to alight on. If you, your family, your family, community, or nation do not deserve to experience a curse, that cannot happen. But who does not deserve a curse? By our nature and choices many of us deserve a curse or have placed ourselves under some curses. Here are some curses the Bible speaks about and how we can have victory over them.

1. *Curses of fall*

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they fell and came under curse. They brought themselves under the curse from God. This curse came on all progeny Adam—his offspring. The curse is spelt out by God, "*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and blessing and calamity you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* Gen 2:17 (AMP).

Adam and Eve disobeyed. Theologians often label these entire events — from the serpent's temptation through God's judgment *"the Fall*." It is meant to reflect the idea that Adam and Eve's sin caused humanity to fall out of God's favor and blessings.

In Genesis God said to Eve: *"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return"* (Genesis 3:16-19).

Adam and Eve disobeyed and brought a curse to them and their offspring. Man was not initially design to die physical; Adam and Eve disobedience brought both physical and spiritual death to humanity.

Even though we still must die physically, spiritual death can be avoided when we come to God through his Son Jesus, whose redemptive work paid the price for our sin and reconcile and reconnect us with God. In Jesus we are spiritually alive, we are connected back to God and have hope of eternal life. As many as not under grace found in Jesus is still under the curse of fall. It can be from one generation to another for those who refuse Jesus' redemptive work.

2. *Curse of sin(s)*

Every sinner is under a curse of sins. Romans 6 verse 23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death…*" Death is a curse. It means eternal separation from God.

Deuteronomy 24 verse 16 says, *"Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin*."

Sins put you under curse of God; this can be punishment of different kinds unless you repent and forsake those sins.

In Matthew 25 verse 42, Jesus says, *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."*

Sins bring curse to anyone. Repentance, faith in Jesus, and prayer are the way out. Remember, the promise of God to save us from sin and its consequence.

"*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*—Mat. 1:21 (NIV).

3. *Curse of the law*

Deuteronomy 27:26 says, "*Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"*

There are some people in our generation who still want to adhere to the law of Moses despite the availability of grace of God in Jesus Christ. If you want to follow the law, you had better follow it to the letter. James reminds us in the New Testament*. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."*— James 2: 10.

Breaking any part of the Old Testament laws brings you under a curse. God has provided us a way to be out of the Old Testament curse for breaking the law; God gave his Son Jesus.

Galatians 3 verse 13 says, *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree".*

Christ hanging on the tree (cross) was the cure for the curse of breaking the law. He bears our sins and cure us of the curse. You and I need grace of Jesus and not the law of Moses. If any family continues in the law and breaks just only one, that family will be under curse from generation to generation until they come to Jesus—the Truth and Grace. Individuals in the family who repents and accepts the provision of God is exempted from the curse.

4. *Curse of adding to the Word of God*

In Deuteronomy 4 verse 2, we read, *"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I am commanding you."*

There is a similar injunction in the book of Revelation. We read in Revelation 22 verse 18,

*"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book…"*

There are some people who break these divine commands and instruct their children or followers to do the same. The curse of adding or subtracting from the words of God comes on them and their generation who are following their parent's footstep. If the children do not follow their parents, they

are free. The parents can be spiritual or natural parents.

Hebrews 13 verse 7 says, *"Remember your leaders, who spoke*

*the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."*

Do not just follow leaders blindly. Consider what they are teaching. Are they adding or subtracting from God's Word? Keep yourself free from curse of adding or subtracting from the Word of God.

5. *Curse of disobedient to parents*

Disobeying our biological parents and spiritual parents can bring curse on our life. The singular solution to this is just obey those you call "parents." The biological parents are divine vehicle God used to bring you to this world. You owe them nothing but your obedience and respect. To do

otherwise is to be under divine curse. Your spiritual parents are those God used to give birth to you spiritually. You owe them your obedience and respect. Your failure to obey them means you are incurring divine curse on you.

This is how the Scripture puts it in both Old and New Testaments.

*"Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."* Exodus 20: 12.

*"Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth"* Eph. 6: 2, 3.

God does not change this moral and divine law for anyone. If anyone disregards and disobeys it, there is a curse on the person. The curse is already spelt out; you will not live long on the earth or land the Lord gives you. Only God knows how many people have passed away prematurely because of disobedience to this command. If the disobedience continues in family line, it can become a generational curse. Prayer and obedience to this command bring cure and break the possible generational curse.

*6. Curse of idolatry on community, society, and nation*

There is a curse on those who neglect the true and living God and follow idols or other gods. God tells us in Exodus 20 from verse 3, *"You shall have no other gods before me. You shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I, the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain."*

From this Scripture, we see the following instructions that if we fail will bring us under divine curse.

i. Having other gods, worshipping other gods or anything we created in likeness of God. It does not matter whether it is image is earthly or heavenly.

ii. Bowing down to such gods. Some people create or make something their gods but not necessarily worship or bow down. Both making a god and bowing down brings

divine judgment on whoever does it.

iii. Taking the name of God in vain. This means using God's name frivolously, swearing in the name of God, or cursing others in the name of God.

The Bible says anyone who does that will not be guiltless. In fact, if such act runs in family from generation to generation, the curse or punishment can run from one generation to other. It becomes a generational curse that requires prayer and obedience to be free form them. How many families have inherited this act of idolatry and taking the name of God trivially or denying God? Some parents claim to be atheists, gnostic, or agnostics, etc. and their children inherit this godless, idolatry from them and they bring the curse of God on them. What is idolatry? 1 Corinthians 10 verse 6 to 8 says, *"These things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousands of them died."*

From the above verses, we can see that man's idolatrous hearts crave evil things that God forbids. Second, man's idolatrous hearts crave good and legitimate things that God chooses not to give us. Anything we accept and cherish more than God, anything we give more attention to, or anything that occupies our heart more than the thought of God is an idol. We all need to be careful about this because parents can unconsciously be idolatrous and pass the practice to their children. So, we see the curse of idolatry can continue in the family. What else can be more idolatrous in our modern society than materialism, sex, pleasure, drugs, liquor, jobs, automobile, money, career, etc. These can also be transferred to our children unconsciously putting them on similar curses the parents are under.

On the other hand, we see people directly worshipping idols made with their hands, ancestral spirits, gods, and goddesses, some spiritual objects, some religious leaders, or gurus, etc. Overall, the Bible condemns idols and idolatry.

Jeremiah 10:14 says, *"Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them"*

Psalm 115: 4-8 says, *"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so, do all who trust in them."*

Habakkuk 2: 18-19 says, *"What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it*."

Romans 1 verse 22, 23, and 32 says, *"Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things…. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death"*

Those who worship or practice idolatry are under the curse of God. Only prayer can help them out. Only prayer can break this generational curse in some family that is given over to idolatry. Are you idolatrous in any form? You must ask God to search your heart before it ruins you and your children who you are transferring the practice on.

*7. Curse Satan or your enemy can put on someone*

There are two realities in our world: God and Satan. God is good and Satan is evil and bad. God and Satan are not the opposite of one another because God created Satan and everything. Satan created nothing but can destroy anything. Satan was a rebel and disobedient angel of God and God banished him from his presence. Satan becomes the enemy of God and God's creation ever since God banished him. Despite the evil nature of Satan, human beings still listen, obey, and follow him. It started with Adam and Eve. Even though God has made a way through which man may be delivered from the grip and deception of Satan, many men still follow his ways. Those who follow Satan can be wicked like him and perpetuate evil and wickedness like him. Some people have been so connected with Satan and become the enemies of God. Such people can

curse others using satanic power. This manifests in many occultic practices around the globe. No race or color can claim freedom from the evil acts and control of Satan. It only those who have accepted God's gift or grace in the redemptive work of Jesus that are free from his mischievous deeds and sins. Satan empowers his followers to inflict evils, curses, and misfortunes on others. Let us see some in the Bible.

In Numbers 23 verses 4 to 6, *"So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed."*

I am sure the Israelites did not know someone was trying to place a curse on them because he was afraid of them. Balak asked Balam to curse the Israelites because he learned that "*whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed."* Neither Balak nor Balam knew God has a covenant with Abraham that includes, *"whosoever curse you will be curse, and whoever blesses you will be blessed."* God even reminded Balam; you may have satanic power to curse, but behold, *"You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed."* Numbers 23: 12. Because of greed and money Balak promised Balam for cursing God's people he went forward in his attempt to curse. The story says God caused his donkey to talk to him because of his folly. The point we are looking at is the fact that some people can place curse on others. It will take God's power and prayer to be deliver from such curses. See these Scriptures to establish that fact that people have satanic power and can curse other—whether they are aware or unaware.

*"But in that coming day no weapon turned against you will succeed. You will silence every voice raised up to accuse you. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the LORD; their vindication will come from me. I, the LORD, have spoken!"* Isaiah 54:17 (TLB).

One of the weapons the enemy of your soul can use against you is curse. Your enemy can curse you openly or secretly. You need prayer to break free from such known and unknown curse. Ask God to open your eyes.

*"Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any*

*divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what hath God wrought!"* Number 23: 23.

There are agents of Satan who use enchantments, divinations, etc., through those media they can know some things about your ways and life. They can then place a curse to retard or prevent your progress in life or cause your death. Can this happen to Christians? Yes. It can happen to Christians who do not know their rights or those who are living careless, prayerless, and empty of God's Word and Spirit—that is Christians who are not been filled with the Holy Spirit. Watch it!

*"When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God."* Deut. 18: 9-12.

Some of the detestable things occultic people do are,

sacrifice their sons and daughters to gods by making them pass through fire (a form of initiation to the gods), divination, sorcery, interpretation of omens, spiritism, consulting with the dead. If someone does these, can he or she not curse others? Surely, they can.

*"'Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God."* Lev 19:31.

Despite this warning some people still have dealings with evil spirits and mediums. In the process, some are cursed when they fail to meet up with expectations or requirements. God also curses anyone who does this.

*"He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger."* 2Kings 21: 6

This King did all these detestable things. Many folks do these in our time. The devil is not dead nor his works. Satan still steals, kills, and destroys. Satan curses. His agents curse—if we have anything to do with them or if we are not watchful and prayerful. God promises divine protection for his own, but it is when we fully obey him. If you are a victim of satanic curse, or occultic spells, or evil divinations, you can be free if you can pray t the Lord. God has the power to set the captive free.

In some parts of the world, parents made covenant with the devil using their children, wife, or parents. If they do not fulfil their part of the covenant, they are cursed and sometimes the curse falls on their children without their knowledge. How can someone be free from curse of a covenant you know nothing about? May be this is a revelation for you to pray and ask the Lord if you are a victim of such covenant. God has a better covenant for us through Jesus. When we come under a stronger and better covenant, the lower covenant becomes of no effect on us. So, if you discover there is negative covenant with a curse in your life and family, go to God in prayer and break those negative covenants with the blood of Jesus and power of the Word of God.

*8. Curse on preaching false doctrine*

Galatians 1 verse 9 says, *"As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed."*

Mind you this is a New Testament. One can be under a divine curse by preaching contrary Gospel, another kind of gospel different from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There were people in Paul's time who were preaching but not the Gospel of grace of Jesus Christ. They were placed under divine curse. Paul was so serious on this that he said,

*"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."*

If angel can be placed under curse for preaching another Gospel, what makes us feel we cannot be if we do what such angels did?

Do not place yourself under divine curse; preach the Gospel of Jesus. Preach and teach the Word of God. Preach and teach the Truth and practice what you preach. The danger we can face is that these curses can move from one generation to another if they are not stopped and people get delivered from them.

Number 14 verse 18 says, *"The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation."*

God can forgive us because of his mercy and grace if we do not follow the path of unrighteousness our father followed. However, if we follow what our fathers did, we may incur God's punishment for many generations to come.

# Praying for the Unknown

Psalm 31 verse 1 says, *“My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.”*

We can pray for the unknown. We can pray for the future. This is meaningful because God knows the unknown; God knows the future. A common adage says, for man proposes, but God disposes; neither is the way of man in his own hands. This reflects Proverbs 16 verse 9, *"A man's heart devises his way: but the Lord directs his steps."*

Shakespeare, too, had a similar message for us. Hamlet said, "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, ...” In this line, Hamlet is saying that there is a God guides our lives and no matter how hard we try to oppose our path, fate, destiny we cannot change it.

James says, *“Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”* –James 4: 13-15.

*“Adonai, I know that the way of humans is not in their control, humans are not able to direct their steps as they walk.”*—Jer. 10:23 (CJB).

Our today and tomorrow and entire future are in the hand of God. From the above Scriptures, we see how we can manage our unknown or future with the help of God. God has our names in the palm of his hands. He has us in the hollow of his hands. So, he knows all about us and he protects us daily. Jesus says no hair on our head can fall to the ground without our Father’s knowledge. We are limited in all things, but God is unlimited in all things. We are finite but God is infinite. We can carefully plan. We can make schedules and roasters. We may say *today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.* But remember, "there is a divinity that shapes our ends, ...” God wants to carry us with his plans and not we are carrying God with our plans. God says, *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So, are My ways higher than your*

*ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."* Isaiah 55:8-9 (NKJV).

God thinks about us every micro-second or nano-second of the time.

He has plans for us that are great and wonderful. We can be peaceful understanding that. *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*—Jer.29: 11 (NIV).

We do well work with his plans.

We do will seeking his face in prayer to know his plans.

We do well allow the Holy Spirit to lead us according to plans and purposes of God.

We do well pray earnestly to know the plans, purposes, and will of our Father for everyday of our life.

We can do this is prayer seeking his face for the unknown and trusting him to lead and guide us aright.

Jesus teaches us to pray, *"they will be done on earth as it done in heaven."* That covers the unknown we are anxious or fretting over. When we learn to pray for God will for our life, our unknown will not frighten us for we do not know the future, but we know Someone who knows, owes, and control our future. We are not out of place to pray for the unknown. God welcomes that prayer and will answer us accordingly. I remember my parents prayed for me when I was a small boy. They prayed for my unknown future. Now I see the answers to those prayer for them and for me. I am glad they prayed for me. I did the same thing for my children when I started having them. I still pray for them for the known and unknown. I am glad I prayed for them and still praying for them. The unknown about their lives I prayed for since their concepts are unfolding graciously. Prayer works. God answers our prayer for the unknown. If we keep our heart in his love and grace, we can say, indeed,

God is faithful.

I remember I pray for many unknown things in my life

when I became a Christian. I prayed for ministry. I prayed to be a missionary. I prayed God should help me to be a good parent. I prayed God should help me to write and publish my books. I prayed God should help me to be channel of blessing to people over the world. I prayed for good health. I prayed for breakthrough, divine health, and healing. I prayed all manner of prayed for my unknown. I shave been seeing

answers everyday and I still expect to see more answers for those prayers as God bring them forth now or in the future. Pray for your future. Pray for the unknow of your family. Pray for your children unknown future. God wants us to pray for our future than worrying about our future.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:34 "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. ... Each day has enough trouble of its own."* One great way to banish worrying about tomorrow is to cast our tomorrow into the big hands of God in prayer. Prayer never dies or wasted if we pray according to God's will. God is always ahead of us. God has plans in place ahead of us. God finished our battles ahead of us. God says trust me with your unknown. They may be unknown to you, but they are well-known to me. Relax but pray. Rely on God's unchanging promises. *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*—Isaiah 26: 3 (NKJV).

So, why are we worrying about the unknown when we have a Father who cares and asks us to ask him anything in prayer? We are we worrying when we can pray? Pray and trust God, worry will go.

## Spontaneous and Extemporaneous Prayer

Prayer can be formal, organized in thoughts, well written, articulate in presentation as we see in some mainline traditional churches. You probably are familiar with *Book of Common Prayer*. However, prayer can be spontaneous and extemporaneous. Over her years of growth, Christianity has developed and designed many forms of prayer pattern, liturgy, and theologies. If we carefully study the Bible, we see prayer in different dimension. I do not believe one person's prayer or a denomination's prayer is better than the other long as God answers the prayer. I ask you, which kind of prayer format or pattern or style God does not answer and which one he answers best? Prayer does not have to be structured. Sometimes you can just talk to God and tell him what is on your mind. The advantage of this type of prayer is that it facilitates an active relationship between yourself and God and is flexible enough to cover whatever you are going through. Honestly, the format or pattern of prayer or praying is not what matters but our heart, faith, the promises of God, and our desire to present our request to God. It may be a surprise to some Christians that there are spontaneous, extemporaneous, and

ejaculatory prayers in the Bible. Maybe you have found yourself in this kind of prayer before; prayer you did not planned, thought of, or prepared formally for. I did and I see it from the Bible as well. It is another layer of prayer we need to understand.

Prayer can be entirely spontaneous. The emphasis should be put on the movement of the Holy Spirit here and now, as well as the fact that prayer is about a personal relationship with God. Spontaneous prayer can be described as the go-to style of prayer when you know you have something on your heart, something burning and needing to come out as freely and openly as you can. In spontaneous prayers you can add how you feel about a subject, and you can directly speak to God. A way of doing spontaneous prayer is sitting in a circle with friends and family members or a small group in a church, and each person adds a thing or pray on a subject in his or her mind. I see this as beautiful and anything because each of us become relevant and significant in the practice of communicating to God. Sometimes, a leader can ask anyone to pray without prior information or preparation. The sweetness of it is the without prior information or preparation. The sweetness of it is the confidence and freedom each person must express his or her to God on the behalf of others. Many Christians are sometimes afraid of this.

