

Fellowship with the Father



**A Thirty Day Prayer Guide to a more intimate
connection with God**

by

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Fellowship with the Father

Introduction

Welcome to thirty days of Fellowship with the Father! This prayer guide consists of weekly prayer digests for True Identity Ministries that were edited to provide a comprehensive, day-by-day journey into deeper fellowship with God.

You will find Scripture based meditations on the various dimensions of a daily prayer walk along with suggestions for your daily prayer time.

My aim is to help you grow closer to God, get to know Him more deeply as your heavenly Father, and form habits of staying connected with Him that will help you through easy times and hard times.

In the process you will learn to come, be still, listen, delight in the Father's presence, pray and intercede according to His will, strive in prayer when necessary, and do battle against the forces of spiritual darkness.

You will learn to pray and commune with God as a child, as a priest and as a warrior.

Our times are challenging. I began writing prayer pointers and weekly digests for the True Identity family shortly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and since then we have had riots, looting, fires, and natural disasters with an intensity we have not witnessed before. One gets the sense that the End Times have leapt closer, and that shakings have been unleashed in accordance with their predictions in the Bible!

All the more reason to stay closely connected to the Lord on a daily basis. It builds our faith, guards our hearts and minds from worry and anxiety with His peace, gives us His perspective in the midst of chaotic news reporting, and empowers us to shine our lights and give hope to the people around us.

The last thing God wants is for you to be scared and cower. He needs His people to be strong in prayer and witness like never before.

Not only that. Our friendship with Him is what God values the most. It is what we have been saved for. Listen to what Oswald Chambers has to say:

"The most important aspect of Christianity is not the work we do, but the relationship we maintain (with God) and the surrounding influence and qualities produced by that relationship. That is all God asks us to give our attention to, and it is the one thing that is continually under attack."

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, August 4

The Psalmist writes:

"The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant."
Psalm 25:14

His desire is for you to revere Him and love Him (that is what "fearing the Lord" in the Biblical sense means). When we do, our hearts are set in Him and He will reveal His covenant to us. What is a covenant, you may ask? It is the closest relationship one can have in the universe! In other words: God expresses in His Word a desire to have the closest relationship possible with those who will walk with Him.

So - dive in, make your time with God a daily priority, let Him be your dearest and closest Friend, and watch Him change your life, destress you, and help you walk in victory!

Fellowship with the Father

Day 1

Come!



It has been said that one of the most important things in life is *showing up*. That pretty much confirms what God says in His Word: “Come to me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden...” (Mt. 11:28)
“Come, everyone who thirsts...” (Isaiah 55:1)
“Come to me and hear, that your soul may live...” (Isaiah 55:3)

His desire for us that we cast our cares on Him, listen to Him to receive His truth and perspective, which set us free from false perceptions and anxiety. But that won't happen unless we come.

And so we must make this our very intentional first step. Show up.

What does that mean for you? And how do you do that when your days are filled, and you feel like you're chasing yourself?

How do you reorder your schedule to ensure He gets the first time slot of your day? Unplugging from TV, cellphone, and computer for an hour? Getting up before the kids do? Going for a prayer walk around the neighborhood?

His ministry to us begins with us coming to Him. “*Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you*” (James 4:8).

Coming to Him means three things:

1. To make room in your hearts (actually desire His presence)
2. Make room in your schedule (eliminate busy-ness and hurry)
3. Make room in your home (have an appointed meeting place with Him where you keep your journal, Bible, devotional).

That will take some doing, but I believe it is possible. Perhaps your appointed time is your drive to and

from work, or the 20 minutes before bed. Perhaps the appointed place is your car, or a particular chair at home, or a stool in a closet. Whatever it takes.

Today's prayer assignment

Take some time today to think through reordering your life around an unhurried, intentional "coming" - showing up, drawing near, so He can draw near to you!

And ask Him to help you with creativity and resolve. After all, He wants to draw near to you – so He will help you draw near to Him. All you really need is a thirsty heart.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 2

Be Still...



After we have come into His Presence by setting our hearts on Him, clearing our schedules, eliminating distractions, and dedicating a place to meet with Him, our first order of business with Him is to *be still*.

Psalm 46:6,8,10: *The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; the utters his voice, the earth melts... Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth... Be still, and know that I am God...*"

Be still! Probably one of the hardest concepts to embrace in our day and age of ceaseless hustle and bustle, noise and constant interaction with the visuals of our smartphones, TVs and computers.

So what is being still, and how do we do it?

Being still is mostly an *attitude*. Cease your striving. Cease your doing. Cease your busy running around. Set your to-do list aside. Take your eyes and mind of the constant distractions that present themselves daily. *Incline your ear to me.* (remember Isaiah 55:3 from yesterday?)

Cease even to give voice to your list of daily prayers and concerns.

Being still is the prerequisite for listening. It involves inclining your ear, blocking out everything else so you can listen better. For God imparts to you, speaks to you, reveals to you, discloses His heart to you in a *whisper*. Why? A whisper makes you strain to hear and you'll pay attention better!

Remember Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11-18? God didn't come to him in a storm, an earthquake or a fire, but in a still small voice.

It may take some getting used to, but practice stillness. Without it you'll miss listening, and without listening, you'll miss the best God has to offer in our turbulent times.

Today's prayer assignment

Look at your schedule for today, and the next couple of days, and block some time for you to go to a quiet place in the house, the backyard, or somewhere in nature where you can be still. If you are a husband and wife with small children, you may have to take turns keeping the kids at bay for each other. If you are a single mom or dad with small children, you may have to find some time to be alone with God while they are asleep or enlist the help of a babysitter.

Separate yourself from your cellphone and any other electronic distractions, and have a Bible and a journal at hand. And be still. Don't pray, don't ask. Just be still. Be in the moment. Focus on pleasant sights and smells in the room or in nature and become aware of how they draw you to their creator.

Perhaps you do not hear God's whispering voice in your spirit just yet and there are no great revelations to write down. That's ok. Just be still, draw near and become aware of His presence. The rest will come.

