

Do I Really Know

How to Pray?

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

So often, because of busy schedules and time restraints, we neglect meaningful prayer. Probably more than any one thing Satan does—even before he begins to invade a Christian’s life—is to hinder a believer’s prayer life. It’s easy to speak, and it’s easy to *do* many things. Still, it is another thing to truly and earnestly purpose in our hearts to become more than just people who pray. We desire to become intercessors, and we need to learn the means of supplication, prayer, and intercession.

The first premise to be effective in intercession and supplication is this: We must have nothing between God and ourselves. That means, when we fail, we rebound immediately. We use prayers of supplication, allowing God to meet our needs. Next, we need an attitude of praying without ceasing. When you hear a name mentioned or come to mind, pray for that person—whatever you’re doing at the time. It means to

pray for someone spontaneously if you know something about their need. So, there are times of prayer we plan, and there are the instantaneous prayers that come without ceasing.

We need to do much less talking and much more praying. Unless there is much intercession, we won't win the war in cities where there are murders nearly every day. We need to stop vacillating with double-mindedness. We need to have convictions about the value of prayer if we want to see young Christians make decisions based upon the conviction of God's Word.

Do you realize that the Lord Jesus Christ in His unchanging priesthood "ever liveth to make intercession for us"? "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the *uttermost* that come to God by him..."—that touches my heart so deeply—"...seeing *he ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). This makes our lives so meaningful. As servants, we can be helpers of people's joy (2 Corinthians 1:24).

How many cases become complicated, difficult, exhausting, and wearisome because we did not use intercession as a weapon to deliver people from the bonds of the enemy? *Knowing how to pray is the key.*

Chapter One

CALLED TO INTERCESSION

I often wondered what the Lord meant in Isaiah 59:16 when He said that He “saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor.” In Ezekiel 22:30, God said there was no man “to stand in the gap.” Think of an entire nation, chosen and nurtured by God Himself, yet not one true intercessor could be found among them! Oh, there may have been religious men offering prayers on their lips, seen of others as holy. Yet, one who intercedes has such intimacy with God, such an intricate relationship with the Savior.

True intercession can be a full-time mental operation motivated by the Holy Spirit in love. How often do we think we have to go and see somebody, to “straighten out” something? Chances are that we mentioned their name for two or three seconds in a prayer meeting. That is *not* intercession. To intercede is to *ask*, making

our requests known to God with fervency and intensity, as God leads, because of our desire toward the one we're praying for. Then, *expect* that God will answer, *look* for God to answer, and *watch* how God answers. Prayer replaces so much talking. Pray instead of rationalizing. Pray instead of evaluating.

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost...seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:25-26).

The Lord in heaven is *praying!* What do you think He is praying for? We know the Blood has cleansed and paid for our sins; we know our sins will never be charged to our account. The Son satisfied the Father's justice pertaining to our sins. So why is He ever living to make intercession for us?

The Lord Jesus Christ is praying that we will allow Him to keep us by the power of God while we live in the devil's world. He's praying for His people because we still have an old sin nature. Always, in every one of us, He is praying that the old sin nature will remain under His provision of death, and burial, and resurrection.

He's praying that we will gain wisdom from above and discernment from within. He is praying that we will get a burden for the lost that will grow in intensity. He is praying that we will not be wrapped up with details, self-occupation, presuppositions, and human energy.

To think that such a high One—holy, undefiled, separate from sinners, higher than the heavens—is praying for us! Because He is, He will save us to the uttermost in this world's system. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are indeed the children of God (Romans 8:16), confirming our convictions and affirming what we believe and experience.

When you intercede, have great expectation. Our bodies are groaning under the disease of this world's system and all the problems that take place. Right in the middle of that groaning, waiting for the adoption, we discover this reality: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26a). How does He do it? The Holy Spirit comes in with groanings that cannot be uttered; He groans when He makes intercession for us (Romans 8:26b). If we could only grasp this! Picture it: the Holy Spirit—God Almighty—*groaning*.

The Network of Prayer

Each one of us has very specific needs, specific areas where we want God to move. We need to realize, however, that because of His great love for us and because He is omniscient, each member of the Trinity is already at work on our behalf.

The Father loved us enough to make a plan to save us, to do it all. Then He loved us enough to move inside of us, guaranteeing our perfection (Philippians 1:6) through His plan, in His purpose, with His provision to work it out.

The Son, who died for us, ever lives to make intercession for us, saving us to the uttermost from the corruption, contamination, and infections of this world.