### ***Examples of spontaneous prayer in the Bible***

*Nehemiah's prayer*

A favorite example of spontaneous prayers come from the prayer of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah learns that the wall of the city of Jerusalem is broken and that the gates are burned down, two ideas came to his mind. First, his response was to fast and pray (Nehemiah 1:4). Second, how will he obtain permission from his boos—the King he was serving? Nehemiah prayer strengthened everything else he did, and it was a spontaneous prayer. His prayer (verses 5-11) is a genuine, heartfelt reaction to the state of his people and their city. There is an honest confession of the sin of his people, and a request for God to be with him as he approaches the king to ask to rebuild the wall. Even though the contents of his prayer are not written for us, it was an equally strong example of spontaneous prayer. Right in the middle of his conversation with the king, the king asked him what he was requesting and before he answered, the narration says, he prayed (Nehemiah 2:4). This was as

spontaneous as it gets; right in the middle of a conversation and he realized he needed the Lord's help, so he fired up and off a quick prayer. This was probably like the prayer equivalent of a tweet or a text in modern day. Just a short, sweet piece of communication.

*Paul's prayer*

This prayer was spontaneous and short. Paul had delivered his farewell speech

and the emotion surrounding him and those he spoke with was very palpable. This prayer best as it will help them spiritually and psychologically. We are told the content, but common sense will tell us it was a brief, heartfelt, Spirit-directed prayer.

*"And having said these things, having put-down his knees with them all, he prayed. And there was much weeping from everyone. And having fallen upon the neck of Paul, they were kissing him, suffering-pain especially over the statement which he had spoken— that they were no longer going see his face. And they were accompanying him to the ship."* Acts 20:36-38.

The same kind of spontaneous prayer Paul Apostle prayed in this short story.

*"And it came about while we were going to the place of prayer that a certain servant-girl having a soothsaying spirit met us, who was bringing-about a large profit to her masters telling-fortunes. This one, while closely following Paul and us, was crying-out, saying, "These men are slaves of the Most-High God, who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation." And she was doing this for many days. And Paul, having been greatly annoyed, and having turned to the spirit, said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from her!" And it went out at the very hour. Act 16: 16-18 (DLNT).* What a bold and spontaneous prayer is this. It worked.

*Peter's prayer*

Undoubtedly, Peter is used to organized, structured, liturgical kind of prayer. Peter is a Jew and familiar with synagogue or Temple prayer. However, this was not one of those organized or structured prayer. Prayer and John were going to the Temple for prayer; it was their regular hour of prayer. I do not think but was prepared for the first phase of the prayer meet that happened to him that day. The first phase of that day prayer meeting was for a spontaneous prayer—unplanned prayer, hearty

prayer. We are not told they have been praying and fasting for 21 days. The need to pray was suddenly discovered and Peter seized the moment. If we are always in the Spirit, we can be ready for prayer just as Peter was—I mean spontaneous

*"When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter*
*looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So, the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.* Acts 3: 2-5.

Peter was not making any prayer meeting preparation here. He was already ready and ever prepared for prayer. Prayer looks to be part and parcel of Peter's life. I believe the first thing that came to peter's mind when he saw this man begging was nothing but prayer. Read again what Peter said.

*"Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. "*Acts 3: 3-10.

This spontaneous prayer brought about spontaneous answer from the Lord and even spontaneous miracle—a outstanding and visible miracle. Spontaneous prayer can produce unprecedented answer because it comes from any heart in tune with the Lord at all times. I witnessed this in my ministry many times. Sometimes, I will be called to come as quickly as I can for a family with a loved one passing. Always, such family was anxiety, sad, sometimes crying and sobbing, and other time just stood or sat by the bedside with their heads down in sorrow. As I came to the hospital room or patient's room in his or her house, what the family wanted is prayer. At this point there is no need for sermonizing. Spontaneous prayer is the key. As I prayed and ended the prayer, I often would see a changed in the spiritual and emotional atmosphere. I could read some degree of comfort, assurance of hope, peaceful countenance,

and courage to bear the loss of the loved one. I have experienced occasions where I helped a dying person to have a meaning “closure” to this earthly life before entering life beyond. I remembered I had opportunity of ministering the Gospel message of grace and forgiveness to persons at the very end of life. The person reconciled with his family and with God. All I did after the short ministration was praying spontaneous prayer. Few minutes after the prayer, the person took the last breath and passed away. I saw a sense of joy in the family because of what happened. The wife a man told me one day; “we have been preaching to him for many years. We have been praying for his salvation. We thank God he reconciled with God and passed away to glory.” I have experienced the joy of seeing God answering some spontaneous prayers in life and ministry.

In another incidence, Peter was called to pray because of believer who just passed away. It appeared the death was so sudden that those who loved her seemed not believe she should die that way or that day. So, in faith they sent for Peter. See how Peter responded and imagine what was on ground.

*“So, Peter got ready and went with them. When he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room where all the widows stood around Peter, crying. They showed him the shirts and coats Tabitha had made when she was still alive. Peter sent everyone out of the room and kneeled and prayed. Then he turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, stand up.” She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called the saints and the widows into the room and showed them that Tabitha was alive*. Acts 9: 39-41 (NCV).

I envy Peter’s faith, boldness, and spontaneous prayer. In fact, spontaneous prayer in some cases do not need to have long phrase or sentences. Look at Peter’s prayer, *“Tabitha, stand.”* Peter was not speaking in tongues here. Peter was not singing to charge his spirit here. Peter was not preaching to boost faith here. He did what he was convince and led to do by the Holy Spirit. When we walk in the Spirit, the Spirit can pray through us and produce amazing result beyond our imagination. “*Tabitha, stand up”* does not look like prayer. I sound to me like a command. That is what the Holy Spirit can do through us.

*Jesus’ spontaneous prayer*

Jesus showed us many examples of spontaneous prayer. On many

occasions Jesus spontaneous prayers are authoritative prayer. This was one of the great things Peter learned from Jesus and he put to practice. At the tomb of Lazarus, all that Jesus said was, "*Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"*

John tells us, "*The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."* John 11: 38-44—NIV

When Jesus was casting out demons, all he did was to us this form of authoritative and spontaneous prayer, not long, hard sentences, or big phrases prayer. They were always short, sharp, and spontaneous but full of power and authority. For example, look at these spontaneous prayers.

"*And the demons begged Him, saying, "If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of pigs." And He said to them, "Go!" And they came out and went into the pigs and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters."*—Mat. 8: 31, 32 (NASB).

*"When evening came, they brought to Him many who were under the power of demons, and He drove out the spirits with a word and restored to health all who were sick."*—Mat. 8: 16 (NIV).

*"And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once."*—Mat. 17: 18

I have seen some ministers attempting to cast out demons or evil spirits and they would sweat their life out. I known churches where they will subject the person who is said to have evil spirits to many days of fasting and prayer and the ministers will do the same. That is great and acceptable if there is result. However, when I study the life of Jesus, Paul, and Peter in the New Testament and I see how they exercised themselves in spontaneous prayer, my faith leaps up. I believe I can do what they did. I believe what the Lord do is examples for me. I can pray spontaneous prayer and by the grace of God I can have spontaneous answers like Jesus, Peter, Paul, and Nehemiah. You too can do. Try this dimension of prayer and faith. God will honor your faith.

# Prayer for Special Events and Holidays

Life is full of events. Events of different kinds are part of huma social norms. Ny culture has a saying, “good things require prayer; bad things need prayer.” We pray so that good things will not go bad. We pray that bad things will change to good or that it may not have devastating events on us and possibly stop. You probably have found yourself praying to make bad things good and making good things stay and even go better, right? Christians should understand that philosophy very well and use the opportunity of prayer to bring up good things, keep good things, advance good things, and pray against bad things. Prayer can be used in both ways.

As a Pastor, I had opportunities to pray for good things to come and bad things not to happen. I prayed in good events in my congregants’ or parishners’ life. Examples of events are,

- Marriages, reunions
- Newborn babies/naming ceremonies
- New houses,
- New cars,
- Students going to various schools,
- Graduation ceremonies,
- Promotions at work,
- Praying for newborn babies,
- New church dedication,
- New company dedication,
- Business projects,
- Stores/shops dedications,
- Inductions/Ordinations of fellow ministers,
- Send-forth/Homecoming
- Missionaries commissioning
- Retirements of friends and church members,
- Someone having opportunity to travel abroad,
- Christmas,
- Thanksgiving,
- Birthdays,
- Easter,
- Recovery from illness.
- New jobs,

- Independence Day,
- Business equipment and tools,
- Lands for houses
- Farmland,
- Funeral services, etc.

Life is full of events from birth and cradle to the tomb! You may have a longer list than mine. The idea is Christians have the responsibility to pray for existential events, holidays, and special occasions in life. Is this scriptural? The Bible shows a how God instructed his people to celebrate some events in the life. Such events are marked with jubilations, singing praises to God, personal and group joy, prayer of thanksgiving, prayer of dedication, prayer of commitment, prayer for protection and security, etc. Here are some examples from Old and New Testaments.

***Praying and worship during holidays, and special occasions in Old Testament***

*Moses' dedication of tabernacle*

In Number 7 verse 1 to 11, we read*; "When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings. He also anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils. Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of families who were the tribal leaders in charge of those who were counted, made offerings. They brought as their gifts before the LORD six covered carts and twelve oxen—an ox from each leader and a cart from every two. These they presented before the tabernacle. The LORD said to Moses, "Accept these from them, that they may be used in the work at the tent of meeting. Give them to the Levites as each man's work requires." So, Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the Levites… When the altar was anointed, the leaders brought their offerings for its dedication and presented them before the altar. For the LORD had said to Moses, "Each day one leader is to bring his offering for the dedication of the altar."*

At this special occasion, Moses anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils, received offerings from people as instructed by God. It was an atmosphere of worship; a form prayer of dedication was in place. It is not out of place to dedication anything in the church or home or office to the Lord. It can be done in an atmosphere of prayer and

worship of our God who gives us all things. In my theology, anything dedicated or consecrated to the Lord will have a sense of sacredness or sanctity. Many do not have that theology. This is the reason they desecrate or demean some sacred objects and places and even life. As a warning, you cannot desecrate anything consecrated to God and go scot-free or unpunished.

When King Belshazzar the son of King Nebuchadnezzar did that God punished him for his act. The account is in the Book of Daniel 5. *"But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which cannot see, hear, or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. Therefore, he sent the hand that wrote the inscription. "This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. "Here is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Teke: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres : Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."*

*Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two." Daniel 5:22-31 (NIV).*

## *Special days and events in Old Testament*

There are three pilgrimage festivals in Judaism. 1) the Passover, 2) *Weeks* or *Pentecost*), and 3) the Feast of Tabernacles, Tents or Booths. In these festivals the ancient Israelites ancient living in the Kingdom of Judah would make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem as commanded by the Old Testament. In Jerusalem, they would participate in festivities and ritual worship in conjunction with the services of the "priests") at the Temple. At a point, the Second Temple was destroyed, and the Third Temple was built. After the Third Temple, the actual pilgrimages are no longer obligatory upon Jews, and no longer take place on a national scale. During the Jewish holidays in modern-day Israel,

many Jews living in or near Jerusalem try to attend prayer services at the Western Wall emulating the ancient pilgrimages in some small fashion. The Samaritans still make pilgrimages to Mount Gerizim three times a year to this day.

Exodus 23: 14-17, says, "*Offer a sacrifice to Me* three times each year*. Keep the festival of unleavened bread...the reaping festival ... the harvest festival.* Three times each year*, every male among you must appear before God the Lord....”* (See also Exodus 34:18-23).

Deuteronomy 16. 1, 9-17 says, *"Safeguard the month of standing grain so that you will be able to keep the Passover to God your Lord, since it was in the month of standing grain that God your Lord brought you out of Egypt at night.... Then count seven weeks for yourself. From the time that you first put the sickle to the standing grain, you must count seven weeks. You shall then celebrate the festival of Shavuot to God your Lord, presenting a hand-delivered offering according to the extent of the blessing that God your Lord has granted you.... When you bring in the products of your Threshing floor and wine vat, you shall celebrate the festival of Sukkot for seven days.... Three times each year, all your males shall thus be seen in the presence of God your Lord in the place that He will choose: on the festival of matzahs, on the festival of Shavuot, and on the festival of Sukkot. You shall not appear before God empty-handed."*

Overall, there seven festivals during three harvest seasons in the Holy Land.

1) The Passover Feast.
2) the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
3)The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost.
4) The Feast of Trumpets
5) The Day of Atonement.
6) Feast of Tabernacles.
8) Eighth Day (which we often refer to as the Last Great Day).

While these harvest festivals were given to the nation of Israel at that time, note that God calls them "feasts of the Lord" and "My feasts" (Leviticus 23:2). They are special events that go with jubilation celebration, worship, and prayer.

*Solomon dedication of temple*

King Solomon dedication of the Temple was an epic event. God so honor

this dedication that he filled the temple with his glory that the priests were not able to minister. It was such an acceptable special event to God that we can learn lots of things.

*"At that time Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, all the tribal heads and the ancestral leaders of the Israelites before him at Jerusalem to bring the ark of the LORD's covenant from the city of David, which is Zion. So, all the men of Israel were assembled in the presence of King Solomon in the seventh month, the month of Ethanim, at the festival. All the elders of Israel came, and the priests picked up the ark. The priests and the Levites brought the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting, and the holy utensils that were in the tent. King Solomon and the entire congregation of Israel, who had gathered around him and were with him in front of the ark, were sacrificing sheep and cattle that could not be counted or numbered, because there were so many. The priests brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the most holy place beneath the wings of the cherubim… When the priests came out of the holy place, the cloud filled the LORD's temple, and because of the cloud, the priests were not able to continue ministering, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple…*

*Then Solomon said: The LORD said that He would dwell in thick darkness. I have indeed built an exalted temple for You, a place for Your dwelling forever. The king turned around and blessed the entire congregation of Israel while they were standing… Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the entire congregation of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. He said: LORD God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth below, keeping the gracious covenant with Your servants who walk before You with their whole heart…"*—1Kings 8 (HSB).

***New Testament examples of prayer during special events***

There are many events in the New Testament narratives that come with prayer. We can lean and learn on these events. Some of these events are burrowed from the Jewish tradition. For example, the Jewish did circumcision for male child on the eighth day of birth. This was done for John the Baptist.

*Dedication of John the Baptist*

The dedication and circumcision of John the Baptist was accompanied with worship song, prophecies, and prayer.

*"When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John … His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel because he has come to his people and redeemed them"*—Luke 1: 57-80 (NIV). Zechariah the father of John the Baptist used the circumcision and dedication of John the Baptist to worship God, sang son, prayed, and prophesied to the baby and the people who were present if day.

This cultural and religious practices are not universal. Some parts of the world did circumcision of male children, others do not. In my culture, we do circumcision but not on the eighth day like the Jews. However, many people will give names to their babies on the eight days with a semi-church service. We would sing, worship, pray, and give names to the baby publicly. The Pastor of the church will be invited to coordinate this program. It is part of Pastor's ministry in my region of the world. I was invited to many of such *naming ceremonies*. I sang with the family and friends of the parents and baby, I preached to the little attendees, I prayed and prophesied to and for the baby, I used the occasion to pray for those who are trusting God for fruit of the womb. These naming ceremonies are special events that can also be used for evangelism. In my areas, the program can be done in a living room or in the open. It is wisdom for any pastor to use it to invite the attendees to Jesus if they have known him experientially.

*Dedication of Jesus*

According to the gospel, Mary and Joseph took the Infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem forty days (inclusive) after his birth to complete Mary's ritual purification after childbirth, and to perform the redemption of the firstborn son, in obedience to the Torah (Leviticus 12, Exodus 13:12–15, etc.). Jesus was circumcised on the eight days according to the law and custom of the Jews. This was like the John the Baptist. The

circumcision of Jesus went with some prayer and worship.
*“Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.”*—Luke 1: 21.

Then Jesus was presented to God in the Temple by his earthly parents. The event went with prayers, worship, prophecies, and much spiritual activities.
*“Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so, his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. ² The law of the Lord says, “If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD.” So, they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord— “either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”* Luke 1: 22-24.

After this, we saw a Priest named Simeon who can and prophesied as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, blessed Jesus’ parents, and spoke more about his life and ministry.
*“At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So, when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying. “Sovereign Lord now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!”* Luke 1: 25-32.

“*Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”* Luke 1: 33-35.

It did not stop there. There was a woman of God called Anna who also witnessed Jesus’ dedication and prophesied about Jesus.
*“Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of*

*Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. Luke 1: 36-38.*
To the Jews, child dedication and circumcision are special events that go with prayer, worship, and prophecies. We can learn from this and use this to bless our people.

*Jesus and his Disciples celebrated events and festivals*
Did Jesus Christ, the Apostles and New Testament Church celebrate these festivals? The answer is yes. There are many feasts and festivals Jesus met in his context which by law he had to celebrate. For example, we read in Gospel of John:
*"After this, Jesus traveled around Galilee. He wanted to stay out of Judea, where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, and Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles!"—John 7: 1-2.*
Jesus eventually went to this festival. While he there he used the opportunity to teach some important doctrine. *"Then, midway through the festival, Jesus went up to the Temple and began to teach. The people were surprised when they heard him. "How does he know so much when he has not been trained?" they asked."*—John 7: 14, 15.
He even stayed more than a day. Interestingly, he was not just
eating and playing around, he used the opportunity to teach vital truth.
*"On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'"* (vs. 37, 38).