Fellowship with the Father

Day 3

Listen!



Once we have come, and have become still, we are ready to listen. Remember Elijah, who sought God's revelation, and found that His voice came in a gentle breeze, not in a storm, earthquake, or fire? In other words, God rarely speaks to us in some sort of spectacular experience.

Ok, testimony time. Quite a few years ago God yanked the rug out from under me (Remco) in a kind of a personal shaking. A cross-country move, no job, no ministry, no permanent home. When I brought my (myriad) concerns about this to the Lord, heard God say to me in a persistently recurring thought: "Just come to me and listen".

So I came. Armed with java, my Bible and a journal. Every morning. And the simple question: "Father, what do you want to say to me today?" And God began to bring Scripture to mind, then speak to me through those verses, and I wrote, and wrote and wrote.

I realized that that is where it all starts: God revealing Himself to us - sometimes by direct insight but more often by His Word. It changed the way I approach prayer. Gone is the "prayer list" (what I want God to do for me or others). I now simply ask how He wants me to pray since I don't know and need the Holy Spirit to tell me (Romans 8:26). It's called "listening prayer". And I'm finding that a lot of what I was going to ask God for has become unnecessary when I listen to Him first!

I'm also finding that listening prayer is a powerful antidote for anxiety. When I bring my concern to Him, as I am invited to do (Philippians 4:6), my first concern is that I hear His voice so my anxiety doesn't evolve into unbelief. And I find that God is all too eager to lay out His perspective, which is what brings me peace. The truth shall set you free.

It's also an amazing reality that makes me *want* to shut up and listen:

"The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant. (Psalm 25:14) Imagine God wanting to be your friend and letting you get to know Him! I can think of no greater thing.

Back to Isaiah 55:3 *"Incline your ear and come to me. Hear, that your soul may live."* Anxiety is death to our souls. God's truth is life and brings joy and peace.

Today's prayer assignment

Come, show up in God's presence, be still, and listen! Ask the Father with your Bible and journal at hand the simple question: *"what is it that you want to say to me today?"*

Write down what you hear, lest you forget. Let Him be your friend. Let Him whisper your name, whisper His thoughts about you, share His desire for what you should pray. It may take some time to calm your wandering thoughts and clear away the pressure of your to-do lists.

But when you do, when you have become still, and have allowed Him to speak, you will learn to hear His voice and give you insights that could not have possibly come from your limited brain alone.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 4

Delight!



Once we've come, become still and ceased our busy minds and bodies, we've listened and received the impartation of His truth, we reach the destination of our communion with Him: delight!

Hmmm? Whaddaya mean? Happiness? A peaceful easy feeling? Warm fuzzies?

No. Much, much deeper than that. In our core passage of Isaiah 55, God questions our labor and spending habits, which demonstrate an obsession with what we think satisfies us, but in reality does not. And He follows it up with an invitation: *"Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."*

Don't miss this: listen, and delight. God's disclosure of Himself to us produces deep joy in us. Not in things, or even in what God does, not even in hopeful thoughts about the future. The rich food is God Himself. His Presence, His love, His character, the beauty of all His perfection, His love, His glory. That's what we were created for. That's what He longs to restore in us - delight in Him. Being uppermost in our thoughts and affections. Long before we get to praying for others, our faith in Him is fueled by our delight in Him that far exceeds all other forms of happiness.

Remember this old song?

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in His wonderful face

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of His glory and grace

In other words: everything else loses its attraction when we turn our spiritual eyes (and listening ears) upon Jesus. Delight in Him above all else is our highest form of worship.

That is significant, especially in times of unprecedented turbulence. It's not an escape from reality, but rather an embracing of the One who is on the Throne, and without Whom nothing in this world happens. Shelter in place? Sure. In the shadow of His wings!

Today's prayer assignment

Come, taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8). Set your requests aside for a moment and think about everything the Father has done for you – your salvation, your redemption, the indwelling of His Spirit in you, His daily protection, provision, guidance, strength, comfort. Think about how the awareness of His Presence and the recollection of His blessings impact you.

Then let your listening turn to delight in the Father and stir up worship and exaltation of the One Whose ways are higher than ours!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 5

Feed Your Soul With Prayer!



The constant chorus of voices calling upon the people of God to pray like never before can wear you out. The barrage of crises, unrest, sociopolitical trends and challenges for the church that we are called upon to convert into effective, urgent prayer can seem overwhelming.

Do you feel that way from time to time?

I do, and I am one of the ones doing the calling!

Though I make no apologies, I do recognize that ever so often, praying believers have to take a step back, rest, and turn to soul-feeding prayer to be able to press on. Exhausted soldiers make for lousy warriors.

Fortunately, the Bible comes to our aid. It is replete with prayers you can pray for your own soul, as well as the souls of fellow believers and prayer warriors. And we should so regularly, lest we wear ourselves out.

Angry? Sad? Confused? Weak? Tired? Depressed? Numb? Be authentic and let it out. God knows and is waiting for you to express it in prayer so He can rush to your side and refresh you.

Then pay it forward by praying for others.

And soon you will be able to take up the mantle of a royal priest again, and with new vigor re-engage in prayer for our church and nation.

Today's prayer assignment

Let me give you a sampling of Bible prayers you can pray over yourself, your family, loved ones, and believers close to you who you know are in need of spiritual refreshment.

Feeling kinda blah in your desire to draw near to God?

Pray Psalm 119:36 - *"Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain."*

Do your emotions feel pulled into different directions, and away from God's truth?

Pray Psalm 86:11 - *"O Lord I will walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your Name."*

Do you feel like you're waking up like an agnostic and you're not feeling God's presence or love?

Apparently Moses did too. So pray his Psalm 90, especially vs. 14: *"Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love."*

Do you long for a deeper understanding and more acute awareness of God's love in the middle of these unsettling times?

Pray like Paul in Ephesians 3:14-19 and substitute the word 'you' with 'me' - *"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

Feeling wobbly in your faith that God loves you and is faithful to care for you in the midst of these storms?