In harmony and in concert with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit (as the third member of the Trinity) convicts and witnesses to the truth with our spirit, even as He prays with unspeakable groanings for needs we are not even aware of.

Feeling Empty?

When you experience measures of emptiness, remember this: The Son of God is interceding for you, and the Holy Spirit is groaning with

intercession; they are calling you by name. The Holy Spirit searches hearts. “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” (Romans 8:27).

So, the Holy Spirit checks with God the Father, and He checks with our hearts, and He goes to work to match up the Father’s will with where our hearts are at, groaning as He intercedes. This is a sobering, but marvelous truth.

Then the Word of God says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). In other words, the Holy Spirit is groaning for our needs, searching our hearts, matching the will of God so that all things will work together for our ultimate benefit.

The Prayers of the Saints

Clearly, there are two intercessors in heaven—the Son and the Holy Spirit—pleading our case before the Throne. But, there is a third party interceding: His Body upon the earth today.

Paul said, “Please pray for me, that I will

“speak the Word of God freely” (2 Thessalonians 3:1); “Pray for all believers” (Ephesians 6:18); then, “Pray for one another” (James 5:16).

Prayer is the breath of fellowship with the inspiration of communion. It is a faith operation motivated by the promises of God, acknowledging His presence. Pray for one another! Pray for me! Pray without ceasing, with importunity, and with tenacity.

There may be times when we simply have to withdraw from certain activities just to be alone with God. Of course there is a balance. For example, we realize that fasting is not something to be done in an attitude of works or striving with religious motives. We know that there is no commandment to fast. Yet, God will lead Spirit-filled people to have meaningful times of prayer with fasting to deal with the difficult cases of demon activity and cosmic functions in Satan’s world system.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to teach us how to intercede.

Intercession is not just praying. An intercessor lives with fervent trust and reliance on God for what’s going on right now. His prayer is the verbal expression of his heart, with great expectations. A person who intercedes increases in

wisdom and understanding. His communion with God becomes more keen. As his relationship with God develops, he has far more sensitivity when he speaks.

Chapter Two
GOING FORWARD
ON YOUR KNEES

I believe that God would call individuals to a mission field for the sole purpose of intercession. They would be a vital part of the missionary team, but their role and primary function on the team would not be soul winning, teaching, song leading, or discipling but *praying*. They would pray for the country, the city, the people, the team members and their families, the finances, and whatever details, as they are led by the Spirit.

So much can happen in an area because of natural gifts: gifts of music, financial security, and the ability to stimulate people to meet their emotional needs. Yet, I am convinced that God wants to move people in a way that can only happen through intercession.

John Wesley was a brilliant theologian; but more than that, the reason for his success as the

founder of the Methodist church was his availability to intercede for the people God called him to. He prayed every morning, without exception.

When you think of prayer, think of Moses and the two men who held up his arms. Think of the effects of their service. When they let Moses' arms down, the enemy prevailed. But through God, Israel conquered Amalek by the faithfulness of Aaron and Hur who "stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exodus 17:8-13). It is such a gift to a man of God to have prayer warriors who continue day and night, doing battle on their knees!

When we withdraw into intercession, clean before God, with nothing preventing our requests, there is no need to broadcast our endeavors. People will *know* that we have been with God.

In Christian service, there will always be some casualties, and there will always be people who get weary serving God. We need to hold up their hands so they will be strengthened; we need to pray for them with intercession.

Alone in the Garden

To really understand the operation of intercession, we must look to our greatest example—Jesus Christ in His humanity. Before He chose the disciples, Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness, praying and fasting to know the Father's choice. He withdrew from the influence of the world and went alone to His Father, whom He trusted completely to answer His prayer.

Then, as Jesus faced myriads of demons in the garden of Gethsemane, He knelt down in weakness, "and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:39-44). Can you see the picture? Jesus *groaned*. "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

Did you notice that the disciples were sleeping during that prayer meeting with His Father? They were not sensitive because they were not "prayed up to date." So, in Matthew 26:56, each one forsook Him.

From the standpoint of His humanity, Jesus Christ's own prayer life is such a beautiful illus-

tration of the virtue and value He places on the power of prayer. We look for people to change. We try to figure out how we're going to change them, but that's not the answer. The answer is always *intercession*. Though we may play a part in lives being changed, it will always happen because of bringing them to God through intercession.

Rest and Relaxation through Supplication

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice....Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God...” (Philippians 4:4-8).