Let us remember that the Jews have many events and festival Jesus and his Disciples participated actively. We can make an event meaningful or meaningless by what we do in them and with others. If we seize the opportunity to pray, teach, preach, and reach other with the love of God, God will not reprimand us. He will be glorified in those events.

*Jesus and Passover Festival*

Again, recollect that Jesus as our Passover became a reality during the Passover festival. The past Passover festivals were pointing to Jesus as the Passover Lamb. Jesus was literarily arrested and sacrificed on the cross during that Passover festival. Many Jews many probably not understanding the fulfillment of this deep spiritual reality when they were treating Jesus that evening, the way they treated him. Jesus not only participated, but he also became the Passover Lamb of God who shed his Blood so that death will pass over all who believes in him. Even after Jesus had been glorified and sat at God's right in heaven, the early Disciples still observed the Passover event. In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 we read:

*"Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."*

The early Church had a better meaning of this event more than when Jesus was with them. Many local churches and denominations observe the Passover like the early Church. I do not know why churches are not observing the event more proactively. The Lord Supper or Holy Communion is set in place to remember that the old figurative Passover was done with, and the true Passover has come to be. The last Passover where Jesus was crucified led us to the entablement of the New Covenant or Testament. And with the bread and wine of Holy Communion we celebrate that New Testament till we meet our lord in glory. It is so surprising that many Christians and churches do not do or handle the Holy Communion as it is meant to be. Some, scarcely do it. It supposes to be an event every Christian can enjoy at home and in the local churches. It is an event that prayer is a very important part of. Remember, Jesus conducted the Last Supper with prayer to the Father, blessing the bread and the wine. So, must we be doing. We can use it to pray for other Christians around the world.

*Jesus, the Disciples and Pentecost*

Jesus surely participated in many Pentecost festivals of the Jews. It is

one of the festivals established by the Law and the Jews did not take it lightly. More importantly, Pentecost has more to it than mere festival or event. The other name for Pentecost is the Feast of Harvest. The Jewish Pentecost was a shadow of another Pentecost that Jesus wants to use to describe the harvest of souls from all nations into the Kingdom of God. Just as the early Pentecost took place during harvest time, the New Testament Pentecost commenced with harvest—the souls of people into the Kingdom and acceptance of the gentiles into the Kingdom of God. Jesus told his Disciples to tarry for the Promise of the Father. That was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was sent 50 days after Passover when Jesus was crucified and buried. This was also 40 days after resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 2 we read how the Holy Spirit was given to the Disciples.

*"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

Who were amongst these believers given the gift of the Holy Spirit?

*Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"*—Acts 2: 1-11 (NIV).

The narrative says there were God-fearing people from every nation under heaven. Then, it breaks it down to the following people or nations.

- The Galileans.
- The Parthians.
- Medes.
- Elamites

- Residents of Mesopotamian
- The people of Judea.
- The people from Cappadocia.
- The Pontus.
- The Asians.
- The people from Phrygia.
- The Pamphylia,
- People from Egypt.
- People from Libya near Cyrene.
- People from Rome
- Both Jews and converts to Judaism.
- The Cretans.
- The Arabs.

Pentecost after resurrection was the event that Jesus used to show the world that he is the God for all people. Both Jews and Gentiles were harvested into the Kingdom and partakers of the Promise of the father—the Holy Spirit. Pentecost after ascension of Jesus was used by God to break all cultural and geographical barriers to the Kingdom of God. From that Pentecost there has been thoroughfare into the Kingdom because of the harvesting ministry of the Holy Spirit.

These are just a few of the many references to God's festivals in the New Testament. We will cover more of them in future lessons. We can use special events for avenue for prayer. We can pray for them, in them, during those events, and for people who attend those events. We can use special events and holidays to pray for people, families, our communities, society, nations, and the world. We see the Jesus and his Disciples and Apostles using special events as opportunity to teach, witness, and pray. Great were the results of those spiritual activities. In the USA we have some many special days for holidays and celebration or as remembrance of some special people in the nation. We National Day or Independence Day, Christmas, New Year, Easter, St. Patrick Day, Martin Luther Jr Day, Cancer Day, Black History Day, etc. in your nations, you may have these special days and events. They give us opportunity for prayer and intercession. You and I can take advantage of those events and festivals and holidays for prayer.

# Prophetic Prayers

Prophetic prayers are prayer with elements of predictions about the future that we do not know before. When someone prays and he begins speaking about future events, divine revelations, activities, or life of someone in the future, such prayer can be said to be prophetic. The prophetic aspect of prophetic prayer is that you can pray with revelation (prophetic insight) given to you by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has revealed something that you would not know by natural means—the Father's purpose
and intent—and that knowledge is assisting your prayer.

***Format of Prophetic Prayer***

There are a variety of forms that prophetic prayer can take, for example:

1. One can have received a prophetic insight before you prayed—such as a personal prophecy, or prophetic guidance or and are now using it to pray. Perhaps God has spoken to you about something, and you are following that up with prayer.
2. The Holy Spirit is directing you while you are praying. You become aware that your prayer has shifted up a level. The Spirit is guiding the direction of your prayer and giving you insight concerning how and what to pray.
3. You are engaged in listening prayer—taking time specifically to hear what God is saying to you.
4. Prophetic prayer can occur in many contexts, such as praying for someone in a personal ministry situation, interceding, or simply conversing with God.
5. Prophetic prayer can be intentional, or it can happen spontaneously as the Holy Spirit leads you in prayer.

***Some Benefits of Prophetic Prayer.***

Prophetic prayer is powerful. Following are some benefits of prophetic prayer to encourage you in your prayer life.

i. Prophetic prayer fosters our intimate relationship with God.

Paul gives us this doxology.

*'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,*
*and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.' (2 Cor 13:14)*.

Prophetic prayer helps our intimate relationship with God. We lean in closely to hear His voice. That place of fellowship with the Holy Spirit is where we receive revelation and hear what is on God's heart and mind.

**ii.** Prophetic prayer helps us pray with authority and faith.

Apostle John tells us, *"'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).*

When the Holy Spirit gives us insight on how to pray and what God's plans are, it empowers us to pray with faith. It adds an authoritative edge to our prayer. We can use prophetic revelation given by the Holy Spirit to make bold proclamations and some prophetic decrees.

**iii.** Prophetic prayers agree with God's Purposes.

*Jesus teaches to pray, "'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' (Matt 6:10).* Even this prayer is prophetic in context and purpose. When the Holy Spirit has given us insight as to what God is up to, and how to pray, we can pray in agreement with Him. (Rom 8:26-27) Prophetic prayer is a powerful means of partnering with God for the fulfillment of His plans. It is important to remember, however, that all prophetic insights—including those received in prayer—are subject to proper testing. We should test all spirit—we should weigh what we have on the divine scale of the Holy Scripture.

iv. Prophetic prayer facilitates miracles

James tells us, *'Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.'* (James 5:17-18).

Elijah's prayer was prophetic in nature. Prophetic prayer facilitates the miraculous. Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19). He took insights received in the place of prayer to carry out Father's plans in His daily life and ministry. (Luke 6:12-13). Prophetic prayer is the foundation of a supernatural lifestyle.

v. Prophetic prayer helps sharpen your prophetic gift.

Jesus says, *'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.'* (John 10:27). You do not have to have the gift of prophecy to use prophetic prayer. Any Spirit-filled Christian can pray prophetically. As sons and daughters, our Father wants to have a relationship; He wants to speak to each of us. In Acts 9, Luke records a conversation that a man called Ananias had with God. Ananias was not an apostle or prophet—

simply a disciple. And yet his prophetic prayer caused him to walk into the pages of the New Testament and be used by God to bring Saul—later the Apostle Paul—into baptism and to confirm his call from God. (See Acts 9:10-19) If you do have a prophetic gift, however, prophetic prayer is a great way to develop and grow your gift of prophecy. Not only do you grow in confidence in hearing God's voice; you can take insights that He has given to you in the place of prayer and share them with others.

In the story of Luke, he mentioned one old man who was in the Temple when Jesus was brought for dedication. His name was Simeon. Simeon was praising God and prophesying.

*"At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So, when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying. "Sovereign Lord now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"* Luke 1: 25-32.

"*Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him.*
*Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's*
*mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."* Luke 1: 33-35.

Study that prophetic prayer vey well, you will see everything Simeon said about Jesus came to pass. At the same event was another elderly woman call Anna. She was a prophetess. Luke showed us that, "*"Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but*

*stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. Luke 1: 36-38.*

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist also shows example of prophetic prayer on the day John was dedication. Luke writes and tells: "His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. *"And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."*—Luke 1: 76-79. This prophecy literarily was fulfilled on John the Baptist.

***Types of prophetic prayer.***

1. Receiving prophetic prayer: The Spirit shares prophetic revelation with us as we wait on God in prayer.
2. . Interceding prophetic prayer: We use the prophetic revelation we have received to remind God of His promises.
3. Wayfaring prophetic prayer: We use prophetic revelation to wage spiritual warfare and make powerful proclamations.
4. Imparting prophetic prayer: God uses us to pray prophetically as we minister in prayer to others.
5. Prophetic evangelistic prayer: evangelistic prophetic prayer can help us to get to know the Father's heart and values—this helps us to respond to people the way He would.

Prophetic evangelistic prayer helps us to grow in sensitivity to what God is doing moment-by-moment, in our society and world and to act appropriately. In addition, prophetic evangelistic prayer helps us to stay filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to witness of His love and power to others. Christian can pray this type of prayer because every Christian ought to have the Holy Spirit in him or her?[29]

# Chain Prayer

A prayer chain is a list of people who agree to pray for a loved one during a troubled time, or who decided to pray for a situation, condition, or problem of any kind. We should never forget that prayer transcends religions, denominations, sects, and belief systems of all kinds. Almost every religion has a way of praying and do pray. Many people pray. I believe strongly all Christians should pray always according to the teaching and example of our lord Jesus Christ. A prayer chain can kick off at several levels, because it is a group of individuals who have decided to pray together. Chain prayer theoretically, amplifies the power of prayer. Praying as a group also fulfills another of our basic human needs: to connect, both with a power greater than ourselves, and with one another.

***How to Start a Prayer Chain***

Here are some guidelines that will help you and others in your sphere have an effective prayer chain — one that is ready to pray for any person, or any situation and challenge at any time.

1. *Decide or choose whom to include in your prayer chain*

They should be dependable and willing to join in prayer, at a moment's notice. These individuals can also expand the chain, even more, with like-minded people they know. Think about including your faith community, family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

*2. Communicate with your team your prayer requests*

We are used to phone calls, but we can be limited to phone calls and words of our mouth. For prayer chain we can post requests on someone's email or as text messages, or social networks. We can build an email list that allows you to send prayer requests to everyone with one click.

*3. Respect people's privacy*

Prayer requests may not always come with an explanation. A patient or caregiver may prefer privacy. A request can just be a top-line explanation, such as, "Please pray for a woman who is going for some complicated surgeries. We can also say, "please, join our prayer team as we pray for _____. We can write and say, "add _____ to the prayer list." It is very important we are discreet if that is what your loved one wants.

*4. Share information right away*

If you get word that the situation of one of your prayer recipients has changed, communicate it to everyone on your prayer chain so they can adjust their prayers. There are times we can ask everyone on the team to choose the best time they will pray in the chain. I remember one of our prayer chains. Each member of the prayer team chose a time in the 24-hours of the day. Some chose an hour, other chose thirty minutes, but the entire 24-hours was covered. We had the sense that the chain was never broken.

This strategy can be used to pray for any situation—salvation of loved ones, revival in the church and Christians, deliverance from satanic oppression, challenging situation. Prayer chain is great in some situation where Christian gathering is restricted. Nothing restricts prayer! Nothing can

restrict prayer from the heart of Christian children of God.

There are some Christian folks who criticize prayer chain. They argued that the emphasis is on the chain and not the prayer. They look at creating of connection of people as a sense of magic. They call the practice as superstitious practice because it consists in the saying of certain prayers successively by many individuals who hope to receive favors from the magic effect of this unbroken series of prayers and not so much from God's goodness. They argued therefore, that it is mainly in the chain and not in the prayer. They labeled all forms of chain prayer are superstition and correspondingly sinful. But that is never true. It is lack of understanding of the Bible. We see people in the Bible who were involved in prayer chain and fasting chain.

When Queen Esther said:*" Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die."*

Is this not like "prayer and fasting chain" for three days? We are not told how they did it, but it was a three-day program of not eating nor drinking. The idea of fasting directly tells us there was praying along with the fasting. Was that superstitious? Was that demonic? Well, Esther used her "praying and fasting chain" to obtain the favor of God and the king. When Apostle Paul says, *"pray without ceasing" (*1 Thess. 5:17), or Jesus tells, *"the disciples a parable to always make the point that they ought to pray and not give up and lose heart…* "(Luke 18:1), do not we think we can extent our prayer using the praying chain? First, many Christians will be involved in praying to God at different period. Second, individuals will not be weary or tired as when he or she is praying alone for long period. Apportioning a period for pray for different believers, or different person choosing different time to pray with the team decided will encourage all to pray. I know God is never mad about Christians praying this way. It is just a matter of the name we give to continuous and unceasing form of prayer by group or team of believers. Prayer chain is neither superstitious, sinful, nor demonic.

Praying in any format by Christians is never sinful. You never know the effect of this form of prayer until you practice it. You never know the gravity of many Christians' praying for you or any condition that affect until you see the profound effect of this group or team or corporate type of prayer.

# Prayer Walk

Another unusual form of prayer is prayer walk. Prayer walk is nothing but praying as you walk. Walk is a verb that means to move at a regular pace by lifting and setting down each foot in turn, never having both feet off the ground at once. Walk can apply to two situations. First, walk can be literal walking or driving or riding a horse or flying in a plane. Second, can be to guide, accompany, or escort (someone) on foot. Thus, we can be traveling or an excursion on foot and be fully engaged in prayer. I like to describe that as prayer excursion, o escorting one another and still be praying for something together. The idea is that as one prays, one is on the move! Is that possible? Absolutely yes! We can walk and pray, and we can pray and walk. We can focus and maximize our prayer time by taking a prayer walk. We can pray together with a group or individually. The Christians who had the idea of prayer walk began in school campus. This prayer walking tool was originally designed for college campuses. We can do a prayer walk on a campus near us, or adapt it to pray in our own town, neighborhood, workplace, or school, etc.

In my walk with God, I have discovered there are times, I have desperate situation that demands desperate prayers. At that time, any kind of prayer could perfectly be put in place—including prayer walk. When there is a need that calls for urgency and desperation in prayer this approach can be considered. There will always be needs, but the route of "all manner of prayer" is always open for the children of God.

***Some simple steps to a prayer walk***

1. *Asking God to reveal his will or mind in your situation*

Our prayer life should be that of worship, praise with singing or listen to a few songs. Our team should be trained to worship and praise God. We should also learn to listen to God as we pray, praise, and worship God. We need to always pray and ask God what He is already doing in this place, what he would like to advance, and what he would like to stop. Whatever is hindering the Gospel in an area is a barrier we can pray to God to stop. We must move in the same direction God is moving in our personal and group life. We must learn to do what God is doing. So, we need to do some listening prayer, asking God questions and writing down

anything we hear or feel. We can then take this to our united prayer walk whenever we decide to do that.

2. *Asking God to renew us and our regions or special spots*

We also need to pray for renewal of your own faith. Our prayer to God should be for God to move deeply in your own heart. Asking God to renew our own faith of what he can do and what he wants to do on campuses, cities, or regions is very important for prayer walk. As a group, there must be that understanding of the move of God. We must learn to like what God likes and reject what God dislike. We must pray against anything opposing the will of God. Did God reveal any barriers to us when we asked him to reveal insights? Pray that the opposite would happen for each barrier. In some of the prayer walks I had participated, we were led to pray over historic or symbolic spots, especially those with satanic background. We prayed against territorial spirits that are influencing the people in the community to addictions, idol worshipping, violence, drunkenness, disobedience of our children, godlessness, etc. Are there any historical spots that may need prayer? Go to those places and pray for them. Pray that God renews those places.

3. *Asking God for revival*

In prayer walk we can pray and listen to God. We can ask God to show us what revival would look like in our region or city. It will be meaningful to keep record of anything we perceive, see, or feel. We can pray for Christians in the region or environment. We can pray that Christians already in this place would be bold, have faith, and be courageous. If there are any Christian groups or churches, pray this for them as well. Prayer walk can be used prior any evangelistic crusade in an area or revival in some churches. Team can prayer for preacher, counselors, choir, and all that will be involved in the programs. Our prayer may include praying for people in authority of the area, state, or nation. If it is on campus we can pray for professors, administrators, student government, and other leaders on campus. We can stretch our faith more by asking God to lead us to particular people on campus so we can talk with them and ask them if we can pray for them on the spot.[30]

I do prayer walk with my wife. We would go to park nearby and as we walk round the park; we would have our prayer items in our hands, and we prayed. Others may see you as just doing some walking for the

purpose of fitness of your body. However, we were doing more than that. We were walking and praying, and this constituted spiritual fitness for us and our family and neighbor and for whoever we were interceding. There is no limit to the prayer of spiritual discipline of prayer. Prayer has many dimensions. Prayer walk is one of those dimensions open to us.