Pray 2 Thessalonians 3:5: *"May the Lord direct your hearts (or my heart) to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."*

Or fuzzy and unclear about God's plans and purposes, what to make of what's going on in the world, His daily presence in your life and His ministry assignments for you?

Apparently the Ephesian believers were too, so Paul prayed a prayer for them you can pray for yourself by substituting 'me' and 'I' for 'you': *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe."*

There is much, much more. You can mine the Scriptures to see for yourself. Throughout history, men of God have cried out to God in faltering faith for help, strength, comfort, wisdom, protection, provision, and even for the desire to stay close to God when the world drew their hearts away.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 6

Enjoy Fellowship With The Father!



Oswald Chambers frequently delves into the true purpose of prayer. In one of his daily readings in *My Utmost for His Highest* he writes:

"The only abiding reality is God Himself, and His order comes to me moment by moment. Am I continually in touch with the reality of God, or do I pray only when things have gone wrong - when there is some disturbance in my life? I must learn to identify myself closely with my Lord in ways of holy fellowship and oneness that some of us have not yet even begun to learn. 'I must be about my Father's business' (Luke 2:49) - and I must learn to live every moment in my Father's house....Are you so closely identified with the Lord's life that you are simply a child of God, continually talking to Him and realizing that everything comes from His hands?"

The true purpose of prayer is oneness with God. Fellowship with the Father that continuously makes us aware of His presence and fills us with an indestructible, deep peace and joy, no matter how busily we are running around or what the ups and downs of our life may be.

I bring that up in relation to the need to feed our soul through prayer. And I do so simply because it is so easy to lose the joy in fellowship with the Father when all we seem to do is fight spiritual battles and pray over the humongous crises that have exploded around us.

Not only will it wear you out, it will distract you from experiencing the closeness of God's love because war feels incongruous with love.

And that is the last thing the Father wants. Here's a sampling of His feelings about fellowship with you and me, the "people called by His name:"

"Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the Lord." Zechariah 2:10

"Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." John 14:23

"For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' " 2 Corinthians 6:16

"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice, I will come to him and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20

As I said, just a sampling. There is much more.

My encouragement for you is to not give up praying for our church and nation as the Holy Spirit gives you insight, but to balance asking with basking.

Today's prayer assignment

Take some time today to meditate on God's love. On the true purpose of prayer. On the incredible privilege of being able to call the God of the Universe our Father, our Dad. Let His love come to you and satisfy you (Psalm 90:14). And talk to Him continuously throughout your day. You will get the inescapable feeling He is right there, all the time. And He is!

Perhaps this is also a good time to reread a resource we use in our True Identity retreats and study book, and meditate on its verses. It's called: *The Father's Love letter*.

You'll find it in audio, video and PDF form here: <https://www.fathersloveletter.com/>

Fellowship with the Father. Hanging out with Dad. That's essentially what fellowship means. It is your right and His desire for you. Make the most of it!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 7

Taste and See That The Lord is Good!



We're continuing our train of thought on prayer as fellowship with the Father this week, and it leads us to one of its most important stations: the enjoyment of God's goodness through prayer.

Psalm 34:8 tells us: "*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!*"

That is right in line with one of my favorite Scripture verses, Isaiah 55:2 - "*Why do you spend your money on what is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food.*" Or as the New International Version states it: "*the richest of fare.*"

How do you taste and see that the Lord is good, especially when you can't see or touch Him? And how do you listen so that you receive rich food for your soul's delight rather than the junk food the world offers?

The answer: Through prayer! Worshipful, grateful, hungry-for-good-food prayer that listens to what God wants to disclose to us about Himself through the Holy Spirit and His Word. Prayerful interaction with God's Word that is ready to receive what jumps off the pages, brought to light by the Holy Spirit.

This is so important in the midst of all the clanging and banging of national and global disasters that can easily make you forget that God's ultimate desire for you is to know that He loves you. Like Peter attempting to walk on the water towards His loving Lord, the howling of the wind and the crashing of the waves demand so much attention that it is easy to take your eyes off the Lord and sink into the sea of worry and despair.

God does not want us to. He wants to whisper your name and remind you of His love. He created you for a love relationship with you, and His Spirit awakened your spirit so you could have fellowship with Him. Bask in His presence. Hang out. And that's in essence what fellowship with the Father means. Hanging out with the One you love, and hanging on His every word. The word fellowship, when stripped of its Christianese connotations, means communion, companionship, unity.

I believe that this is supposed to be the bedrock of our prayer life. You've heard me say "balance asking with basking." I should actually say: "Let the asking come out of your basking." When you learn to listen to God and let the Holy Spirit reveal Him to you, He feeds your soul with truth, perspective, wisdom, insight, comfort, peace and joy.

Then asking - supplication and intercession - becomes very different. It will no longer feel like you're besieging God with what you want Him to do. It becomes more a speaking forth in prayer what you have just discovered He wants to do!

The tough part of tasting and seeing that God is good is that it takes time. Another reason to be as intentional as you can in reordering your daily rhythm to accommodate times alone with God. Or perhaps you can do it only once or twice a week. Just remember that the Enemy does not want you to delight in God or listen to Him, so he is going to try to keep you busy and distracted. Don't give him room.

Since, according to Isaiah 55:3, your soul's life depends on it, I strongly urge you to try. Even if it means you have to get creative with the use of your time and attention. I'm thinking especially moms and dads with a houseful of children who don't know the meaning of the words "don't bother me for half an hour.". But where there is a will, there is a way.

Today's prayer assignment

Practice tasting and seeing that the Lord is good today. Set time aside. Get your Bible out. Worship, pray, ask God to open your eyes according to Psalm 119:18, to lead you to passages in His Word He wants to use to reveal His glory to you, and then: feast! Write down what you see in a journal. Then see what tasting and seeing the Lord does to your soul, your prayer life, and the way you approach your day or view the turbulent world outside your front door.

You will not be disappointed!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 8

Simplify!