Do you know that one translation for the word “rejoice” is “relax”? Relax in the Lord, and again I say, *Relax!* It's a mandate. Then it says, “In *every* thing...”—watch this—“...by prayer *and* supplication,” we are to make our requests known unto God. We come to God not only in prayer but also in supplication, beseeching God on our own behalf.

“...And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall *keep* your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” In everything, relax. In everything, by faith, start praying with suppli-

cation and thanksgiving that come from a relaxed capacity that can relate to God. As a result, the peace of God *guards* the heart.

Why are you to guard your heart? Because you need to have a boundary line for your thoughts. Guard your heart so you can think of the things that are true, pure, kind, and lovely; things that have virtue and praise. It's the work of the Spirit; *He* is praying for you, and He will guard your heart as you take opportunities to pray with supplication for everything.

Every one of us has failed so many times. Yet, I believe with all my heart that this ministry is where it is today—having touched over 120 countries, with full-time ministries in more than forty countries and throughout the United States—because of the consistent prayers of intercession and supplication before God.

In the pioneer years of our ministry, we began every day with early morning prayer meetings. Just a few came in the beginning. I never wanted anyone to be in bondage to a program, and prayer meetings were never legislated from the pulpit. But after a while, many would gather at five-thirty every morning—and not just for one or two years, but for ten years. We never quit or became familiar with God's

provision. Now, with a vision to seek the lost in 220 countries, with 1,000 missionaries by the year 2000, our prayer should be no less fervent.

The Value of One

When Job prayed for his friends, everything turned around for him. Remember, it was his *friends*, not his trial, that got him off-center. Job's reputation before his friends came into question, and he couldn't handle it. He could handle everything else but their speculation. He couldn't deal with how his friends thought of him, and it made him want to die. The answer was to pray for them; and finally, everything turned around.

How many things can turn around by our prayers? In this lifetime, we can never measure the value of one who believes, on his knees.

Your mind doesn't need to wander if you're talking to God. He is speaking to you with His still, small voice. The Christian who prays knows with a certainty that God is going to release things, change things, and bless—at some point. Remember that Jesus is praying with you, the Holy Spirit is praying, and the Father is receiving each request.

God has called many people only to inter-

cede as prayer warriors. They are not highly visible in their call here on earth. But when we get to heaven, we will meet them as they reveal the glory imparted because of their faithfulness in quietness and confidence. From an earthly vantage point, prayer causes blessings, like nothing else. What good is my obedience in other areas of my Christian life if I lack obedience in the areas of supplication, prayer, and intercession?

Chapter Three
BIRTHING A VISION
WITH PRAYER

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, *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 Saviour;

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:1-6).

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to write this, and he began by saying “I *exhort*....” This word carries the force of an urgent appeal. Paul meant, “Timothy, I’m not just saying this for

your passive consideration. I want you to step over the line from *knowing* to *doing*.”

As a pastor who is accountable to teach the whole counsel of God, I have been pondering this subject of prayer. Obviously, not every idea presented here is original with me. I glean from many godly portions, but every credible thought is original with God! And the Lord has exhorted us to pray for all men, with supplications, with prayers, and with intercessions. These three classifications are God’s order in God’s way.

Supplications (Greek, *deesis*) are personal requests to God. It means we bring our own needs and requests to God the Father fervently in prayer. Examples of this kind of prayer are seen from King Solomon (1 Kings 9:3) and David, his father (Psalm 6:9). Also, it is the kind of prayer that Jesus used to teach the disciples in Matthew 6:5-13. The order of this kind of prayer is so important. Before we can ever pray effectively for others, it is vital that we establish a solid personal relationship with God. It is how we get to know Him, see His faithfulness and trust His character. It is our response to His bidding, “Come unto me....learn of me” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Next, Paul mentions *prayers* (Greek, *proseuche*).

Although these petitions may not have the degree of intensity, the fact that prayers follow supplications in God's order reveals an important principle: Just as I cannot love others until I am able to love myself because of "first" love (1 John 4:19), I cannot effectively pray for others—either generally or with the intensity of intercession—until I have the convictions that come from meeting God at the throne of Mercy as a sinner saved by grace. So now, in my prayers, I can ask God to bless other men of God and their ministries. I may not even know them intimately or be aware of a particular need, but I know they are serving God.

Pray for men like Dr. Dobson, whose radio program reaches more stations in Russia than any other. Pray that he would have good health, and pray for his wife and family. We must learn to exalt Christ and never have barriers among ourselves, in terms of love. We must love and pray for all ministries that preach the truth.