## Prayer in the Time of War

Do Christian pray about war? Yes. When there is war there is no peace. We Christians had better pray against war before any begins. In case there is war in the country where we live, can we pray as Christians? Yes. We can pray that God help bring the war to an end and grant the opposite sides to seek for peace instead of devastation and destruction of lives and properties. If there is a situation that gets Christians caught on one side against the other side, can Christians pray? Yes. How do we pray when we find ourselves as Christians in war with our enemy? For example, we have nations in civil wars, ethnic cleansing, genocide, political wars. How do Christians pray at that period?

War is never good—any kind of war for that matter. Who is behind war where people are fighting and killing one another and innocent children and women and innocent folks? As Christians, we know it is our archenemy and God's archenemy. Satan is number one agent in all wars we see around the world. If we know Satan is behind anything, what do Christians do? The Bible gives us the simple but profound answer; *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*—James 4: 7 (NIV). We can pray to resist Satan behind wars and its negative effects. Peter tells us, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith…* "1 Peter 5: 8, 9 (NKJV). War is manifestation of our adversary the devil walking around nations like a roaring lion, devouring and destroying lives. Christians can resist him with steadfast faith—asking God to manifest his Omnipotent and Sovereign power on our behalf.

When humans allow Satan in their hearts, policies, laws, governmental operations, etc. we see what James described as:
*"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God."*—James 4: 1-2

(NIV).

When we see fights, quarrels, battles within and outside, killings, covetousness, greed, hatred of one another, etc. it is because we give Satan a good place in our lives, family, communities, or nations.

This is not only for Christian community of faith but our general secular community. That is the reason for wars and battles within national citizens or wars between different nations. What do we do as Christians during this period of war, fighting, quarrel, fighting, etc.? We need to keep praying for both sides for peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness of one another, understanding of different point of view and allow peace. Can Christian pray against his or her enemy who is warring or fighting against him/her or his group, community, and nation? I believe we can pray against our enemy who is engaging in war against us. What does the Bible say about this view?

***God's perspective about our enemy in Old Testament***

*"The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea."*—Exo. 15: 3, 4 (NIV).

God is a Warrior, Fighter, and King, and Conqueror. We see God fighting in the Old Testament for his people. In other words, God took side—he was for his people and against the enemy of his people and his enemy. In most cases our enemy becomes God's enemy. If we want this strategy work well for us.

i. We must truly be on the Lord's side. He who comes to justice must come with equity. God does not fight blindly.

ii. We must seek God's face to know what he wants us to do. In the light of so many Bible examples, many times we do not need to engage in physical fighting. Remember how King David inquired of the Lord to fight his enemy.

In 1 Samuel 23*, "he inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah." ... Once again David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand."* Twice did David asked of the

Lord.

iii. If God tells us to go and fight (I mean physical warfare) we must do everything warriors do. We are rest assure that God will give us victory if he tells us to go to fight any war. The question is, can God tell us to go to war with our enemy physically? Absolutely yes. God will not expect us to be conquered cheaply when he has given us the go ahead to fight and the resources and weapons to fight.

One of the analogues the Bible makes for Christians is that of soldier. We may not initially be recruited to our national military but when war breaks and we are expected to defend our nation through war, it is scriptural to fight in war for our nation against our enemy.

***God's perspective about our enemy in the New Testament***

*Jesus' perspectives on war*

Will Jesus sanction Christian be joining the national military and fighting in war against the nation's enemy? The answer is yes! Jesus teaches us spiritual warfare and never instructs us to run away from war when we need to fight. Jesus demonstrated meekness and gentleness, Jesus showed us love and compassion. But we never should forget the other side of Jesus as King, Victor, Warrior, Fighter, Conqueror. Jesus never asked us not to fight war when we need to do so—when fighting war has not alternative than to fight. Let us see Some of Jesus perspectives on war which we need to learn from.

Jesus speaks of war and the use of violence in his teachings and parables. He does not make a point of condemning such behavior**.** Jesus said, *"Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand?"* (Lk. 14:31).

Jesus also said, "*When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe*" (Lk. 11:21).

*"When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come"* (Mark 13:7, also Matt. 24:6, Lk. 21:9*).*

The word *when* shows Jesus understands the inevitability and imperativeness of war in human endeavors. War is one

of the signs of end according to Jesus. Are Christians immune from such occurrence in the nations? No! If you are not a nation where war is taking place, thank God. If you are in a nation that have incessant war, what will you do? If duty demands of you as citizen, you need to show patriotism for your nation and enlist in the military and trust God to keep and protect you as you serve your nation. Do you ever think of the fact that many nations are enjoying peace and tranquility within the walls of their nations because men and women serving outside and inside the nations as military officers fighting to protect such nations? Jesus is never a warmonger neither is he a pacifist.

In one of Jesus teachings, he said, *"Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand?"* (Lk. 14:31). Jesus also said, *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe"* (Lk. 11:21).

Jesus seems to recognize that war and violence are sometimes justified. In the parable about the king, Jesus is primarily teaching about the importance of making sure one is prepared to meet the rigorous challenges of discipleship. In the parable of the strong man, Jesus is responding to those who accused him casting out demons by the power of Satan. Even though, Jesus uses these parables to teach of himself as more powerful than Satan, is not this principle we can apply to physical war? Prepare to fight your enemy or make peace. Guard your castle or state with full armor, secure your properties safely against the enemy less you are conquered cheaply, and you make your subjects war victims. The principles are applicable for both spiritual and physical warfare.

Some people have argued that how can it be claimed that Jesus support war after all, he stated, *"I did not come to bring peace to the earth; I did not come to bring peace but a sword"* (Matt. 10:34). Jesus may be speaking of "sword" metaphorically, however, his peace is not one that frees disciples from rejection, persecution, conflict, and war. It was of a Roman soldier, a Centurion, that Jesus said, *"Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith"* (Matt. 8:10, also Lk. 7:9). Such strong praise from the mouth of Jesus would not likely be given to one in a profession forbidden to his own disciples. This would indicate that

Jesus did not disapprove of soldiering and if there is soldering or militarization, which shows nations are never ruling out the art or occurrence of wars. According to Jesus, soldiers who fight for a good cause, therefore, have justification in the example of Jesus. At a point, Jesus insisted that his disciples arm themselves. He said to them, "*But now the one who has a purse must take it and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one"* (Lk. 22:36). The disciples responded, *"Look, Lord, here are two swords*" (vs.38). Jesus' advocates nonviolence. However, much as we can take his words as metaphorical, we must also be as literal as possible. Surely the disciples would not have those swords in their possession if there was not thought of self-devil or fighting or local or domestic warfare.

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, is filled with violence against the enemies of God. Jesus is depicted as a warrior who leads *"the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure"* (Rev.19:14). This does not seem to contradict any claim that Jesus wants his followers to remain nonviolent, but it shows us our Lord is a Warrior and he would forever be. The Second Coming of Jesus and all it accompanying epics are not to be taken just as symbols, metaphors, or figure of speech. Jesus is coming back literally as Conquering Warrior fighting his enemies.

*John the Baptist and soldering*

When John the Baptist was preaching, and he demanded that his listeners repent, "*Soldiers also asked him, "*And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "*Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation and be satisfied with your wages""* (Lk. 3:14).

John did not tell them that they must cease being soldiers. Neither did he tell them that they could not fight in war. This would indicate that being a soldier is not spiritually problematic to Christian life.

*The view of Early Apostles on war*

When Cornelius the Roman centurion became the first non-Jewish convert to Christianity, the apostle Peter did not tell him that he needed to leave the army (Acts 10:1-48). Likewise, when the Philippian jailer – presumably, a soldier- was converted by the apostle Paul and his companion Silas, they did not insist that he abandon his profession (Acts 16:25-34). This suggests that the apostles did not think that was any necessary contradiction between Christian life and military life, including

participation in warfare.

Things to take away from here are.

- Christians should live in peace with people across the world—if it is possible. That is the message of Jesus and the Apostle.
- Christians have only one eternal enemy. That is Satan. Satan has his followers who wage spiritual war against Christians and God. If we do not fight spiritually against Satan and his agents, we will suffer both physically and spiritually.
- Christians are spiritual soldiers who are admonished to get ready for spiritual warfare and expect victory as they fight.
- Christians should pray against the occurrence of war—locally, regionally, and globally. Prayer can usher in peace around us and prevent wars anywhere around the globe.
- Christians should pray during war in any region that God help in

bringing an end to it.

- Christians can be involved in military profession and

therefore involve in war against the enemy of his nation. There is no scripture that shows us we need to hide for military service in our nations. Just as Christians can be politicians so they can be military men and women.

- The more meaningful teachings and revelations of the Bible is that human beings will have wars. Men will fight wars because there are so many things they do not agree on and could not resolve amicably. God fights for his own people. God expects his people to defend and protect themselves. God is not against self-defense or checking someone who acts as bully or terrorist in any part of the world. God supports and approves of wars. There will be occasion when nothing will or can resolve some existential challenges except physical wars. Christians cannot and should not shy away from this truth.
- We need soldiers for our nation just we need firefighters, policemen, medical doctor, lawyer, economists, politicians, nurses, or any other professions. We need each of these professions to help us to have meaningful life. And Christians cannot shy away from all of these under God. We are encouraged to stay on our calling. I do believe God call

soldiers.

# Dialogue Prayer

We had earlier on established that prayer is two-way communication system designed by our God. To make that more meaningful, we can call prayer dialogue between God and men. Do you know it is God who brought the idea of dialogue in prayer to us? In the book of Isaiah chapter one, the prophet
portrayed graphically the wickedness of Judah, the people of God.

God told Isaiah people of Judah were rebellious children,
sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, and corrupters. They have forsaken the LORD. They provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel and turned away backward. To get their attention back to himself, God struck them, yet they revolted more and became morally and spiritually sick from head to sole. Even when they became sick in heart, they kept their rebellion acts and deeds. They were sick to the point God said t*here was* no soundness in them. There were wounds and bruises and putrefying sores that remained unclosed or unbounded up nor soothed with ointment. As a result of their wicked lifestyle, God said he would allow their country *to be* desolate, cities *are* burned with fire; strangers to devour their land and overthrew it. Their situation was likened to like Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet, they attempted to make sacrifices to God, presenting burnt offerings of rams and cattle, and shedding blood of bulls. God rejected their offering because he expected obedience and faithfulness to him. Even though, these people attempted to spread out hands in prayer—speaking to God, God said he would hide his eyes.

God told them, *"Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear."* What God was expecting from them is not doing evil and making noise in prayer without listening to him and obeying him. God told them, "*Your hands are full of blood..."* God expected his people to.

- Wash and make themselves clean.
- Put away the evil of their doings from before his eyes.
- Cease to do evil.
- Learn to do good.
- Seek justice
- Rebuke the oppressor.

- Defend the fatherless.
- Plead for the widow.

These are things Christians also fail to do that hinder their prayer—especially their monologue prayers. You may be speaking in tongues for 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, if those expectations of God are not met, your prayer goes less than the ceiling of your room. It looks like God tried many things to get the attention of his people to his side, yet they were not responding. God used punitive measures, but they did not change. God rebuked them verbally calling them brood of vipers, yet they remained adamant. God used hard and harsh strategies on these people. They yield not. Then, in his sovereignty, God chose a better strategy; that is dialogue. In verse 18 of Isaiah chapter one, we read,

*"Come now, and let us reason together,"*
*Says the LORD,*
*"Though your sins are like scarlet,*
*They shall be as white as snow;*
*Though they are red like crimson,*
*They shall be as wool.*
*19 If you are willing and obedient,*
*You shall eat the good of the land;*
*20 But if you refuse and rebel,*
*You shall be devoured by the sword";*
*For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

There are times hard measures do not resolve important issues. Humanly speaking, I have seen how stubborn and rebellious people can be when leaders are dictators, despots, not communicative, commanding, etc. You will almost always see people protesting and rebelling against any hard and harsh and hostile leaders. However, when such leaders attempt the strategy of dialogue, things change. The same can be true of homes between husband and wife, parents, and children. Dialogue is so powerful in communicating system that we need to learn how to engage it afresh. God calls us to dialogue in prayer. He probably has used many methods to get your attention but now he may be inviting you to dialogue with him as he did to the people of Judah. He can use his sovereign power to get things done or makes you do what he wants, but his moral principles that makes us free moral agents will not be in place if

he does that. He does that for humans so that he will always be justified. God wants to dialogue with you in prayer.

God never belittles us. He elevates us. He loves to lift us up even when we drag ourselves to the mud. He is stooping God who always bends down to lift us up. One way he does that is to bring us dialogue with him—bringing himself "down" to our level again. This should humble us. In Isaiah, God tells us:

*"Present your case,"…. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. Tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear*."—Isaiah 41: 21-23 (MIT).

*"Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. "tell us, your idols what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods."*—Isaiah 41: 21-23 (NIV).

Can we stop our monologue prayer and listen to what wants to tell us? Can we learn how to dialogue with God, bring our cases, and setting forth our arguments? We need to stop dealing with God as if he were an idol. Idols cannot tell us what is going to happen in the future, God can, and he does that always if we dare listen to him. Idols can never tell us what was in the past—the former things but God can. God only can do all that. Idols has no power to put us in dismay or fill us with fear. Idols cannot tell us what the future holds; only God does that. If we can enter relational dialogue with God in prayer, it will transform and revolutionize our life. Why are we always hurry in prayer? Why do we spend such a little time in prayer? It is because we do not make conversation, dialogue, listening to God as most important part of our prayer. Why did Jesus get so used to all-night night prayer? Because he took time to have conversation and meaningful dialogue with the Father. That is why Jesus can boldly and always say, "I do what I see my Father do… I do what pleases my Father"

***How to pray and Dialogue with God***

- *Know God Word*—God's promises, God's thoughts, God's blueprint for us. God speaks to us his Word in many

dimensions.

- *Pray without ceasing*—Learn to pray all-day-long and not just your special hours of prayer. Let every minute be a special prayer time.
- *Pray and listen to God*—Never be in haste before God. Talk and let him speak. God always speaks. We should learn to always listen.
- *Learn to be silent when you are praying*—to listen and

hear what God is saying demands of you and me to be calm, cool, and silent.

- *Let your spiritual ears and eyes be opened to hear and see what God is saying God* is never a talkative, but he speaks always. He may speak view rods, however, that is all you need from him.
- *Learn to write down what God tells you—L*isten. Write. Document God's words to you. Be ready to obey whatever he tells you.

# Lunch/Break-time Prayer

My break time is my free time to eat and do whatever I want to do. Why will anyone ask me to use it for prayer? Yes. I know. Let us see this in a broader light. Do you know many people use their break time just meaninglessly in eating, talking, gossiping of fellow workers, jus discussing the non-essentials> However, we can use our break time for something more practical, purposeful, and profiting? We can take some minutes of our break time for prayer. I have seen many people using break time for walk. They do some physical exercise. We can hard a little layer on that; doing some spiritual exercise. The Bible says spiritual exercise profits much now and for eternity. Why cannot we embark on something that has more value eternally? Prayer has present and eternal consequences if we seize the opportunity
to pray.

***Some ways to turn  break time into a worship, prayer, or devotional period.***

If you are not sure where to start, here are some suggestions.

*First,* you can make you break time a prayer time by just pray silently,

quietly, meditatively, etc. It is all a matter of discipline and having a mind et toward prayer. Deuteronomy 4 verse 7 says, *"For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?"* (ESV). We can make lunch a time for prayer knowing fully well that God is near to us. Without misunderstanding the Bible prayer is how we converse or communicate with God. As we share our feelings, concerns, and questions with God, we begin to see Him at work in our lives. It is amazing to see how God responds to our needs in ways we would never have imagined and changes our hearts when our desires are not what is best for us. We can start doing this by simple jotting down our prayer points, writing down some names of people with needs and committing to pray for them daily. You can bring together like-minded workers as a group for brief prayer. You can pray for your workplace, families, individual issues, missions, the sick people you know, etc. Prayer items are inexhaustible if we set our heart to prayer.

*Second,* you can use break or lunch time to prayerfully memorize Scriptures. You can write a couple of verses on a note card you want to have in your mind. Memorization as a spiritual discipline is seldomly spoken about in many churches and many Christians in our time have not seen the necessity of memorizing Bible verses. Remember, Psalm 119 verse 11 says, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."* Saints of old made it a sense of spiritual assignment to commit God's Word to long-term memory. When you have any word, song, poem, or lesson into a long-term memory you hardly can forget it. Break period is a good time to begin the process of memorization. You can start with some short verses at a time. If you do commit to memory a verse in a day, by the end of the year you would have had your brain and mind filled with lots of Bible verses. This is a sign of spiritual growth. You can start by looking for Bible verses on some important themes you believe you need to know. Here are
some of such themes or topics and corresponding verses.