Hurry goes hand in hand with busyness. The busier we are, the more hurried, and harried, we become. And down the dominoes fall - we have overcrowded schedules, we hurry, we get tired but our minds stay busy, we can't sleep, we get more tired, and we burn out or get sick.

Busyness is the tyranny of the urgent. And tyranny it is. That's why people have coined the word "busy" as an acronym: Being Under Satan's Yoke.

If the devil can't keep you from praying, he'll keep you busy, so you won't have time. Busyness constantly demands your attention and keeps you from focusing a healthy portion of it on God.

Here is that same passage from yesterday again:

"Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master...so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till He has mercy on us." Psalm 123:2

Coming, being still, listening, delighting, praying and blessing are all about where we put our attention. And for us to give God the firstfruits of our attention and time, we *must* slow down and simplify.

Fifteen years ago a pastor in Southern California lamented to me: "We pastor a generation of distracted Christians." Too busy to get involved in church other than attending Sunday morning services, too busy to pray, too busy to listen to God. And that was before smart phones. It is estimated that today, the average American has more than 2,700 interactions with his cellphone per day!

Busyness is not the same as productivity. In fact, it is estimated that our productivity stops at a certain number of hours each day. The busier we get, and we try to "multitask" the less we produce both in quality and quantity.

But wait, there's more! New studies have shown that all this non-stop preoccupation with tasks, visual imagery, data and non-stop information is severely undermining our mind's capability for abstract thinking, like meditating on Scripture and prayer.

That is alarming.

Time for a reset. Time for an intentional slam on the breaks and evaluate how much time we spend on our phones, running around, "multi-tasking" and evaluating how much of that we really need to do and how much of it is distracting us from communing with God. In other words, what is consuming our attention and energy?

To simplify means to eliminate unnecessary busyness from our lives in whatever form it comes. Just like busyness goes hand in hand with hurry, simplifying goes hand in hand with slowing down. In some ways, the nationwide emphasis on self-quarantine has already helped us with that.

Today's prayer assignment

I invite you to go before the Lord today and ask the Holy Spirit to shine His light on your calendar and your daily activities, and show you how to simplify your life so Jesus is uppermost in your attention, thoughts, affections and time. He *wants* your attention, so I guarantee you, He will help.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 9

Slow Down!



The microscopic menace labeled COVID-19, which very much resembles the types of plague frequently mentioned in Bible prophecies as one of the sudden and unexpected "shakings" God brings to get mankind's attention, caused just about the entire world to grind to a halt. Church included. It has been widely regarded as a "Reset" a "Great Pause" or a "Forced Sabbath." A time to reflect on our doings as the

people of God.

Perhaps because the pace of our daily lives in our technology dominated, instant-everything world was spinning out of control?

Perhaps because our treasured idols of financial success, entertainment, sports and creature comforts were crowding out His daily presence in our lives?

There are no doubt a lot more reasons why God brought about this unprecedented shaking, but I mention these for a reason.

A couple of months ago Jennifer and I read a book by John Mark Comer, a millennial mega-church pastor from Oregon. He burned out on being a mega-church pastor, re-evaluated his life, resigned his job and wrote a book about his experiences called "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry."

In it he makes a couple of crucial observations that spoke deeply to us.

First: the greatest enemy in our relationship with God is not unbelief, it is hurry. Why? Because God is never in a hurry. God is love, and you can't hurry love (does that remind you of an old Diana Ross song?). Love is based on deep connection, and deep connection takes time.

Second: Jesus modeled how we should relate to the Father, and it doesn't look anything like what we have become used to.

Everything we have talked about so far - coming, being still, listening, delighting, Spirit-directed praying, blessing (in short, loving God, loving people) - requires generous daily helpings of our time. Ever noticed how God would sometimes call His prophets to a desert retreat (remember the word eremos?) because He wanted to speak to them, and He made them wait for 40 days?

The principle at work there: before we can truly hear God, we must empty our minds from hurry, distraction and busy-ness. For a busy prophet or spiritual leader, that apparently took 40 days of sitting in the desert doing absolutely nothing else. What would it take for us?

Today's prayer assignment

Take your first step in the ruthless elimination of hurry from your life. Think about what you can do *today* to slow down. Ask God to help you. Remind yourself that God is never in a hurry because He loves us, and you can't hurry love.

Take some time to meditate on Psalm 123: 2: *"Behold the eyes of the servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of the maidservant to the hands of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till He has mercy on us."*

And Isaiah 40:31: *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."*

Wait, look, seek - till He speaks, directs, refreshes, strengthens, loves.

Finally, think about some practical ways to eliminate hurry from your life so you can truly put God first in the use of your time and attention. After all, that is the whole idea!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 10

Keep the Sabbath!



Exodus 20: 8-10 says: *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."*

Part and parcel of slowing down to connect with God is keeping the Sabbath. The Hebrew word Sabbath means "day of rest." It was ordained by God as far back as Genesis 2:2 when God rested on the seventh day from all the work He had done, blessed it, and made it holy.

Since we have been created in His image, we, too, have been wired to have at least a day's rest from work. In John Mark Comer's words, a "day to let our soul catch up with our body." There have even been productivity studies that back that idea up. They say that a person's productivity tops out at 50 hours a week, which adds up to about 6 days of work. Beyond that, even if you work more hours, you're not being productive.

God designed us to act like Him and make this day holy - set it aside from frenetic activity and for connecting deeply with Him and with each other. To pray, to play, and to powernap!

I'm sharing this with you out of a somewhat guilty conscience. It is not until a few months ago after reading John Mark's book that Jennifer and I started re-evaluating things and realized we hadn't been keeping a weekly Sabbath. Sure, we weren't at our jobs, but we weren't resting either. Sabbath encroachment meant setting the seventh day aside for the leftovers on our weekly to-do list - a little cleaning, laundry, shopping, and some ministry stuff we didn't have time for during the week. No wonder we were burning out. Our souls never had a chance to catch up to our bodies.