Finally, Paul referred to *intercessions* (Greek, *enteuxis*). The technical use of the word describes a person meeting with a dignitary, such as a king, engaged in fervent conversation regarding his petitions. In application, it is a picture of a believer representing the needs of *others*, argu-

ing their case in a godly way, humbly yet boldly approaching God the Father, with the authority of the Son. When Jesus prayed at Calvary, in Luke 23:34, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”—that was intercession: an intense argument of love (not in a negative sense) in favor of a person or a cause.

Who to Pray For

Day in and day out, the Bible says we are to pray for leaders in government. Beyond political leaders, we need to get the names of the people in authority, and pray for them. Get the names of police officers, attorneys, the state’s attorneys, city attorney. Get the names of leaders in the fire department and sheriff’s department. Pray for them specifically. Knock on heaven’s door for them.

We should learn to pray beyond generalities; we should find out the names of leaders in every level of government—local, state, and federal; cabinet secretaries, delegates, representatives, committee chairs; even heads of international governments—and petition God for them. And the Bible says we are to pray for kings and for *all* men and for *all* things, with supplications, prayers, and intercession.

A Vision for the Cities

If churches in a city would agree to pray together, they could literally build a wall of prayer around their city. They wouldn't have to have a common meeting place. Rather, if thirty churches in a large city agreed to take one day each month to have their members pray in specifics, then they would see God act in the fullness of His character! A very large city could conceivably enlist sixty churches and have two churches praying at the same time.

As we pray privately and corporately, we will receive direction from heaven for new ways to go forward in practical visions with practical means of reaching people.

In praying for *all* men in authority, we must include mothers and fathers who are in authority in their homes. We should get their names and pray fervently for them. The list would also include the pastor, staff pastors, music leaders, worship leaders, security, ushers, deacons, each staff member. Pray for them *by name*. Pray for their families. Each portion is so vital to the working of the whole.

Jesus Christ should always come above and beyond denominational differences. We should

pray for men like Billy Graham and for all the ministries that make such an impact upon the nation. Find the names of other missions boards that are doing a work for God and pray for their leaders, staff, and missionaries.

If we will pray for those in authority, the Bible promises that we will be able to live peaceable, godly lives. That's a promise from Jesus Christ.

Often, I've heard people say, "I never know what to pray for! I run out of things to say." Well, I think I'm giving you enough so you would never run out of things to say! This kind of praying will produce a spiritual barricade—a wall of prayer against the enemy.

Praying According to the Word

Because of my call to be part of an international ministry with many missionary teams throughout the world, I hear from pastors and their people who struggle. Perhaps they are young and growing, but things are not happening the way some people feel they ought to. Can you imagine what would happen if there was an intense chain of prayer among the members of a church instead of criticism for the pastor and his wife? I'm not saying there is not a place for cre-

ative communication and encouragement as long as it is done according to Matthew 7:1-12, Matthew 18:15, and Galatians 6:1, going alone in humility and after much prayer. But can you imagine the effect of Spirit-filled people in a church who pray and keep their mouths closed, except to “go alone”?

We have been called to go forth, praying through the Word, praying in the Word, building barricades with Holy Spirit prayers against the onslaught of the enemy. Jesus Christ went about, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, healing every sickness and disease among the people. Think of it! He went into the cities and the villages, even teaching in the religious synagogues!

“But when [Jesus] saw the multitudes and he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Then said he unto his disciples, *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.* Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:36-38).

We pray and send out labourers into the harvest here in our ‘Jerusalem’ and to the uttermost parts of the world, praying through the Word.

That is a Holy Spirit prayer meeting!

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

Why did Jesus say this? So many people living in sin are coming to the end of themselves. They may have been arrogant a year ago, yet some of them will not be that way today. They may have finally come to the end of themselves, and they know God is their only answer. The harvest is all ready—prepared for the laborers. In Luke 10:2, Jesus said, “Don’t say, ‘It’s not ready yet!’ Lift up your eyes and look on the fields: for they are white and ready to harvest, *now.*”

Chapter Four

PRAYER AS CHILD-BEARING

We should never consider the cost of obeying the perfect will of God. We can never put a price on reaching the lost. Programs, seen in the light of God's eternal purpose, are important, but they do not have first place. Giving birth through travailing comes first. The pain, the agony, and sometimes, the suffering in praying: *these* come first. It takes pain to bring forth a child from a mother's womb, and it's going to take pain to bring a soul into the kingdom of God. Sarah prayed, and finally Isaac was born (Genesis 21:1-3). Hannah prayed, and Samuel was born in the eternal purpose of God (1 Samuel 1).

When Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," he was saying, "I can feel the pains of child-bearing." Prayer becomes so intense; and because nothing happens right

away, the only thing Paul could compare it to was the pain a woman has bringing forth a child. Paul prayed that Christ would be formed inside of the people in the Galatian church.

In time, there is a birth: the birth of a vision, the birth of a mission field, the birth of outreach teams. The teachers of our Christian schools are giving birth to miracles that take place in the lives of their students. All fruit comes through a birthing process, and prayer is the thing that brings it forth. *Prayer* brings forth a brand-new birth.

I believe that the birthing pains of travailing in prayer is what is lacking in the major cities where sin is rampant. This is why I believe that if thirty churches in a major city like ours would take one day every month and pray, we would see miracles. Can you imagine the results? Every day, through prayer chains, an entire congregation would lift every leader, every problem, and every need before the throne of God—with supplications, prayers, and intercession. Before you know it, believers everywhere would recognize Jesus Christ interceding with us as our Mediator.

I don't know how long it would take, but miracles of salvation would take place, and the crime rate would go way down. The Lord Jesus

Christ would reduce satanic activity, including the drug and alcohol factor and demonic relationships. He would give victory over the terrible emotions that have hypnotized and plagued individuals. Through our travail, God would produce new life in our cities. We would see it all because of Word of God, shield of faith praying.

Take up the Shield of Faith

“Take the shield of faith, that you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with prayer and supplications with thanksgiving for all saints” (Ephesians 6:16-18).

By the grace of Almighty God, we can bring in something new for our city through travailing (and in more difficult cases, through agonizing). God will move to nullify the effects of sin and evil.

Remember, we wrestle not against flesh and blood. The Bible exhorts us time and time again to *know* our enemy. We need to learn to identify demons and not live in abstract thinking with impersonal knowledge of their existence.*

What Prayer Does

We cannot begin to understand how a vision is born, yet I know that every man and woman in the Body of Christ has a personal and solemn responsibility in seeing it come forth.

We have been exhorted to pray fervently for all men. The result: We will live peaceably, with godly, protected lives. Prayer protects and provides; then, through the Holy Spirit, it penetrates and permeates, convicting the souls of men and women whom Jesus Christ died for. As you ponder this, think of the visions that could be given birth when people act together.

As we minister in our Bible clubs and in visitation throughout the city, we discover so many needs people have. There are homes that need cleaning, not because of carelessness but because of illness or infirmity. There are filling stations that we use regularly, but the workers have no vision for having a clean workplace because their own lives are so disorderly. Imagine having a team of people go to these places to clean them for nothing, as a ministry. To protect their dignity, call ahead to make an appointment. You do it in an act of love and kindness, not preaching to them. Leave a Gospel tract and pray for

them. Only God knows the potential of a ministry where people are willing to sacrifice and lay down their lives this way, giving birth to a vision.

With birthing come compassions. We understand that the fields are white, all ready to harvest. When men and women who are lost can see the Lord Jesus Christ, they can be won—whatever the cost. The Holy Spirit can soften the hearts of men and women who don't even know who He is. They will know that we are not trying to *get* anything but to *give* something. They will know that, indeed, we love our neighbor as ourselves.

**See Can Anyone Overpower the Power of Demons?, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Five

THE SUBJECT OF
PRAYER AND FASTING

According to Daniel 10, the Lord instructed Daniel in a vision and he fasted three weeks. In the third chapter of Jonah, the entire city of Nineveh was saved because of prayer and fasting by people who believed God. In Esther 4, through prayer and fasting, God delivered the nation of Israel. Through prayer and fasting, demons were cast out (Matthew 17:14-21); the will of God was revealed (Acts 9:9; 13:2); and the elders were ordained (Acts 14:23).

These verses show that the New Testament also firmly supports the purpose of prayer and fasting for the Church. Also, the promises given in Isaiah 58:6-12 for those who fast and pray are for us today: "...the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose

waters fail not....” (Contrast that with Isaiah 58:1-6.) Also, I believe that as an application of 1 Corinthians 9:27, prayer and fasting is a way of bringing our body into subjection.

Prayer and fasting ministers unto the Lord (Acts 13:1-3). *It ministers!* And it gives individuals power to engage in spiritual warfare.

There are different ways to go about prayer and fasting. Usually, it is done for a predetermined amount of time. Some people refrain from all food and drink except for water (Matthew 4:2); a partial fast is described in Daniel 10:3, restricting the intake of certain foods; a liquid fast is what many people use, restricting the intake of all solid foods; and a total fast is to refrain from all food and liquids (Acts 9:9; Esther 4:16).