- Faith—Romans 10:17
- Prayer—Jeremiah 33:3
- Love—1 Cor. 13:13
- Salvation—John 3:16; Acts 4:12
- Holy Spirit—Acts 1:8; John 14: 26
- Forgiveness—1 John 1: 8, 9

- The Great Commission—Matthew 28:19
- Healing—Isaiah 53: 5; 1 Peter 2: 24; Exodus 15: 25, 26

I suggest you search for the Word of God on any area of your life that you are struggling with and endeavor to memorize the Scriptures on those areas. Do it prayerfully. Get flash cards and write those Bible verses on them. Pull your cards out during lunch and reflect on them as you eat. Recalling God's promises and instructions throughout the day reminds us of who God is and who we are as His children.

*Third,* you can read or listen the Bible on your phone prayerfully. Is not what Psalm 1 verses 2 to 3 tell us?

*"Blessed is the one who does not walk in the step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, AND who meditates on his Law Day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers."*

It is a spiritual necessity to know the Word of God
because the more we know of God's Word, the more it shapes who we are. Reading the Bible changes how we work, how we interact others, and even how we deal with traffic jams because it teaches us what matters to God. You can pick a study and read a book of the Bible at a time. If reading on your phone is frowned upon, bring your printed Bible, or pop in some earbuds and let the Bible app read the Bible to you. God's Word never returns void. Even if you do not think you are getting anything out of it at first, reading the Bible will cause
you to love God more over time.

*Fourth,* you can listen to scriptural music during your break time Psalm 63 verse 5 says, "*I will be fully satisfied as with the*

*richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you."*

The Contemporary English Version renders this as, *"I will sing joyful praises and be filled with excitement like a guest at a banquet."* From my experience, when I have a hard day and I begin to sing to the Lord or listen to songs the render praise to him, I often experience a lift in my spirit and put myself in the right frame of mind to better serve him in the hours that remain. My work is my service to the Lord. Thank God for music technology. My phone and earbuds can make my break room a place for praise and worship. Or I can sit in the car, turn up the stereo,

and sing along and aloud in privacy.

*Fifth,* you can listen to sermons or podcasts. *"And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."*—Jer. 3: 15 (ESV).

I believe every serious Christian should have a pastor or a shepherd who God uses to feed and care for spiritually. I have seen many Christian folks who neither have a church nor a shepherd. Unfortunately, when the come to the end of life, they begin to look for an *"emergency"* pastor or chaplain. They can always get someone due to mercy and love of God and his ministers, however, that is not a good deal. You need a shepherd who God will use to feed you with knowledge. Such a shepherd is someone you will love to listen to teaching, preaching, or counseling you from the Word of God. This could be in live sermons, podcast, video, audio tapes, books, etc. God has promised all Christians, "*I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."* Do you have one? Do you know your shepherd? You can pray about this. We can learn a lot by listening to someone further along in their walk with Jesus. God has given us lots of teachers to help point us to Him. If you have a long commute to work, listening to a sermon could be a great way to spend that drive as well. Then you could prayerfully review the Scripture on your own during lunch.

The present generation of people are busy people—that is you and i! We are all always busy. However, for Christians like you and me, all our hard work is for nothing if we forget the God who brought us the opportunity in the first place. So, it is not out of place to look for places and spaces in our day — from the break room or the carpool line — where we can connect with our heavenly Father, even if it is just for a few minutes. I used to do this in a botanical garden in my workplace. Sometimes, I used the library when I was a student. It used to be quiet and contemplative prayer. I truly enjoyed those moments. I still do it now. We have a chapel in my workplace, and I retreat there to pray after or before I eat my lunch. I do pray in my car or any quiet place I discover around me. I am very proactive about this. Everywhere I work I always ask myself, "where is a quiet place, or a solitary place I can use to pray in my free time or lunch"? Honestly, I often found places. We do not see such places because we do not seek for them. There is a place for you in

your workplace to pray! *Pray without ceasing.*

# Prayer Vigil/Night-long Prayer

What is prayer vigil? Some people call it nigh-long prayer, what exactly is this? Is it biblical? Do people of God practice it? Is it for us in our generation? Let us throw some light and get some scriptural answers to these questions.

***What is a Vigil?***

The etymology of this word is from Middle English *vigile* which means “a devotional watching” and from Old French *vigile,* from Latin *vigilia*, all which means “wakefulness or watch,” from **v**igil which means “awake”). The Proto-Indo-European word, **weǵ* means “to be strong, lively, and awake.” The word *watch* is a very familiar Bible word in both Old and New Testament. And when it is used it means wakefulness, being awake, lively, as opposed to being slubbering, sleeping, or mindlessness. So, what is the meaning of the word vigil? It is the act of keeping awake at times when sleep is customary. It is a period of wakefulness. Vigil is an event or a period when a person or group stays in a place and quietly waits, prays, etc., at night. The word vigil gives us what we call vigilance. Vigilance means the action or state of keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties. For example, we hear people saying, "security duties that demand long hours of vigilance". In the context of this definition, it is keeping careful watch of something that happens both day and night.

This is also application for Christians who has the Lord admonition, *“watch and pray…”* Jesus had the same idea of action or state of keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties that can take away what we stand for. Jesus was not telling us to be vigilant only during the day, but also at night. From his example, we learned Jesus kept a careful watch at night through praying to the Father. Did he need to do that? I think not necessary. However, he needed to teach us what we need to do so that we would not be overcome with dangers in this world, devil, and difficulties we might face as humans as we run the Christian
race. There are Christian denominations which have spent lots of energy

and time arguing about prayer vigil or night-long prayer. The problems of such denominations are many.

1. They forbid night-long prayer but fail to provide good alternative. That means they are not proactive and actively engaged in prayer during the day.
2. They are lazy in spirit, mind, and body. Any person who is lazy in spirit, soul, and body will find prayer a burden. Many denominational leaders as like that and they indirectly or directly produce followers of the same mindset. So, prayer is seen as difficult things any time of the day.
3. They find reasons for other biblical disciplines expected of all churches and Christians. Watch it. Any denomination which operates at a low level of prayer will consciously or unconsciously do the same for evangelism, missions, giving and stewardship, caring for the poor, worship, etc. One thing leads to another. Lack of prayer leads to lack or absence of other biblical disciplines for the church and Christians.
4. Any denomination that has a weak liturgy and theology on and of prayer will invariably has same to other Bible teachings. What is your denominational theology of prayer? What is your personal theology of prayer? There is a common saying, “a prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian.” This is also true of any church or Christian ministry or group. Show me how prayerful you are, and I tell you how spiritual you are. When I was in college, we used to make a joke. Now, I see it is true. The joke is if you do not pray for a week, you will become weak as a Christian. Do you see a denomination which do not have time for prayer in her worship service, such denomination may be arguing about having prayer meeting in an all-night-long format?

I have come to believe very strongly the words of Jesus as I grow in my walk with him. Anything Jesus says or does, we better follow him. Jesus is our pattern, mirror, and example. Jesus securely told his Disciples—that includes you and me now.

He says, *“I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, if anyone steadfastly believes in Me, he will himself be able to do the things that I do; and he will do even greater things than these, because I go to the*

*Father."*—John 14: 12 (AMPC).

Wait a minute, what are these works of Jesus that he expects us to do as he did and even do greater? Let me highlight some of them.

i. Prayer—daytime, nigh-time, public, private, anytime, anywhere.
ii. Preaching the Kingdom of God.
iii. Teaching the Truth—the Word of God.
iv. Evangelism—all kinds that we see and learn from him.
v. Missions—going from our Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the end of the world. Jesus does not make us local champions.
vi. Stewardship—proper handling and managing God's resources he places in our hand. This includes time, talents, money, material things, people, etc.
vii. Loving God and our neighbors—this is how we can fulfill God's law.
This the conclusion of all laws in the world.
viii. Demonstration of faith—faith in God and his Word.
faith for miracles; faith to live victorious life
ix. Winning is spiritual warfare—Jesus won in all spiritual warfare, and he has empowered and expected us to do the same.
x. Social services—social justices, equity, equality of all people, helping the poor, orphans, widows, the outcasts, the abandon, people the society is sinning against on regular basis, etc.

The summary of this is in Matthew 28: 16-19 (NIV).

*"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

If you believe in all Jesus teaches and practices, why is it difficult for you to believe in prayer—including all-night prayer? Think over this. I understand some folks have some health conditions that may not allow them to stay awake at night. Do you have any or you are just lazy, too comfortable, very complacent, or trying to avoid some hardship in

sleeplessness as you engage in night vigil? Remember, Jesus did have lots of night vigils! Here are examples we see in the gospel narratives.
*Now during those days, he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles.* —Luke 6: 12. Mark 3:13-19.
This night prayer was needed because Jesus was about to decide on choosing the Apostles. He needed more concentration and focus which may not be possible during the day with the hustle and bustles.
*Jesus' prayer in the Garden*
"*Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, your will be done." And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So, He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise let us be going.*
*See, my betrayer is at hand*." Mat. 26: 40-45.

While this may not be a total all-night prayer, the context shows us it was a nighttime. Jesus and his Disciples had the Last Supper and he needed to pray because he had a heavy burden on him. It was about the hour to be betrayed and go to the cross. Watching is not a new thing to the Jewish. He asked these Disciples to support him in prayer. He wanted them to watch and pray with him just for one hour! Jesus checked on them three times in one hour, but what was happening? Unfortunately, they were sleeping. Are there not Christians in our time who cannot watch or keep vigil for one hour (with Jesus or for the cause of Jesus?). I believe this should be part of every church and Christian life. We need to cultivate the habit of praying in the night. It may be all-night prayer or some hours in the night. Do not forget, our accuser is around just like Jesus; betrayal was at hand. That night prayer kept Jesus. His prayed to his Father until he concluded God's will must be done.
***Other Saints in vigil or all-night prayer***

*Paul and Silas in jail*

In Acts 16:25, we see Paul and Silas in vigil. They were imprisoned for the Gospel. *"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them…"* That was the key to their release. If they had kept silence and had a pity party, they probably will be in that jail for long. But about midnight, they prayed and sang to the Lord. They had complex problem but simple way to solve it—the way of prayer at midnight.

*King David's vigils*

In Psalm 63:6, David told us, *"When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches…"*

I do not think I am as much spiritual as David to neglect night watches. In Psalm 119:148, we read, *"My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word."* David also mediated in God's Word during his night watches. Awesome.

In 2 Samuel 12:16, we discover how David sought the face of the Lord in prayer and fasting into the night. *"David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground."*

In Psalm 30:5, David told us, *"For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning."* There lots of folks who want joy in the morning and all day, but they never want the season of weeping in prayer during the nighttime. It is better to weep to God at night and he answers and joy manifests as the sun rises. That will be a pleasant experience.

*Prophet Jeremiah*

In Lamentations 2:19, we see Jeremiah's experience of vigil.

*"Arise, cry aloud in the night at the beginning of the night watches; pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord; Lift up your hands to Him for the life of your little ones who are faint because of hunger at the head of every street."*

Can we have such a desperate situation and afford sleeping and snoring at night? When things call for prayer at night, the best option is nothing but prayer at night.

## Prayer of Authority

Jesus also empowers his disciples to pray with authority—authority of his name, authority in his name. There are prayers of petition or intercession;

prayer for worship and praise; prayer of agreement; and praying in the Spirit. There is also the prayer of authority. All prayers are to be directed to God in the name of Jesus and God honors and answers such prayer. However, there are time spiritual warfare demands being a little authoritative. Example of the usage of prayer of authoritative is seen in Jesus and his disciples.

*"And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all that were sick"* (Mat. 8:16—KJV).

In Matthew 8 :28-32.

*"When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. **29** And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before [b]the time?" Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them The demons began to entreat Him, saying, "If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." **32** And He said to them, "Go!" And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters."* "*And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."* (Mark 1:27—NIV).

Jesus used his divine authority in casting out demons and do mighty miracles. He showed us what we will be doing. When we embark by faith on this divine operation, great things are done through us. When Jesus was leaving this earth, he commissioned and commanded us to keep his ministry going and he gave us the promise of his power and presence. We can use his authority in prayer to do and get result that he got when. Jesus said,

*"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; **They** shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."* (Mark 16:17-18—KJV).

We are meant for signs and wonders and that can be manifested when we take our position of divine authority in prayer like

Jesus did.

***Paul prayed the prayer of authority***

Apostle Paul prayed the prayer of authority I believe several times in his life and ministry. He understood what Jesus did and asked his followers to do. Here is an example of demonstration of divine authority in prayer by Paul *in* Acts 16:16-18 (DLNT).

*"And it came about while we were going to the place of prayer that a certain servant-girl having a soothsaying spirit met us, who was bringing-about a large profit to her masters telling-fortunes. This one, while closely following Paul and us, was crying-out, saying, "These men are slaves of the Most-High God, who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation." And she was doing this for many days. And Paul, having been greatly annoyed, and having turned to the spirit, said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from her!" And it went out at the very hour."*

The prayer of authority can be short or brief, but it is often loaded with power. It can be like what was said of Jesus; "*he cast out the spirits with a word."* Or like what Paul said to the servant-girl we read in the passage above; "*"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from her!"* Christians have this authority and when it is exercised with faith great things
happen. We all can do that as well.

# Prayer to Cast out Demons

The idea of casting out of demons was not prominent in the Old Testament. We had little accounts of the practice. One of such was the story of king Saul and young musician David. In 1 Samuel 16:14-23, we read this narrative. *"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well. So, Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and …. bring him to me… And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him."*

Demons or evil spirit and Satan can oppress, obsess, and possess human beings bring so many pathological, mental, or psychological and psychiatric conditions. For Saul, it was distress and trouble not described or explained. In our modern world, we have the manifestation of evil spirit operation as stresses, depression, manic attacks, anti-social behaviors, self-injury, suicidal tendency or suicide, violence, fighting, and so many other manifestations. In Jesus time, it was almost like today with the exception that we are more technologically advanced than then and so the demonic activities tend to be advanced. We have lunacy, craziness, depression, oppression, obsession, and many other mental disorders.

It is interesting to know that when God's Spirit leaves a person, demons can be allowed to fill that person by God. Disobedience to God opens one to so many unspeakable consequences. For king Saul, it was distressing spirit that came to torment him. It is also amazing that music from an anointed servant of God can "chase" demons out and away and provide refreshing and wellness to people. That was the effects of David skillfully playing his harp for king Saul. David was casting out demons with his anointed music. We do not have so much of such activity until Jesus came to the scene. Undoubtedly, Satan and demons were having field days with humankind, tormenting, torturing, oppressing, possessing, obsessing, and making people life miserable. Graciously, redemption encompasses deliverance from satanic attacks and demonic infestation of human beings. Mankind was once helpless in the hand of Satan and demons. However, when Jesus came, that comes to an end for those who believe in him. In the early day of his earthly ministry, Jesus had to read aloud his manifesto publicly from what had been written many years before his arrival. The manifesto included deliverance from the hand of Satan and demons. Jesus read aloud Isaiah 61 verse 1, in Luke 4: 18.

*"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,*
*Because He has anointed Me*
*To preach the gospel to the poor;*
*He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,*
*To proclaim liberty to the captives*
*And recovery of sight to the blind,*
*To set at liberty those who are oppressed."*

And then, Jesus told his hearers, *""Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* Jesus made it known that as the Christ or the Anointed One of God, he will be preaching to the poor (poverty can be demonic or satanic in some context); he will be healing the brokenhearted (some kind of psychological illness or condition); he will be setting the captives free (that is those demons and Satan have put in bondage mentally, physically, and other ways); he will be providing recovery of sight to the blind (this was both for those who are blind physically and those who are blindly spiritually. Both can be satanic and demonic in some situation. The whole content of Jesus' ministry has a lot to do with casting out of Satan and demons from people's life. He fulfilled that as he told his audience because we read in the Gospel narratives many instances where Jesus confronted demons and cast them out to bring healing and deliverance to folks. He taught his disciples and empowered them to do the same. Ever since then, Christians have the authority and the Spirit and anointing to pray and cast out demons and stop satanic activities in people's life. This is a vital and integral part of the gospel mandate.

In his last words before ascending to heaven, he commissioned and empowered his followers to preach and teach the gospel, heal the sick, and to cast out demons. In Mark 16: 15 to 17, Jesus told his disciples these words.

*""Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Every part of this assignment carries equal weight. Preaching the gospel is not complete until we baptize believers and disciples them. Preaching the gospel is not complete until we demonstrate supernatural signs of casting out demons, speaking in tongues, proving that serpent (Satan or snake) has no power over us, laying hands on the sick to heal them divinely. We are not commanded to chose any of these mandate. They are interwoven and interrelated and should be done simultaneously and constantly. So, if we can witness, teach, preach, and heal, then we can cast out demons in the name of Jesus Christ. It is in his name and not our name or theology.

While Jesus was training the first disciples, he ensured they practiced these mandates. He empowered them and asked them to go out two-by-two. They (70 of them) came back with this testimony: *"When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!*" Luke 10:17 (TLT). They were able to cast out demons. After Jesus left, the act and ministry continue with both individual believer and the entire Early Church. It was recorded of believers and Phillip the Evangelist,

"*Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed, or lame were healed. So, there was great joy in that city*."(Acts 8: 4-8).

Praying to cast out demons is part of the Great Commission. Do not let anyone explains it away with theology or history. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. You can cast out demons. You can stop the work of Satan and demons in people's life. You can set the captive free in the name of Jesus. Let that be part of your prayer dimensions. We have the mandate from Jesus who promises he is always with us to the end of the age.