We've repented of our disobedience and become very intentional now about keeping a Sabbath day, and I can tell you - it has made a huge difference.

Have you been keeping a Sabbath? A day to truly rest, not just from your job but also from honey-do lists, housework, shopping, and all the other stuff of life? Would you be up for taking a day to turn your

smartphone off and "sabbath" from the distraction it brings and just have fun? Do a puzzle? read a book? Phone a friend? Go for a walk? We can argue all day long which day of the week it should be, but I don't think that matters as much the fact that you do it.

But what if you have small children? They don't take a Sabbath from playing and needing mom or dad. A parent simply can't take a day's break from caring for them. I see a two-part solution to that: One: teach your children that it is important to take a day's rest, and make it a family affair – naps and all. It's a process, but it can be taught. Second: if they are too little to get on board with the sabbath program, insert "mini-sabbaths" for yourself throughout the week. An hour here, a few hours there – to let your soul catch up with your body. It is not going to be easy, but where there is a will, there is a way.

Today's prayer assignment

I invite you to prayerfully return to the first commandment. If God rested, so should we. It is His design for us – to let your soul catch up with your body!

So ask Him to help you create time and space for a Sabbath in whichever way works best for your life. God is *very* creative – He will help you to be as creative as you need to be to make it work and help you obey His command to rest.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 11

You Have A Prayer Altar In Heaven!



Last week I found myself drawn to Revelation 8:1-5 around the question: how do we pray effectively in these End Times? What I found there is nothing less than stunning in its imagery, promise and power:

"When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and

seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and 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. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake."

There is no time or space to go into an in-depth commentary here, so let me treat you to the highlights and help you turn those into prayer.

- The half hour of silence denotes an awestruck "calm before the storm" as heaven gets ready for the seven trumpets, the final and most intense series of shakings to stir humanity to repentance.
- The seven angels are most likely the same ones described as stars in chapter 1 - the "messengers" of the seven churches, representative of God's people.
- An angel of God comes forward and mixes the prayers of all the saints with incense, so that they rise up to God as smoke. The words of Psalm 141:2 come to mind: "Let my prayers be counted to you as incense." This whole image denotes acceptance of and delight in, our prayers by God!
- These prayers were first brought to God and presumably put on the altar by the 24 elders in Revelation 5:8. Those elders are widely believed to represent the Body of Christ, twelve from Jewish heritage and 12 from Gentile stock to represent the entirety of God's people.
- Then the whole kit and caboodle is taken up from the altar as fire and thrown down to earth in the form of loud noises, lightning, and an earthquake, as if to announce that the final shakings are about to begin.

So all the prayers, presumably those prayed according to the Scriptural qualifications of being in line with God's will (1 John 5:14), prayed in faith (James 1:6-8), out of a pure motive (James 4:3), in line with the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9) and in Jesus' Name (John 14:13-14) are on the altar before God. Two thousand years' worth - billions of prayers. This powerful imagery gives us two things:

1. *A promise:* your prayers matter. They are heard, accepted, and acted upon from before the throne of God! This is the imagery that demonstrates God, by His own decree, working mightily through the prayers of His people.
2. *A responsibility:* I don't know about you, but I want my prayers to be in that bowl. They won't be if I don't pray, and they won't be if all I pray about is my own needs and desires.

Today's prayer assignment

In light of this amazing perspective on the power of our prayers, here are a couple of prayer pointers for today:

1. Pray that God helps you come into your true identity as a member of His royal priesthood (1 Peter 1:9) - ministering before His throne on behalf of others, and praying into existence His plans and purposes.
2. Pray that, according to your priesthood, God gives you a "prayer assignment" through the Holy Spirit - specific things related to the advance of His kingdom and purposes.
3. Pray that God raises up a mighty new movement of prayer here in the US of people stepping out beyond praying for their own needs and participating in kingdom-advancing, Satan-busting, soul-winning, global-reaching prayer!
4. Pray that the all-church prayer meeting be restored, re-invigorated, and re-imagined to focus on God's will for our churches, communities and our global impact and that congregations will discover the thrill of hearts united in prayer for God to do mighty things.

Take heart! Your prayers have been heard, accepted, and are in the bowl!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 12

Pray In Circles!



Many years ago, during the of the Concert of Prayer movement, I learned a simple way of praying together that has been my way of organizing my personal intercession ever since. You might say it has become the meat and potatoes of my prayer life.

A method of organizing your prayers helps express an ongoing mindset of prayer. What we read in Romans 12:12 is an apt reminder of that: *"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."* Wise counsel when you feel beset by quarantine-fatigue, Zoom-fatigue (yep, that's a word now), and stress under the turbulence and unrest in the world

So what's the method? Praying in concentric circles!

The idea is simple: Do you want to pray for change? For spiritual awakening? For a move of the Holy Spirit? Begin by drawing an imaginary circle around yourself, kneel (or sit) in the middle of it, and ask the Lord for revival to come within that circle. In other words, your own heart and soul.

Then draw another imaginary circle around that one and pray for God to move in your family, immediate and extended.

Then draw yet another circle and ask the Lord for spiritual awakening and revival in your church family. Pray for your pastor and elders, your ministry leaders and fellow congregants.

Circle four represents your city. Ask the Lord to unite the churches in the Spirit and bring spiritual revival and transformation to the communities that make up your city. Pray that through a united, prayerful church God's light may shine in your city's government, police and fire services, its schools and business, its art life, and its neighborhoods.

The next circle - five, if you're counting - represents your state. Repeat what you prayed for in circle four, but then statewide.

Circle six is our nation. Pray for a nationwide revival, for light to triumph over darkness, for the wounds of division to be healed, and for our nation to attain with new and united zeal to its claim of being one nation under God, with liberty and justice for all.

The seventh circle (I love the number 7, don't you? It signifies completeness!) represents the world. Pray for the advance of the gospel from nation to nation and from continent to continent until the gospel has reached every tribe and nation. Pray for mission endeavors to be strengthened, empowered and provided for, and for persecuted Christians around the world to be strengthened in their faith. And while you're at it, join me in my daily prayer that God will open doors for the True Identity message in every country since it is such a vitally important component of discipleship in our times!