Regardless of the kind of fast, a person definitely needs to be led by God in order to have a spiritual fast. In Matthew 4:1-2, Jesus was led to fast and pray. There are times when an individual senses the need to fast and pray (Matthew 6:16-18). God may call an entire church body to fast, as He did the people of old (Joel 1:14; 2:15-16). In our church, we have times appointed monthly when, as the Lord leads, whosoever will may participate in a corporate fast. We dis-

tribute prayer lists to use as a guide. No one ever knows who is fasting or who is not, so there is no badge of spirituality attached. God looks upon the hearts of individuals.

The Purpose for Prayer and Fasting

Remember, supplication means to beseech God, pleading with God in a very special, personal appeal. Prayer is communication between God and man. Intercession is an intense argument of love on behalf of another. We are God's people, and He calls us by name. We wait upon God in quietness and make petitions of Him, seeking His face.

Consider Isaiah 40:31, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk; and not faint."

Jabez prayed in 1 Chronicles 4:10, "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 his request.

There are so many hindrances coming against believers. In order to match the wiles of

Satan—his devices, schemes, and supernatural ability—we've got to understand Mark 9:28-29. The disciples asked, "Lord, why couldn't we cast out the demons?" Jesus replied, "This kind can come forth by nothing, *but by prayer and fasting.*"

Sometimes, the kind of prayer engaged with fasting is intercession, pleading our case that God would do something beyond our expectation. It may mean that we keep on the path we were called to, doing what we believe God would have us do, but we pray that God would supernaturally accompany us, giving wisdom as we go.

Then, as the Shepherd goes before us in our walk (John 10), He goes before us in our prayer and fasting for people to be saved. Every city has so many strongholds; I don't believe we will see many people saved and delivered unless we pray and fast for supernatural intervention in a supernatural demonstration of the love, grace, and mercy of God. I am not only speaking of large cities. Small towns and rural areas have severe strongholds. Intercession is the key. Prayer and fasting is often the means of breaking through.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let

your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6). Always be thankful before God. When I am very weary, sometimes I just walk the floor thanking God, praising Him. I thank Him for everything under the sun. He loves it!

Preparation to Prevent Hindrances

It's so crucial to pray through the unction and power of the Holy Spirit. Don't just say words; pray in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:14-15; Ephesians 6:18, Jude 20).

Several things interfere with prayer and fasting. Undisciplined thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) lead to undisciplined feelings, which open the door to projections and impressions that lead to undisciplined reactions.

Next, asking amiss is a hindrance to effective prayer (James 4:3). In other words, not having direct, clear petitions according to the Father's heart is asking amiss.

When a person tries to cover old wounds without forgiving, his prayers are hindered (Mark 11:22-26). He may pray as though everything is all right, but he is living in self-denial because of unforgiveness. Instead of tucking bad experiences beneath the surface, the believer

needs to experience an act of forgiving another person completely, totally, and biblically.

In Psalm 138:6, pride is a hindrance. In Hebrews 12:15, it is bitterness. In James 1:5-7, it's unbelief. And according to 1 Peter 3:7, having an improper relationship with his wife could hinder a man's prayers.

A person could pray an hour every day; yet, think of all the hindrances that would make that prayer null and void.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

This verse reveals two essential tools for waging warfare in prayer. We approach God with confidence, having the right motives in our hearts. Then, with our minds focused, having a peaceful mental attitude, we begin to pray according to God's will. And according to God's Word, we *know* we have the petitions that we asked.

CONCLUSION

When you're having trouble with someone, do you realize that Satan matches people to go up against you just to give you trouble? His goal is to cancel your entire prayer life.

Get on your knees, and even if the other person is guilty, forgive him and write it down—not with words but in your heart. Note the point of time, and through the Holy Spirit forgive him completely. Then, just as though that thing never happened to you, begin to think through the supernatural resources of God. You will experience a brand-new life of completeness through prayer.

Father, grant us grace and mercy. Write the truth about prayer upon the tables of our hearts. Throughout the churches of our city, bless each one equally as we reach out to the community. May we be able to go forward in quietness and confidence, developing a partnership in prayer where Jesus Christ will be exalted above our different names and labels. We pray that you would be glorified. Have supernatural access

to the bondages and slavery to sin that so many have because of ignorance, because of environment, and because of wrong decisions. Use this message in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.