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God—NKJV.*

# Chapter 8
# The “Immortality” of Prayer

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God—CSB.*

In practical terms only God is known to be immortal. That means God is living forever; never dying or decaying. Immortality means not liable or subject to death; undying. For example, souls are known to be immortal, and can be remembered or celebrated through all time. Sometimes we often say the immortal words of an inspirational person. Immortality means not liable to perish or decay; imperishable; everlasting. Spirit beings are also known to be immortal. Spirits or ghosts do not die physically like human beings. Prayer should come from our immortal spirit—the very nature and image of God. Prayer is inspired by the Spirit of God living in us. The Bible says the *“Spirit prays for us according to the will of God.”* This conclusively makes our prayer immortal, undying, imperishable. Prayers as we see them recorded in the Holy Scriptures are an immortal part of the Divine plan of salvation. These petitions were made immortal by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables God's people to pray with yearnings which cannot be uttered. *“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."* –Rom.8:27 (KJV).

It is clearly expressed in this remarkable Scripture that every prayer empowered by the indwelling Spirit becomes an integral

and immortal part of the entire economy of God as disclosed in the plan of redemption. Every living thing dies—that is, loses the vital force that makes them move, reproduce, feed, response to stimuli, grow, excrete, communicate, etc. If we can say the words of some heroes are immortal, then, prayers of saints can be said to be immortal. Prayers never die. Prayers are not perishable or subject to decay. Our prayers live or exist forever. The Bible teaches us unambiguously that prayers do not just cease to exist. God does not just erase our petition, supplication, thanksgiving, worship, devotion, etc. the Scripture supports the immortality of prayer.

## Prayer Does not Die!

Prophet Malachi gives us a perspective about this matter when he wrote, *"Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name."*—Mal. 3:16 (ESV).

- God pays attention to those who fear him, worship him, and pray to him.
- God hears those who pray to him—without ceasing.
- God has a book of remembrance before him where he keeps records of the acts and deeds of his people—those who fear and esteem him and regularly cast burdens and worship to him in their prayers.

David tells us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; *"You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book."*—Psalm 56: 8—NLT

Our sorrows and tears are integral part of our prayers. We express our grieving, challenges, existential problems etc. in prayers. And God took note of them, recorded them, and
preserved them.

Apostle John gives a better view of this issue in the book of Revelation. *". . . Golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints."*—Rev. 5: 8. The Savior selected this faithful man to be the human channel through which his sublime truth could be given to his trusting saints. It pleased the blessed Lord to reveal the sublime truth

about prayer in John's picturesque language, **". . .** *Golden vials full of odors . . ."* Our Lord would evidently have us understand that prayer is a part of worship. It is like the odors of sweet incense ascending upward to God. The heavenly Father is pleased with our fervent prayers when we fill them with the fragrance of our sincere worship. The Savior would have us understand that our prayers are kept in golden vials in His Holy Place in heaven like the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid roundabout with gold, were kept in the most Holy Place in the temple.

Perhaps God's praying people have not fully grasped the fact that all sincere prayers are immortal, and the Lord preserves these prayers like a sweet incense kept in golden vials. We surely are aware that Christ's prayers are living petitions preserved for us in his plan of eternal salvation. He breathed the power of his endless life into his prayers. His prayers are immortal because He is immortal. His prayers will be answered because He is the answer to all prayer. I am thoroughly convinced that every prayer offered according to the will of God shall be answered either in our lifetime on earth, or after we have entered our heavenly home[31] The Scriptures encourage us to pray incessantly and importunately knowing within ourselves that God will answer our petitions in his own time, and according to his own will. Let us offer up prayers with strong crying and tears unto him that can save to the uttermost. Let us pray without ceasing until the hour comes for our immortal prayer to be poured out like sweet incense
poured out of golden vials.

*Prayer is labor of love*

Anything we do in love is counted by God as immortal. Prayer is a labor of love. It takes a heart of love for God and others to pray. When you labor for soul—whatever is the need of that soul—God sees your intention, your travail, your heart of love, etc. and keep a record of that deeds for you in eternity. Remember this truth from the Holy Writ.

"*But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister*"—Heb. 6:9, 10.

Do you minister love through your prayer? God does not forget such ministration and labor of love. Such labor has eternal rewards. In other

words, it such labor is imperishable, it is immortal.

*Prayer is an act of faith*

The Bible is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Praying is never a sin because it is an act of faith towards God. If you pray to God, you do well. God commends your faith. God appreciates your dependence and trust in him as you express yourself to him in all kinds of prayer. You have genuine faith in God if you have been praying all this while you do not give up even though, sometimes you do not receive instant answer, sometimes no answer comes at all. You have faith. You are a person of faith. And with your faith you are pleasing God. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*"—Heb. 11: 6 (NKJV).

Your incessant prayer to God means you believe in God, and you are diligently seeking him. So, you will have rewards from him because God is a rewarder of those wo diligently seek him. Keep praying. By your Bible-based and faith-inspired prayer you are demonstrating the fact that you belong to God and venturing to make him happy or pleased with you. God does not forget whatever we do in faith. Those we read about in the book of Hebrews chapter 11 are described as heroes of faith. That means they seek for God; they please God; they depend on God; and God reckon with them; God reward them; and blessed them. So, we can be amongst the Christian heroes of faith as we demonstrate our faith in God via praying and worship regularly. Faith response to God through prayer. And God responses to prayer of faith from his people. God answers prayers of faith because he is the rewarder of those who seek him; those who pray to him at all time. So, I encourage you to keep praying, keep trusting God, keeping your dynamic relationship with God by communicating with him always. Great is your reward now and in eternity. Prayer of faith lives into eternity and not just for now.

# Challenges to Prayer

Challenges are inevitable to both physical and spiritual activities. In fact, spiritual activities face more challenges than the physical activities. Why? Because everything that tends to godliness suffers more challenge because our enemy does not want us to succeed spiritually. Satan knows true life is godly life; spirituality depended on God and his grace. One of

the spiritual disciplines Satan opposes vehemently is prayer. You have seen the benefits and immortality of prayer. How can immortal men enjoy such benefits why Satan cannot? Satan will use anything to prevent God's people to fully enjoy the grace and divine benefits of prayer. Here are some challenges you may identify with as you struggle to please God and engage on scriptural prayer.

1. *Discouragement as challenge to prayer*

Perhaps you can identify with this in your prayer life. Sometimes we do not know what to say, how to pray, what to do. Sometimes we are tired, feeling bad, or we just do not have a desire to pray. We are discouraging sometimes because we do not receive answer to the prayers we had offered. Discouragement weakens faith and zeal for prayer. But do not be discouraged. God does not forget your prayer. He sees your tears and sorrows> God has great plans for you. He will answer and give you great joy in praying. Be encouraged. Let your faith be alive. Never give up praying. There is hope from the Lord. So, be full of hope. *"Be strong, vigorous, and very courageous. Be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* Joshua 1:9

2. *Doubt as challenge to prayer*

There are times good Christians ask the question, "God really there?" "Can he hear me?" "Does he care, even if he exists?" "Does prayer really even matter?" What do we call these types of question? That is doubt. Or we can call it doubtful disposition. Every Christian goes through that experience occasionally. Every Christian shows some doubts. Even Peter asked Jesus, *"if it is you bid me come."* John the Baptist was in that condition when he said, "*is it you* (referring to Jesus)?" or *"do we expect another one?"* Have you ever doubted about your faith? Do you experience doubt recently because of not having the answer to your prayer? You probably resonate will all these questions. It is not a sin to doubt. When doubt makes us go against God or to deny God and abandon Jesus is what is dangerous. I do have doubts occasionally. Nevertheless, I have walked with God for some good years that I can quickly say, "Lord, may your will be done." I have taken a leaf from Job who said, *"even if he slays me, yet I will hope him"* (Job 13: 15—KJV).

Now why do we doubt? What causes our doubt of God and his

power and love? I have seen some factors that try to influence us to see God not as he is at all time. God is unchanging and unchangeable. God is forever faithful. He Word is settled forever. His promises are yes and amen. Yet, we doubt God and his promises. Here are the reasons why we doubt.

*First,* Satan wants us not to believe God. So, he sews seed of doubt in our mind. If Satan can convince you to question God and his omnipotence you will end up doubting God. You have to understand God and his Word enough and have unflinching faith in his Word, and know when to say like Jesus, "get thee behind me Satan. God is true. God is faithful and his Word is true." Learn to use the Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God to fight the spiritual battle of doubting initiated by devil. Devil is still alive and keeps walking and roaring like lion. He is still looking who to devour. Satan has never ceased for "stealing, killing, and destroying" (John 10:10a) with his lies and throwing of doubts in Christians' minds. It is his old strategy and trick. *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* This is not only once in lifetime, or ten times in your lifetime. It is something we do as often as Satan brings his dirty tricks of doubt. What Jesus to overcome, we can also do. Jesus used the Word of God, and he expects us to do the same in spiritual warfare. Victory is sure that way.

*Second,* plus Satan's influence on us to doubt is our inadequate understanding of the Word of God or lack of the Word of God. Has not the Scriptures told us, *"Let the words of Christ dwells in you richly in all wisdom'?* (Col. 3:16). But do we make effort to have the Word in us richly in all wisdom? When the Word dwells in us richly, we will be able to develop faith in it and use it against the wile of Devil—which is primarily doubt. If a Christian is devoid of the Word of God, he can hardly overcome doubts. He will fall prey of Satan's schemes. We need to learn how to stand on the Word of God. That is the foundation for our prayer. That is the foundation for hope when we have prayed and expecting answer form God. That is what we lean on even when God has not delivered to us our answer. We can say, "if the Bible says it, then I believe it, and that settles it." The
Word is critical for our victory.

Remember how Abraham treated the Word of God. He had doubts like you and me. He had hope against hope like we all do. However, Abraham stepped up as God kept dealing with him with his

words. We can from this experience of Abraham—understanding god's Word and becoming stronger in faith. We are admonished,
*"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us…"*—Heb. 6: 12-17 (KJV).

What did God do for Abraham? God gave him his Word—his promise and them swore by himself to ascertain the authenticity of the performance. God gave Abraham his Word and his Oath (that is swearing). The Word of God and his Oath, the Bible says are *two immutable things.* And with these two immutable things we should have knowledge and assurance that *it was impossible for God to lie.* When we are fully aware that God cannot lie*, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us…*That was what destroyed Abraham's doubts. He became father of faith. Knowledge of God's Word, will, power, promises, and oath can help us to be like Abraham when we have prayed in faith.

*Third*, why do Christians doubt God? When Christians take off their eyes from the Lord Jesus, doubt can set him. Are we not encouraged to *"Keep your eyes on Jesus, our leader and instructor*…"? (Heb. 12: 2—KJV). Amplified Bible renders this verse as.
"*Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]."*
If you do not keep your eyes of faith on Jesus Christ but shift them on something or someone else, you will end up doubting Jesus. This is very serious. No matter how good you are in prayer, you must put your eyes of faith on Jesus. You need to look away from all that distracts you and your hope of obtaining answers to prayer. That is a spiritual formula we cannot manipulate or treat with lefty hand. Gaze on Jesus always. Fix your eyes

and full attention on Jesus and there will be no reason to doubt him. The better you gaze on him the more glorious he becomes, the more convince you become about his power, promises, and his faithfulness.

Why do Christians doubt God and his Word? Colossians 2 verse 8 gives the answer.

" *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ." (NIV).*

When Christians fail to watch and pray, especially in our age when everyone is going crazy with science, technology, and avalanche of knowledge through internet and computer, we can get caught and taken captive with *hollow and deceptive philosophy, human tradition, and the elemental spiritual forces of this world.* That is another reason Christians find it hard to fully trust God, depend on him, hope for him, and wait for answer to their prayer. Some made a joke with me sometimes ago. He said in the Western world, the government seems to provide lots of things for citizens and availability of infrastructure do not make people to see the need for serious prayer to God. That seems to be true if we look at it carefully. In the developing nations, needs tend to push people to God. There are five kinds of needs that are common to all humans. These are physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization. Without being bias in any form, the government of the developed nations help the citizens to meet needs more than those in developing nations of the world. However, meeting some basic needs have made some citizens of developed nations to rely less and less on God and faith. In developing nations, people may wake up not knowing where the breakfast is coming from. The next things many people do is to cry to God or look up to spiritual or metaphysical power to meet their needs and not the government food banks or pantries. In many developing nations, such infrastructure does not exit. Both systems have cons and pros of the story.

Meeting needs especially real and felt needs by the government or systems of any nation does not suppose to take people away from faith in God. Not having the necessity of life does not suppose to keep anyone from God or faith. Life is not just having mundane things of this world. Life is more encompassing more than that. Felt needs can be simplified to being synonymous to wants, wishes, hopes, and, in short to

issues, changes, results a person deems necessary for their lives. Real needs often refer to the real qualities and efforts a person needs to develop or utilize that lead to the results they desire. In most cases both are important for our earthly existence but not outside of God. God meets all kinds of needs if we trust him; if we take our case to him in prayer in whatever part of the globe you are. God knows our needs more than ourselves. However, we must show our dependence on him first.

When needs are not met as people expects, they easily fall prey to empty philosophies, high-sounding nonsense that originate from huma thinking and from some spiritual powers in this world and not from God or Christ. So, we are admonished:

*"Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ."* (NLT).

The same verse is rendered as*, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."* (ESV).

Do not give in to doubt or lack of trust in God because of felt or real needs; because of human philosophies and tradition that are against God. God still answers prayer—if we dare to pray and trust him.

*3. Impatience as challenge to prayer*

I was not a patient person until I was born again, and the Holy Spirit began to bear his fruit and gifts in me. Christianity teaches me to be patience. Prayer teaches patience. The Lord teaches me patience through prayer that does not have answer immediately. Prayers can seem to go on forever with only silence coming from heaven. When will God answer me? Yes. He promised to answer, and he does answer. We had seen early in this study how God answers prayer: It could yes. It could be no. It could also be wait. Each of these ways can come to display from heaven. God is a loving Father. Jesus says, *"You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead?"*—Luke 11:11. The same narrative is in Matthew 7: 9 to 11 says:

*"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"*

The reality is that, even if our earthly father gives us what we ask from them, in most cases we need to be patient. Maybe you have not come to that experience of being patient with you dad; I did. I remember many times when I was in school, and I needed to pay my tuition or get some pocket money. My dad is a father and if there is no harvest from the farm there is no money for us. My father would say, “I do not have a grocery store. My store is my farm. I cannot do anything unless I sell my farm produce. You need to be patience until the market day…” Friends, I had waited many times in my life for the harvest time or the market day when my father will sell his farm produce and give me what I requested from him. No matter how important such a request is, if I cannot exercise patience, I just fret or cry for nothing. I cannot force my father to steal what he does not have or cannot give me immediately. What, do I do? I learned to present my case as long a period as I can and then wait for my father to sell his farm produce. It worked for me. Patience works.

Some of us are *microwave Christians.* Whatever we want we want it now. Lots of Christians want to engage *the drive-through practice* with God. God never works like a microwave or like a drive-through store. God works with principles, processes, procedures, prayers, and patience. God wants us to learn obedience and patience in our relationship with him. If you are an *instant food person*, you do not belong to God’s kitchen. Every good thing take time. Prayer is a good thing. It takes time to pray and sometimes, it will take time to have the answer. Lack of patience may be a big challenge to some Christians. James gives us a good picture of patience. James tells us candidly and lovingly, and we better take heed.

*“Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.”*—James 5:7 (NKJV).

Now, tell me what you can do as a Christian without patience? God is patient, so should we. Farmers are patient. So, should we be. My mom and wife cook good dishes with patience. So, I must learn how to be patient while they cook otherwise, we eat not well cook dishes. Life teaches us patience everywhere we turn to. Prayer also requires our patience with God. Pray and wait for answer from God, in his gracious time. God never comes too early or too late, he comes at the right time.

God right time is the best. We should never allow impatience to discourage us from praying. We should never be impatient with God. God is a good Father—he will never give us stone instead of bread, neither will God give us snake for fish. If our earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will our Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! God gives good gifts. Answers to prayer are good gifts, but we need to learn how to be patient with God. David says, "*Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!"*—Psalm 27:14 (NKJV). In other words, be patient after you have done your best; the best in prayer.

*4. Temptations to sin as prayer challenge*

Prayer seems to be easy when you are not challenged internally through temptation. But, when the temptations enter in, it becomes drudgery. What type of temptation?

- Temptation to think God does not answer prayer.
- Temptation to pray little or not pray at all.
- Temptation to relax after some degree of victory and answers.
- Temptation to think our faith is working more than others.
- Temptation to be proud to others when we receive answers.
- Temptation to think we are more prayerful than others.
- Temptation to take prayer for granted.
- Temptation to use vain repetitions or unscriptural formula for prayer, relying on our denominational liturgies or theologies, etc.

The good news is that "*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*—1 Cor. 10:13 (NKJV).

Devil can tempt us. But that is ok. Temptation is never a sin until we yield to it. Al Green encourages us in this Hymnal.

*Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin*
*Each victory will help you or some others to win*
*Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue*
*Look ever to Jesus and He'll carry you through*
*Just ask the Savior to help you*
*To comfort, strengthen and keep you*

*He is willing to aid you*
*And He will carry you through*[32]

Even when we are tempted, the way out is still to pray. Just ask the Savior to help you; to comfort, strengthen and keep you. He is willing to aid you. And He will carry you through. Human schemes cannot overcome devil's panoplies because they are spiritual in nature. However, when we run to our Refuge—the Lord Jesus in prayer, we can overcome any type of temptation no matter how severe they are.