Today's prayer assignment

When you enter into prayer today, organize the things you normally pray for into widening concentric circles, and allocate a couple of minutes to each circle. Start with yourself in the inner circle, then family friends, church, city, state, nation and world (if you are inclined to go that far!). It's amazing how much you can cover in concise, specific prayers when you organize your requests!

You could pray like this every day if you have the time, or take one concentric circle a day for seven days. Either way, your prayers, when guided by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26) will be powerful and effective.

And God is pleased when we pray "*The prayer of the upright is His delight.*" (Proverbs 15:8 ASV, AMP). That alone should be an incentive to keep praying in circles!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 13

Be Watchful In Prayer!



"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving" Colossians 4:2

With so much happening around us and the news headlines changing by the day it is easy to get lost in all the narratives, opinions, explanations and reports that crowd the news outlets and the social media. That can leave you with a prayer conundrum: how do I pray intelligently about what I hear and see?

Both Jesus and the apostles admonished believers that they should be watchful, sober-minded and alert. For some personal Bible study this week I recommend meditating on a few of those admonitions. You'll find them in Matthew 26:41, Mark 13:33, Luke 21:36, John 10:1-42, 2 Corinthians 2:11, Ephesians 6:11, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Peter 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-10, Revelation 3:20 and Revelation 16:15. I encourage you to look them up and pray that God speaks to you through each passage.

They cover at least five aspects of watchfulness:

1. **Watchfulness against the devil.** The unrest in our nation and around the world today is clear evidence of a spiritual battle that is raging around the future of the church and our nation. And the distractions, doubts, and discouragement you are facing? Not flesh and blood either.
2. **Temptation from within.** Jesus especially warns us to not fall asleep or give in to weakness. Fill in the blanks for yourself.
3. **Seeing the signs of the times and being able to navigate them.** Study what the Word of God has to say about the End Times and ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you in how that applies today and how you should live in the midst of them.
4. **Recognizing and responding to the voice of God.** Jesus foresaw and warned us that the sheep should know the voice of the Good Shepherd and distinguish it from that of the one who tries to come in to steal and kill. Every Christian has to develop his voice recognition skills in order to not be led astray.

5. **Praying with pure motive and spiritual insight.** We have to be watchful that we do not pray selfishly (James 4:3), but pray according to God's will (1 John 5:14), and in partnership with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26).

God longs for watchful, thankful intercessors. He chooses to work through them to thwart the devil's schemes. Being watchful and thankful not only ensures protection and a strong faith-walk for yourself, it can change the course of events for entire nations. That is also the idea behind Isaiah 62:6: *"On your walls, O Jerusalem (or America), I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent."*

That's you and me, not some professional prayer guy or "the spiritual people". The Body of Christ, the people of God, the royal priesthood are called to be the watchmen for such a time as this, and it is make or break time for us in terms of the future of our nation.

Today's prayer assignment

Invest some time today and meditate on watchfulness and put it into practice. Do a self-check and confess and remove anything that keeps you from being watchful. Then drink deeply from the wisdom of the Word and listen to what the Holy Spirit whispers to your soul in terms of how you should pray - for yourself, your church, your city, your state, the nation and the advance of the gospel around the world.

And then pray. Steadfastly.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 14

Fear Not!



There is little doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has turned out to be one of the most fear-inducing pestilences in human history. It very much feels like one described in Psalm 91:6: a *"pestilence that stalks in darkness."* You can't see it. Very little is still known about where it came from, how long it was being spread before it became an epidemic and then a pandemic, and how to effectively stop its spread since it takes so long to show symptoms that no one knows who's got it. It feels like an unseen enemy that stalks and pounces before you know it. Consequently, mass-scale fear all but shut down the economy, the sports world, the entertainment world, the educational world. Even our church buildings.

And it forced the whole world to huddle indoors, uncertain from day to day what will happen next.

But wait! There is a promise for God's people in all of this. It comes from the same Psalm that describes this pestilence as stalking in the darkness:

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty...For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions (feathers), and under his wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and a buckler (that's a small round shield to fend off arrows and sword strikes). You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday."

This takes the "shelter in place" we have heard all this year to a whole new level. The importance of slowing down and simplifying is so we can come. Being still, listening, delighting in God's loving presence, participating in His mighty works by praying as the Holy Spirit directs, paying our blessings forward, worshiping and praying - it all serves to bring us under the protective umbrella of the Most High. Abiding in Him. As we do, He abides in us (John 15:4,5).

I can't think of a better incentive in times of fear to run to Jesus. Make sure I am right with Him. Come, be still, listen, delight....abide.

As God's people we have the assignment to seek His face and pray, pray, pray. All bets are off if we disobey. But when we do, we have the promise of His protection. Not just that - just like a fragile baby bird under the wings of its mother He wants us to have the acute awareness of His loving, reassuring, protecting presence.

Today's prayer assignment

Your assignment today is to relish the hiding place that God offers in the acute awareness of His Presence. And pay that enjoyment forward. Prayerfully invite others of more fragile faith or no faith at all to seek shelter in the shadow of the Almighty.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 15

God Has Fun Answering Your Prayers!



Are you feeling on edge and fatigued today after the unknowns, the confusion and turmoil of the last who-knows-how-long? Overwhelmed with what is happening, how to pray into it or even knowing where to start praying? I know I am at times and that's when it is time to hit the pause button.

How do you do that without checking out or giving up? I often do it by shifting my focus from intense intercession and supplication to affirming our faith in answered prayer, and seeing afresh God's joy in giving us our requests.

1 John 5:13-15 says *"And this is the confidence we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests we ask of Him."*

Hence the importance of listening prayer and asking the Holy Spirit to pray through us. And the importance of praying Scripture. When know we are praying according to God's will, we rise up from our prayers with the joy of knowing that He hears us, and that we have the requests we put before Him, big and small.

We can hit the pause button on asking by reflecting on that incredible promise - that He has heard us and has given us our requests - and by reaffirming our faith in that truth.

Between the lines of the promise in 1 John 5 is something else: God enjoys answering our prayers! I have to confess that I oftentimes feel like I'm nagging a very busy God to throw me a bone, but that's because when I'm in the midst of battle I can easily forget that He's my Father. I am one too and I enjoy providing for my children. I enjoy being needed by them, and I enjoy seeing them enjoying what I do for them. God does too.

Jennifer and I have been watching "The Chosen," a remarkable take on the relationship between Christ and His disciples from the moment He enters into each of their lives. Something stood out to us. When we watched Him perform miracles it struck us that Jesus had *fun* performing each miracle and He enjoyed watching the people's reaction. When I saw that, The Lord spoke to my heart and said: "I'm having fun answering your prayers. Rejoice in my joy!"

Just. Wow. Tears of relief, warm fuzzies, and deep joy in my heart for days. And a whole new motive for praying!

Paul says in Romans 15:13: *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."*

Feeling hopeless by all that is going on in the world? Hit the pause button! Ask the God of hope to fill you afresh with all joy and peace in believing, and meditate with a thankful heart on the fact that He enjoys answering your prayers. In fact, He's having fun!

Today's prayer assignment

Here are 7 verses concerning God's joy in answering prayer for you to meditate on today. Affirm your faith that He has answered the specific requests you put before Him, and worship His Father-heart.

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."*

Matthew 21:22: *" And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."*

John 14:13-14: *"Whatever you ask in My name, that 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 16:23-24: *"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."*

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."*

Psalm 10:17: *"O Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble;
You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear."*

May the Lord fill your heart with warm fuzzies at the fact that He's having fun answering your prayers.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 16

***Pray For God's Multicolored Wisdom To Be
Made Known!***



I have been thinking a lot lately about the importance of the True Identity message for our day. I keep hearing the words "For such a time as this."

No kidding.

We have been caught up in a whirlwind of confusion, misinformation, and outright deception like never before. It seems that, while God was working on us during the 2020 pandemic, Satan was working on galvanizing his forces to sow fear, hate, division and anarchy. God's aim? To strengthen our true identity of who we are in Christ, and Who Christ is in us. Satan's aim? To attack the true identity of our nation and everyone in it by tearing open the wounds and divisions that have existed beneath the surface since the US was formed.

Were we ever "one nation under God?" Will we ever be? Will there be liberty and justice for all? Or are the United States going to become the Divided States - headed for an eventual breakup into individual progressive and conservative countries?

Only God knows and He's not telling. Just yet.

So what are we to do?

We are to pray in remembrance that the dividing walls of hostility can only be destroyed by Christ - in that all have sinned, Christ died for all, all are forgiven and redeemed by faith in His atonement, and all are filled and gifted by the same Holy Spirit, and made citizens of heaven. It doesn't matter what we look like on the outside, where we've been, what we've done, or how much or little we own. Those are the external things Satan uses to divide us. God unites us by transforming our hearts and bringing us into One Body, with One Spirit, under One Father, through one faith and one baptism (Ephesians 4:4,5).

And that is our only hope, and should be our only message to the world. Our love-filled, heart-transforming, reconciling, unifying true identity on display in word and in deed.

I think that is what is meant in Ephesians 3: 9,10: "...and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold (literal meaning: multi-colored) wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."

In other words: our true identity, the fact that people from every color, language, tribe and nation share the same salvation and citizenship in heaven, is God's glorious "in your face" display of unity to Satan and his forces who use a false identity made up of outward things to divide us.

That's why we must pray that the true identity message spreads and becomes a mighty movement, here in the US, and abroad. A "true identity revival!"

Some time ago God gave us a Philadelphian Promise that, though we are small, He has given us an open door that no one can shut. Pray with us that we, His people, come into a deeper, unifying awareness of our true identity and exemplify it to our divided world that only looks on outward things and sees what divides us.

Today's prayer assignment

Let us stand on the promise of Ephesians 3:11, 12 together today: *"This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, **in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him.**"*

Affirm your faith in God's invitation to access His throne 24/7 and pray that our nation will see a move of the Holy Spirit awakening the need to embrace our true identity in Christ and a thirst for Him to pour out the love that breaks down the dividing walls of hostility in our hearts. If we are ever to come into what we proclaim our nation to be, we need this to happen on a grand scale.

Fellowship with the Father Day 17

Let Your Light Shine And Bless!



Ever hear the phrase "Blessed to Bless"? I've seen it used primarily as an email signature and I always thought it was one of those corny signoffs designed to make the writer sound spiritual.

But I got to thinking about that phrase in the context of what we have been talking about the last few days. After all, we concluded that the path of listening prayer (come, be still, listen, delight) results in us paying it forward by praying for others.

But paying it forward doesn't stop there. God is a missionary God. God deeply cares about the lost, the scared, the broken, the downtrodden (Psalm 34:18). Those who are left over, left out or left behind by the world. God gives Himself to us, and His desire is that we should give ourselves to others. You know, be "Jesus with skin on". Make His love visible to others by our love put into action towards them.

A well-known Christian futurist and thinker surmised that this unprecedented global standstill provides a unique opportunity for the Body of Christ to speak into the fear and heartbreak of many with the gospel of peace and hope. The need is raw and real, especially with the turmoil in the world. A lot of people live in fear. I hear a sense of hopelessness about the future from the younger generation. The information about unfolding world events people receive from social media and news outlets is confusing, alarming, and often contradictory. Perhaps there is now a greater latent sense in people's minds that stuff is happening that is bigger than ourselves and we need divine intervention of some sort. Or at least hope and peace.

As Christians rooted in a daily relationship with the Lord, we exhibit that faith and peace, and we have the ability to be an example for others. Some might find it off-putting, but there may be many more who long to have the peace and perspective they see in the people of God.