Temptations abound here and there. But God's grace is sufficient for us.

*5. Laziness as challenge to prayer*

God hates laziness. God does little or nothing with lazy
Christians. Laziness is neither a gift nor a fruit of the Holy Spirit. If you are lazy physically it will affect your spiritual life. And if you are lazy in spiritual life, the impacts would be so great on your physical life.

*"The lazy person buries his hand in the dish [losing opportunity after opportunity]; It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth."* Proverbs 26: 15 (AMPC). Have you been losing many opportunities because you are lazy in prayer? Laziness can be serious challenge to the spiritual discipline of prayer. Here are some negative things laziness will do to your prayer life

1. You can just give up or never establish spiritual habits of prayer that can sustain you in dry times or through the business of modern life.
2. You can be postponing praying indefinitely and end up not coming
   back to it. Procrastination of prayer opportunity can end up in not having that opportunity again.
3. You will always feel tired and lack zeal and zest for prayer. You can
   end up enjoying more sleeping time than praying time.
4. You can be inconsistent in prayer meeting with other Christians, family, or in your private prayer.
5. You can end up having unreasonable excuses not to pray or devotion. When last did you have a meaningful quiet time? Lazy?
6. Bible study can be a burden instead of pleasure. If you do
   not know the Word of God, you may not be an effective prayer person. God's promises are needed for effective prayer.

7. You can be missing the great joy of answers to prayer. Jesus says,
   *"ask and you will receive that your joy may be joy*." Lazy Christians do not have the spiritual joy that comes from answers to prayer because they often pray little or not pray at all. Laziness kills their prayer life and deprives them of divine blessings and joy of the Lord.
8. To lazy Christian's prayer can be duty instead of means of communication with God. As duty prayer can be legalistic. As a means of relational communication, it
   brings joys and peace.

Are you lazy when it comes to payer? Can you give one-tenth of your time to prayer every day? I hear some lazy readers saying, how? Here is a simple Arithmetic. There are 24 hours in a day. One-tenth of that is 2 hours 40 minutes. Can you pray for 2 hours 40 minutes in a day? Why not? Take the time of the day you know you will active. To me that is about 10 hours. Then divide 2 hours (120 minutes) and 40 minutes by 10 active period of the day. That is 120 + 40 = 160 minutes. Divide 160 minutes by 10. That will give 16 minutes per hour. This tells means I can pray for 16 minutes in every 1 hour I am awake and active in a day.

Honestly, we can do that. We can pray for just about 15 to 16 minutes every hour of the day when we are not sleeping. That means we can pray without ceasing. We can always pray. We can pray all manners of prayers. We can be prayerful Christians if we want to be. We can be communicating with God every blessed hour of the day. It may look huge for some people to pray for 2 hours and 40 minutes in a day. But if it is 16 minutes every hour you are active, that can be done. That also transpire to being proactive to pray while driving, during break time at work, when you feel a little free at work, etc. Do you know how many hours many Christians use to watch TV every day? Lazy Christians can do that, but they cannot create 2 hours 40 minutes to pray in day. Do you know how many hours a standard movie is? I think about 2 to 3 hours. Careless and lazy Christians have no problem watching two movies or more in a day but cannot create 2 hours 40 minutes of a day or 16
minutes in every hour to pray. Who are we doing or deceiving?

My dad would always make a joke when I was much younger. I understand that joke now. He would say, *"a lazy person cannot be a*

*Christian."* I did not know where he got that philosophy or theology from. Now I understand better. If you are lazy to pray, lazy to witness, lazy to go to regular church service, lazy to give, lazy to help others, lazy to do your mundane work, lazy to study your Bible, lazy to visit the prison, lazy to visit the sick in hospital, lazy to give or feed the poor, lazy to clothe the naked, lazy to worship, lazy to sing to the Lord, lazy to train your children about things of God, lazy in everything, how can you be a good Christian? Your laziness is a big challenge to your prayer life.

*6. Spiritual dryness as challenge to prayer*

Sometimes dryness is good for us. dry prayers are a gift from God. Yes, we all long to have consolations in our prayer, just as a child longs for candy and having those denied is difficult, but healthy for us. It is in dryness that our faith is tested and strengthened. Spiritual dryness is when God seems distant, and prayer becomes a chore or duty. This can happen at any time. Some people call this wilderness experience. Have you ever experienced that? Every Christian goes through that experience at a point in your Christian life. Spirituality dryness is a period when one lacks spiritual encounter, experience, or spiritual consolation in one's spiritual life. It is a form of spiritual crisis experienced subjectively as a sense of separation from God or lack of spiritual feeling, especially during prayer, studying of Bible, or and worship. During spiritual dryness or wilderness seasons we can encounter a state of feeling depleted or emptiness. Spiritual dryness affects not only our spirit but also our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. One may feel as if one's spiritual life is stuck in a rut. You might notice the devotional life becoming less regular.

What causes this experience? Spiritual dryness comes when we overextend ourselves and do not take time to be alone with the Lord.[33]

In my experience, my inner emptiness or dryness is caused by,

- My self-abandonment. It happens to me when I begin to not be loving to myself.
- My inner emptiness comes from a lack of connection with your spiritual source of love. That is, from not opening to the love-that-is-God and bringing that love to myself through true thought and loving action in my own behalf.
- My hiding myself from other children of God who could have been

source of spiritual encouragement or inspiration. The Bible warns us not abandon the fellowship of one another. One of the reasons is to avoid spiritual dryness. *Iron sharpens iron* says the Word of God.

- My falling or yielding into temptation and sins that are foreseeable and avoidable. Some self-indulgence, self- conceit, presumptuous sins, sin of the flesh and spirit, sin of prayerlessness, intentional ignoring Spirit's promptings, and nudging, grieving the Spirit of God, suppressing the move of the Spirit in my life, quenching the Holy Spirit, etc. Sin can cause distance between you and God.
- My foolish deeds and failure to confess them to God. Foolishness may not be sins, but they have consequences. They can lead us to spiritual dryness.
- Whenever I experience life tragedy, my adversity has come to wear down my hope and test my faith, leaving me feeling vulnerable.
- My becoming or focusing my relationship with God to that of two legalism. In other words, my performance becomes more important than my intimacy with God.
- When I have given out to the point of being empty and failed to refill my spiritual tank with divine virtues.
- Whenever I try not to sustain my connection to God. Whenever I found myself to be busy that it has overtaken my life to the point where I tend to have forgotten the value of time with God.
- When I tend towards believing a lie and need God's truth to set me free. Deception negatively colors our perspective of ourselves and God.

*How do we overcome spiritual dryness?*

Most importantly, we need to reconnect to our first Love (the Lord) and renew our minds with his Word. Spiritual nourishment flows out of an intimate relationship with God. God is a loving father. Remember you are a child of God. You are thirsty and dry, and you can experience refreshment when the rain of the Holy Spirit comes upon you again. So, seek for the rain. Seek for the Bread of life. Seek earnestly for the Water of life. He is close by you. Yield to him again and overcome the dryness. We do not have to be like Moses who ran away for forty years, and God had to use something supernatural to catch his attention. God graciously does that for us. However, if we discover we are in the wilderness, we can trace our feet back to grace without wasting time.

If it is a matter of sin(s), repent and go back no more. If we confess our sins God is faithful to forgive and cleanse and restore and refresh us again. *"Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands,*
*you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded"* (James 4:8).
Sometimes, all we need is going back to prayer. Jeremiah 29 verse 13 says, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* Just do that! Pray for restoration and refreshment of the Lord. God is faithful. Whether we are asking for ourselves, our church, or our nation, Hosea chapter 10 gives us what we need to do to end drought and prepare for rain, refreshment, and
restoration.
*"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes and showers righteousness on you."* (Hos. 10:12)
Here are the highlights in that verse.

- Sow for yourselves righteousness—go back to right living.
- Reap the fruit of God unfailing love—depend on God's love.
- Break up your fallow ground—whatever is fallow or hard in your life, break it in prayer.
- Continue to seek the Lord until he sends showers of blessings.

7. *Physical, mental, or emotional problems as challenges to prayer*

Sometimes, we suffer physically, mentally, and emotionally. These conditions can constitute challenges to our prayer. It is hard to pray, because we sometimes feel that a loving God would make it stop but he seems to be delaying or not answering at all. God is still there, anyway.
In my ministry as a Chaplain, I have met Christians who could not pray at all or the way they want because of their health conditions. Some have pathological illnesses that have taken toil on the physical body making them weak to pray. They would just complain of tiredness, lack of strength, lack of appetite to eat, and inability to pray for themselves.
Some have psychological conditions like depression, anxiety, confusion, unexplainable disorders that have affected their psychic or minds and they cannot pray. How could you help a dementia or Alzheimer's person to remember to pray or pray as he or she likes to pray? How can you ask

someone under the destructive effects of liquor or drug to focus his mind and heart on prayer? Many people are passing unspeakable and indescribable medical and psychological condition that kill their prayer. If you are healthy physically and psychologically today, raise your hand up and worship and pray the Lord.

Some of these conditions do not go away and the victims must live with them. Sometimes the physical pain, the emotional pain, the spiritual pains are so much no one knows what to do. Sometimes, all I must do is just be or present with such folks. Your prayer can be like inflicting fresh pain, so, just keep calm and provide a loving and therapeutic and friendly presence. You action of love is the prayer or words they need. Their prayer life has been put to low or zero level. Life has turned the other side to them. Does God know? What will God do? How will God help them? Well, I do not have the answer to these questions. I believe in the Sovereignty of God. I believe in the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God. I believe in the mercy and grace of God. So, in my heart I commit such people to God and his grace and sit down and be with them calmly, unjudgmentally, and patiently. That is what we call therapeutic presence, compassionate presence. When we are in congruence with people we can not even pray for. God knows better and he only how to meet there needs when they cannot pray again. May the Lord help such people who are in such situation that they cannot express their needs to God again. It is a hard place to be in life.

If you can still pray in your condition, please keep praying. Remember, prayers do not die. Prayers are immortal. God has a record of all our prayer from childhood until we see him face to face. Never cease to prayer. You do not know when you will need it. God uses the prayer we prayed that he has stored to bless us when we could no longer pray. Many of us will experience that condition when we can no longer knee and pray, stand for some minutes to pray, even lie down, and pray. The prayers we have made will come up as a memorial to God at that time. So, never stop praying. Never abandon prayer. Never under-estimate the potency and longevity of prayer. Prayer is immortal and imperishable. Keep praying. If you do not have answer today, you may have it in the future. God in his wisdom knows what he does with our prayer now and in the future. You may have some challenges now, just keep praying. God hears, answers, and

preserves our prayer eternally!

## Overcoming the Challenges to Prayer

To every problem there is solution. Or let me say there may or will be a solution. It may not have been discovered by men. To the challenges of prayer there are some scriptural recommendations on how to overcome them. Here are to exam these recommendations.

*Understanding your relationship with God.*

If we will overcome the challenges to our prayer life, we need to re-appraise our understanding of God. How do you understand God? A good knowledge of God and how you relate with him will show how your prayer life is. God is not a tyrant or despond. God is not a dictator or hard and harsh person difficult to relate with. In many cultures of the world God is portrayed as hard, loveless father who kids run away from or hide when they hear his voice. How do you see and understand God? Some Christians, unfortunately see and take God as such a hostile father. I encourage you to study the Bible well. Go and study how Jesus related with the Father—his Father, Your Father, and have a change in your mind and heart about God. God is described by every gracious word you can imagine in our world. And that is who he was, he is, and so he will forever be for the redeemed. We come to enjoy God because of Jesus. Ask Jesus to show you who God is, and I believe he would. I cannot emphasize this one enough. Many of us struggle to understand how a perfect God could love us and want a relationship with us. But this is due, mainly, to our bad perceptions of our own dignity and the way God loves us unconditionally.

Make some effort to get this straight. Find some useful and good resources about Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit. This is important because when you do not know God and what to do with him, or how to relate with him, those resources can help. Resources include people, friends, books, websites, messages of Bible teachers or pastors, Video message, music, biblical pictorials, or whatever you can lay your hands on to learn about

God. A good knowledge of God will help your prayer.

*Be faithful or consistent with the biblical Sacraments*

What are Sacraments? Do not lose me at this point. I am an Evangelical Christian, an ordained and endorsed Baptist clergy. The English word

“sacrament” is derived indirectly from the Ecclesiastical Latin *sacrāmentum*, from Latin *sacrō* ("hallow, consecrate"), from *sacer* ("sacred, holy"). This in turn is derived from the Greek New Testament word "mysterion". In Ancient Rome the term meant a soldier's path of allegiance. Tertullian, a 3rd-century Christian writer, suggested that just as the soldier's oath was a sign of the beginning of a new life, so too was initiation into the Christian community through baptism and Eucharist or the Holy Communion or the Lord’s Supper.[34] Over the years in Christendom a **s**acrament**t** is any Christian rite recognized as of particular importance and significance[35]

The Catholic Church, Hussite Church and the Old Catholic Church recognize seven sacraments:

1. Baptism.
2. Reconciliation (Penance or Confession).
3. Eucharist (or Holy Communion).
4. Confirmation.
5. Marriage (Matrimony).
6. Holy Orders.
7. Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction).

Now tell me which of these sacraments any Bible-believing or Evangelical Church not observing? I had occasion to attend Catholic Church service as a young boy in primary school. As I grew up in Baptist Church, I discovered we did everything the Catholic Church does except is different format. To me that was ok. As adult, I have seen many Evangelical Churches especially many Pentecostals Christians condemning what the Roman Church does as Sacraments. That kind of put me off. Interestingly, many of *the mysterion* we saw or learned from Catholicism have fully come into play in many Evangelical churches, specifically Pentecostal Church movement which initially outrightly was condemning Roman Catholic Church. Please who is wrong? What is wrong with Christian Sacrament? Is it because the Evangelicals fail to carefull study and understand the meaning of the word and practice? Or is it sheer ignorance of the Bible especially New Testament? To your surprise, Jesus was sacramental! Jesus sanctions and observes Sacraments except that he did not marry. So, who are we following when we even fail to use the word, sacrament?

To overcome the challenge, you may be having in prayer may

require of you to be faithful and consistent in observing the path of allegiance to Jesus we call Sacraments. The Scripture tells us to do so.
*"Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage*
*and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near."*—Heb. 10:25 (LTB).

Our *church meetings* technically mean our *Masses or* assembly of Christians, fellowship, church services, Sunday, or Midweek services, call it any name. Mass means the ritual of chants, readings, prayers, and other ceremonies used in the celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Communion. The same name is used in high Roman Catholic and Anglican churches.

Why must we be faithful and consistent with our Sacraments and church meetings or Masses? It is God established it and expects us to do it because God meets us in those services or Masses. It is because none of the Sacraments and Masses is done out of the arena or environment or context of prayer. Our worship services often have Baptism, confession of sins, Holy Communion, confirmation of our faith with one another, paying attention to our spiritual leaders (Bishop or Pastor or Overseer) who facilitate or conduct the worship service. This is the Holy Order. We also do pray and anoint the sick when there is need to do so. This is what we called worship or Mass in the Catholic context. Tell an Evangelical, how was your Mass today? You may have a funny reaction. Why? Masses are done by Catholic and not Evangelicals. Some Evangelical absconds from it. It sounds strange or they are ignorance. This is always done with and in prayers. What is wrong with saying Mass in our Baptist or Pentecostal churches? I do not know yet.

The honest point is that if you can make daily Mass or once a week, you have doubled your access to the greatest gift ever given humanity—meeting with other children of God, meeting with God, having the opportunity to pray or be prayed for. I tell you the more you go to church meetings or Masses, or church services on regularly basis the more you are surely going to get a multitude of graces. Show me a Christian in any denomination who seldomly goes to church meeting, Masses, or worship services, I will tell you, you will see a Christian who will not be praying as he or she ought to, or with time abandon praying. You can overcome the challenge of becoming uninterested in prayer,

tendency to abandon prayer, praying less and less by joining yourself with children of God who pray in church meetings or services or in Masses. Some people abandon faith by firstly getting lethargic in prayer. If you cool off your prayer life, other aspect of your Christian life will eventually cool off or become cold or dead with time.

*Establish good habit of consistent personal prayer*

According to a 2009 study published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, it takes 18 to 254 days for a person to form a new habit. The study also concluded that, on average, it takes 66 days for a new behavior to become automatic[36]. There is another wise observation that what we do consistently for 21 days will become a lifelong habit; we can hardly break from it. That is the power of any habit. Why do not we form the habit of prayer in such a powerful way that we will not find easy to break or stop? I tell you; it will not hurt you. It will make you a better Christian person. You should be able to rely on our habits to help you, and not hurt you, in your prayer. So, if you can commit to a routine of prayer for 2 months, you should start to lay the groundwork for healthy prayer habits for life. I suggest you give this a trial if you have challenges in your prayer life. It is free of charge!

*Accountability partner counts*

I think we do well to have someone we can count on to tell us how sincerely or honestly, we are doing in life—including our prayer life. Some pastors use other pastor. Some professionals use other professional. If that is hard to come by, why not commission your spouse to be honest with you on your prayer life? You need someone who is more objective than you are to look at your prayer life and see how you are doing and how the Holy Spirit is working. If you have not been praying daily for at least 12 months, then you probably are not ready for spiritual direction. But, even if you are not ready for spiritual direction, having a good friend who prays regularly to talk to can be good. My wife is in this role for me. She is called to the intercessory ministry, and she loves to pray, and she prays now and then. What will I do than to gear up my prayer life as well? I am not called to intercessory ministry, but I need to be prayerful. Now and often, my wife request we fast and pray. Sometimes, I cannot yield to her request because of some personal good reason. But we do pray and fast together very often. It has helped me a lot. If I seem to be cooling it off, she will ask me, what is Jesus telling you today? That means if you

pray, Jesus will have something for you in the process. Friends, what has Jesus told you recently in your prayer or communication with him? You need an accountability partner. Remember, “iron sharpens iron,” so a friend sharpens the prayer life of his or her friend. It is spiritual principle that will help to overcome barriers in praying effectively and regularly.

*Change your method or style of praying: Try different prayers*

Monotony can be boring. Prayer should not be boring but exciting and lively. That is the way I understand it. We should never let our praying and prayer be monotonous and boring. If we are using vain repetition our praying will be boring. If we are not always inspired by the Holy Spirit to pray, praying will be boring. If we follow some old kind of liturgy of our church that has never changed over many years, praying can be boring. The Bible recommends all kinds or manners of prayer. We need to learn what this means and engage ourselves in them. Then, our praying will never be boring again. We all have different tastes in prayer, just like most other things in life. So, try out different types of prayer and see which wok for you. One caveat – do not give up too soon on a type of prayer. It might take a good long time to discover whether it is good for you or not.

*Have you experience reading and praying with the Bible?*

The Bible in entirety is a prayer book. The Bible is our Book of Prayer. While I enjoy the *Book of Common Prayer* published by the Methodist and Catholic, I discovered that the contents are nothing but scriptures and related matters. We can take the Bible and read it and pray with the words and stories in it. We can take tons of promises of promises of God in the Bible and pray with them. When we pray with the Bible text, we are sending God’s Word back to him. And the Bible says, *“…for I am alert and active, watching over My word to perform it.”*—Jer. 1:12 (AMPC). Realistically, the Bible is a gift to us from God. We can hear him speak to us personally and be continually challenged by it. If you do not know where to start with praying with Sacred Scripture, start with Ephesians chapter 1, Psalm 23, Psalm 103.

*Praying with fasting regularly can truly spice up our prayer life*

There is great power in praying. Also, there is great power in fasting. There is greater power when we combine praying with fasting. We see it in Scripture when Jesus fasted and prayed and then called his Disciple to do the same. When we have better control over the desires of

our bodies, we can pray better. One of the reasons many people could not pray effective is because they have no control over their body. Fasting is a spiritual tool not only sharpens our spirit but helps to put our flesh under control. If you have health issues, please seek medical counsel. If not, banish the myth and fear in fasting. God asks us to seek him with praying and fasting. He does not intend to harm or hurt us in the process. In fact, he blesses us abundantly when we do. If anything tells you, 'hey you cannot do that,' it may not be the Spirit of God. Tell whatever tells you that you cannot pray and fast to get thee behind you. Tell that voice, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Tell yourself you can do it by the grace of God. Resist the devil, do not listen to the voice of your flesh, or other carnal Christians or unbelievers who probably do not know the value of spiritual disciplines. Do not tell yourself you cannot do it when you have never tried it. I believe God will not ask us to do anything he does not provide us with his grace. Tap into the grace of praying and fasting. Come out of your self-created comfort zone. Come up into the realm of the supernatural through praying and fasting. One of the reasons why you have not enjoyed breakthrough in prayer life is probably because you have not coupled your prayer with fasting. Now go and try it depending on the grace of God.

*Overcome your distractions by prioritizing prayer*

May a schedule for prayer like Peter and John (Acts 3). Peter and John were going to the Temple at the hour of prayer. They had a schedule for prayer weekly. Do we have such schedule? Schedule time for prayer. Bump something else less important. Get up early. Do whatever you have to do, but do not let a day go by without spending time with the most important person in your life. Create regular to commune with God. Sometimes, God nudge you to pray, Sometimes, the Spirit invites you for prayer. Sometimes, you have some burden within you to pray. Just yield. Abandon everything you are doing and obey such inspiration.

While I was writing this last part of this book on a Saturday, I was distracted with the current news on TV. It was political news in the USA featuring how the impeachment rials of former American president by the US Senators. I have been following the events and it was the last day and the last part of the event. I was curious to see how it will end that afternoon. However, the Holy Spirit asked me to leave whatever I was doing and go to pray. I pushed it off for a while. The voice came from the

Spirit of God again to knee down and pray right in my living room. I tried to take some more time to see what was happening. The still small voice came again, “knee down and start praying.” I did. I knew it was the Lord. So, I obeyed and found myself praying for the next 60 minutes for US, mission project plan to East Africa, my children, my aged parents, many nations having political and social challenges, etc. I had never planned for that for that afternoon. At the end I
felt so relived and happy I did obey the Lord.

Distractions come in different shapes and sizes to our spiritual endeavor. Many Christians could not make a headway in spiritual life because of distractions. Some things may look legitimate but, overall, they are distraction. For example, see how many people glue to their cell phones in our time are. Do we have to check our phones every seconds? Probably not. But that is what we do. Some folks cannot even put their phones far away from them as they sleep and when they wake up to ease themselves right in the middle of the night, and sometimes many times, they will check their phones. The digital mobiles tech is great. However, it can be a great distraction to almost everything we need to do. It becomes more serious when they distract us from spiritual disciplines like praying.

Check this, it seems to be scary to me. Americans check their phone on average once every 12 minutes – burying their heads in their phones 80 times a day, according to new research. A study by global tech protection and support company Asurion found that the average person struggles to go little more than 10 minutes without checking their phone.[37] Americans now check their phones 96 times a day – that's once every 10 minutes, according to new research by global tech care company Asurion. That is a 20 percent daily increase from a similar survey conducted by Asurion two years ago.[38] Our mobile devices, for example, cell phones can be a challenge to our entire life is we are not careful. Your phone is presently number one distractor to your spiritual life or prayer life now. If you can be checking your phone every 12 minutes, why can you pray 16 minutes every
hour.

There is no magic wand to overcome distraction than to realize it and cut it off. You may need to pray about it. The simple way to overcome a distraction is to not give into it. Distraction is a form of temptation we

need to deal with. Once you realize you are distracted turn your heart and mind from it and turn them back to your prayer. From experience of some people and myself, this simple act is the easiest way to defeat distractions. And we can all do that. We can overcome our distraction and improve in our spiritual life. We can use time we use for many distractive things for prayer, Bible study, worship, contemplation, and some other creative things in life. Distraction can hinder us from achieving some important landmarks in our life. Discover it and shun it.

*Make praying a natural thing: Do not over-think or over plan prayer*

Prayer should be Christian breath. It should be as easy as every second breathing. We need prayer like we need air. If we are short of air, we are in danger. That is how prayer is. It must be natural. Do not be too hard on yourself. Struggles in your prayer life do not make you a terrible Christian. They are a universal experience of everyone who prays. So, do not get down on yourself for struggles. Do not freak or strike yourself so hard about prayer; let the Spirit of supplication assist you. Too often we tend to complicate something that should come naturally to us. We are made for communion with God. Prayer is merely directing your mind and heart in the direction of God. If we over-complicate it, we get caught up in the externals. Individuals do this. Churches do that. How many well-planned programs for prayer ended up in not praying? Prayer is a spiritual thing. We cannot plan it without then Spirit who wants to pray through us. The grace to pray effectively comes from God; let us ask and receive that. The words for prayer come from the Spirit of God in us who desires to pray through us with words that cannot be uttered. Let us yield to him.

We need to be humble about this. We are not the prayer-planner, the Holy Spirit. We are not the “prayer warriors,” the Spirit of God is. We do not usurp his role and make anything tangible out of it. Become a prayer warrior only in the Spirit of the Lord and not you are thinking and planning and execution of prayer with the grace of God. Praying is a gift we receive from God—we are not the creator of praying and prayer. So, let us make it spiritually natural. Let flow into what God has designed for us. We need to pray for humility about this. To the extent we are humble is the extent of the power of God’s grace changing our lives. Without

humble prayer, God is unable to reach us, because we have no interior need for Him. Remember the Pharisees and the Tax-collector praying in the Temple. Pharisee was not humble. He designed his prayer. Had his phraseology. Sounded so sanctimonious. Praised himself. Boasted about his self-achieved success in praying and fasting. The Pharisee prayed about how good he was, but the tax collector asked for God's mercy as he was a sinner. Jesus said that it was the tax collector who went home justified before God while the Pharisee was not. Jesus concluded, *"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*—Luke 18: 9-14.

So be humble about praying and prayer. Allow God's Spirit to initiate and lead. Let prayer be natural and not duty. Do not make praying legalistic. Prayer is grace, let it always be by God's grace. When prayer is in grace and with grace, it is always graciously done. Let your prayer be graciously natural and not a legalistic burden.

*Do you have quiet?'*

Susan Taylor said, "We need quiet time to examine our lives openly and honestly – spending quiet time alone gives your mind an opportunity to renew itself and create order." This must be done in the context of prayer for Christians. What is quiet time? It is time you are quiet indeed. It is time you cut off the cacophonies of voice around you and even in your soul and mind to intensely listen to God. That can take many forms. Quiet time, also stated as heart-to-heart **time**, or one-on-one time with the Creator, is a regular individual session of Christian spiritual activities, such as prayer, private meditation, contemplation, worship of God or study of the Bible.

*What is the purpose of quiet time?* We need quiet time, that uninterrupted silence that is so elusive and prized to rest and renew our mind before our God. You may not even discover anything novel when you are on the move in mind and body. In my quiet time I have heard God speaking to me deep spiritual things. I got inspiration to write. I connect with the Divine energy and get up fresh. Our modern lives are filled with noise.

The proper procedure for quiet time involves quietening us to hear God – both internally and externally. Find a peaceful and quiet place to pray. Church is helpful in this respect – so if you can stop at a church,

even for a short time, I recommend you do so. The Bible says in Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Focus your mind on Him. Calm down, relax, and recognize His presence. Take a deep breath and focus your thoughts on the Lord. Get into the Word of God.

Psychology tells us we need quiet time for the following reasons[39] just as the Bible teaches us. Here are the psychological perspectives.

1. You need to rest to renew.

Human has the tendency to keep moving and working. However, it is impossible to just keep going without ever stopping to rest. Even machines need downtime for repairs, lubrication, and maintenance. The human body is no different, with the exception that the mind often tries to influence continued action at the expense of physical, emotional, and spiritual needs and life. Hence, wisdom demands that we have quiet time, that uninterrupted silence that is so elusive and prized, to rest and renew.

2. Quiet time helps you discover what is important.

Quiet time helps us to discover what is important to us spiritually. When you are constantly doing things, caught up in the whirlwind of the moment, you may tend to forget or ignore what is important. By involving yourself in too many activities, taking on too much or spending time on unnecessary and time-wasting projects and tasks, you are losing sight of what matters most. You need quiet time to rediscover what you have neglected and to discover what is most significant to your life if you have never done so.

3. When it is quiet, you can make order out of chaos.

When you are deep in a flurry of activity is no time to organize and put priority on tasks. You are too busy working on making progress. The time to examine your reasons for what you are doing and to figure out some semblance of order that works for you is during times of quiet self-reflection.

4. There’s grace and spiritual renewal in quiet time.

All the negatives attendant in everyday life can overshadow the good and positive that co-exist. You need quiet time to allow grace to suffuse you and your spirit to renew itself in those golden moments of quiet introspection. Savor the silence. Allow your thoughts to wander where they will and then draw back your attention to your center. This is the

core of psychological mindfulness and meditation (this is what the Bible teaches as renewing of mind).

5. Quiet time reinforces your sense of place in the universe.

Since you are human and not a machine, you can put things into perspective. This is difficult when you are crashing to meet a deadline or attempting to multitask. You need quiet time to do that. It is now when you can think about where you are in the universe, to discover your purpose and find meaning in what you are fully capable of doing in this lifetime.

6. Reduce stress with regular quiet time.

If you cannot escape stress, you can certainly do something to mitigate it. One quick and straightforward way to reduce stress is to carve out 10-15 minutes regularly to sit quietly, meditate, listen to music, go for a peaceful walk, take a brief nap. If you have longer, perhaps on your lunch break, you can extend your quiet time. The point is not how long you are quiet, but that you give quiet time its proper place in your life. There is no easier way to nourish your body and soul. A bonus is that you return to the task at hand at work, home, or school energized and more
focus.

7. Quiet time helps you heal.

It is no coincidence that caretakers and medical professionals encourage a darkened, quiet room for patients in recovery from surgery, illness or other chronic conditions that require constant management. Healing takes time and the body needs complete rest to jumpstart this process. Emotional wounds from anxiety and depression similarly benefit from quiet time. In a fast-paced world, stepping off the treadmill — as is necessary when sick or recuperating from serious illness — and allowing the quiet to envelope you are basic components in the overall healing process. Realistically, the world is full of noises and distractions. Sometimes, the din is so loud and the interruptions so many and varied that it is tough to tend to what is necessary and right, much less what is desired. The yearning for peace and quiet, however, has more significance than just taking a well-deserved break. It is an important and integral part of growth, renewal, and joy of living. But making the time to find comfort in solitude and silence is often seen as an unaffordable luxury. After all, if you are off being quiet and reflecting, youre not accomplishing anything, right? This is the wrong way to look at the

situation. When you are quiet and engaging in self-reflection, you are doing something much more profound and that is helping to establish a cadence and priority, finding that life-affirming spark of enthusiasm and coaxing it into a fire that motivates and inspires you to act.[40]

If psychology has so much to tell us about quiet time, how much more if we consider biblical teachings on this theme. Quiet time enhances our spiritual life. Quiet time is the avenue for heart-felt prayer. If Jesus had period of solitude and aloneness with the Father, why can we follow him? All spiritual persons I believe have this sacred moment called quiet time when they pray, meditate, reflect, repent, renounce, refresh, renew their faith and commitment and restore fellowship God. All spiritual persons create this sacred moment at various time of the day—some early in the morning, some at noon, other at the sunset, some at midnight, others before sunrise, some at break time at work, etc. to deep inwardly and discover something God has deposited in them. I believe great leaders and those who invent or discover ideas and some life-changing things have always been using this sacred moment of solitude, quietness, silence, time of deep reflection and thinking. Quiet time is very important to every life of our life. Why no do it, or revive it?

# God Still Answers Prayer: Keep Praying

God still answers prayer; so, keep praying and keep watching. That is where our victory in life is. That is what our lord Jesus used to overcome the enemy while he was here. That is what he has taught us to do. Obedience is rewarding. Jesus tells us to ASK (Mat. 7:7). He would not have told us if God does not answer prayer of his people. In fact, Jesus says up till now we have not asked anything. He wants us to ask whatsoever we need in prayer and God will answer. We will glorify God and our joy will be full. Without God answering prayers we do not need prayers. There tons of promises of God in the Bible about God's readiness to answer prayer. Prayer is designed by God to communicate and fellowship with us. God still answers prayer.

***Some Promises on Prayer from the Old Testament***

Psalm 91:14-16:

> Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him.
> I will set him securely on high because he has known My name.

“He will call upon Me, and I will answer him.
I will be with him in trouble.
I will rescue him and honor him.
“With a long life I will satisfy him
And let him see My salvation.

Psalm 50:14-15:

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving
And pay your vows to the Most High.
Call upon Me in the day of trouble.
I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.

Psalm 10:17:

O Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble.
You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear

Exodus 22:22-23:

You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry.

Psalm 102:19-20

For He looked down from His holy height.
From heaven the Lord gazed upon the earth,
To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To set free those who were doomed to death,

Isaiah 41:17:

The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none,
And their tongue is parched with thirst.
I, the Lord, will answer them Myself,
As the God of Israel, I will not forsake them.

2 Chronicles 7:14:

If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

***Jesus Promises on prayer***

Matthew 7:7-11:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives,

and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

Luke 11:9-13:

So, I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Matthew 21:22:

And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

John 14:13-14:

Whatever you ask in My name, which will I do, so that the Father
may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

John 15:7:

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

John 15:16:

You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

John 16:23-24:

In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

1 John 3:22:

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His

sight.

Mark 11:24:

Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.

1 John 5:14:

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Matthew 18:19:

Again, I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

Keep praying. Christians, seek not yet repose.

1. Christian, seek not yet repose,
Cast thy dreams of ease away;
Thou art during foes:
Watch and pray.

2. Principalities and pow'rs,
Must'ring their unseen array,
Wait for thine unguarded hours:
Watch and pray.

3. Gird thy heav'nly armor on,
Wear it ever, night and day;
Ambushed lies the evil one:
Watch and pray.

4. Hear the victors who o'ercame:
Still they mark each warrior's way;
All with one sweet voice exclaim,
"Watch and pray."

5. Hear, above all, hear thy Lord,
Him thou lovest to obey;
Hide within thy heart his word,
"Watch and pray."

6. Watch, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day.
Pray, that help may be sent down:
Watch and pray.[41]

Amen.

*Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God—KJ2000.*

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