Today's prayer assignment

In light of this idea that we are blessed to bless others, I encourage you to add a component to your listening prayer today.

Ask the Lord to use you in some concrete, personal way to pay your blessings forward. Even if you have to be limited in personal contact, it is possible to do so. We just have to be creative. Not only that, but we must be completely dependent on God to guide us in what we do and how we do it.

And that's the way He wants it anyway: *"I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

He will work through you. All you have to do is be deeply connected to the Vine and be available. Let Him do the rest, and He will bless so you can bless.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 18

May They Be One As We Are One!



Unity is highly prized by our Lord. Psalm 133:1 says: "*Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.*"

In fact, it is so important that Jesus ends the final meal and teaching time he has with his disciples in the Upper Room with a High Priestly prayer for it: "*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*" (John 17:20-22)

He knew that the unity of the believers would reflect the unity between Him and the Father, and thus be essential for the credibility of the gospel. And that Satan would attack it with all his might, using the tendency toward discord that resides in our flesh (see Galatians 5:19,20).

At first, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, all believers truly were one, as we read in Acts 2 and 4. They had everything in common, no one had a need; their unity was love made visible and drew the favor and admiration of all around, drawing many to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But soon, the enemy started sowing discord. And almost two thousand years later, the Christian church is marked more by divisions, disagreements, infighting, power struggles and splits than by love and unity. Add to that here in the US competition for church size and individualism - an unhealthy preoccupation with our own campus at the expense of working together to spread the gospel.

Our country itself is even more mired in chaos. Racial tension, social divisions, economic divisions, political rifts are running deeper than ever. Don't get me started there. We are supposed to be the United States, One Nation Under God, but appear to be anything but. I believe with all my heart that the discord in our nation is related to the discord in the church. A divided, conflicted church cannot set an example or positively influence the unity of a nation. A church united to Christ and to each other can!

Today's prayer assignment

Here are some topics for you to consider praying into today:

Repentance: Let us repent of any traces of prejudice, competition, condemnation, dissension and discord first of all in our own heart, and then seek God's forgiveness on behalf of His Church for divisions along racial, economic, political, doctrinal and missional lines.

Reconciliation: Let us ask the Lord to give us a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness to begin restoring our divisions and let go of grievances and hurts, remembering that we were all forgiven through Christ and are expected to pay that forward (Matthew 6:14,15); Let us pray for our pastors and congregations to let go of any individualism, mistrust, envy, or competitiveness that seeks individual ministry success above partnership in the gospel.

Restoration: Let us pray for healing of the wounds caused by division, strife, and competition in ministry. Wounds cause fear. But perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18). Let us pray for the perfect love of God to be poured out in our hearts so we may love each other unconditionally and freely.

Reunification: Let us pray for us to rediscover doing life together: being one in mind and spirit, sharing our resources and meeting one another's needs - as a visible manifestation of God's love poured out into our hearts. Let us pray here, that we do not return to our church campuses to "circle the wagons" again but become innovative and outward focused to welcome all who are drawn by our unity and love.

Release: Let us pray for the release of our unity into the our nation and world through prayerful cooperation in mission, charity, and evangelism. Pray for the boldness and courage for believers to set transforming and impactful examples in conflict resolution, collaboration, sacrificial love and charity, and to boldly and lovingly call for our society to unite for the greater return to being the United States - One Nation Under God.

These are just some pointers. Let the Holy Spirit lead you as you listen to the Lord, think deeply, grieve over discord and thirst for the unity Jesus prayed for Himself.

And be emboldened and encouraged by the fact that you are echoing Jesus' prayer in the Upper Room.

Jesus rejoices in these prayers. Satan trembles at these prayers.

So let us believe God together for a mighty revival of unity!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 19

Pray For Prayer!



It sounds perhaps kind of strange to "pray for prayer." What does that even mean? Let me explain.

I have learned from years of experience that a nationwide movement of prayer often begins with a handful of people directing desperate prayer to God for a move of the Holy Spirit. That despair may have come from anguish over the current state of affairs in the world or from a traumatic event in the community. The prayers of the handful call for God to call forth desperate prayer in the hearts of many more, and that's how a groundswell movement of prayer begins. In short, a few "pray for prayer," which then causes a groundswell of prayer, which in turns brings forth the spiritual revival so badly needed again in turbulent times.

And we are in such a time. Desperate, hungry, and faith-filled prayer is needed.

Our nation has drifted further away from being "One Nation, Indivisible, Under God With Liberty And Justice For All" than ever before. And the response God expects from His people is twofold:

- Unceasing, repentant, Kingdom-moving, revival-birthing prayer
- To be an example of forgiveness, reconciliation and unity by stepping out of our fortresses, over our denominational, political, socioeconomic and racial dividing lines to be God's church - one in Spirit, with one identity, worshiping one God, and bringing one gospel to our desperately needy and broken world.

The starting point is to pray. We can't do the other effectively without it. Our second response requires nothing short of revival that begins with us, changes us, unifies us, fills us with bold love, and overflows into our communities. And the seedling of that revival is our prayers for the groundswell of prayer that begets revival.

2 Thessalonians 3: 1 and 5 are good prayers to pray: *"...that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored"*, and *"may the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."*

Along with Psalm 85:4-7 - *"Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation*

toward us! Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation."

At the time of this writing, it seems that this groundswell has begun in the places where unrest has been the most acute. Pastors and congregations from all walks of life have taken to the streets in Minneapolis, Chicago, Portland, Seattle, New York, San Diego, Los Angeles and Austin. Praise marches, prayer walks and beach services are being organized.

Today's prayer assignment

Allow these stories of moves of God fill your heart with hope. Then turn that hope into unceasing prayer, for God to raise up a groundswell of humble, repentant, Spirit directed, hungry prayer for revival in the church and in the land. Not just because there is a crisis, but ongoing, lasting, nationwide prayer that does not stop till that revival comes.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 20

Pray For The Authorities!



The picture for this week's Prayer Digest is that of a road. Roads have lines, signs and guardrails to keep us moving safely in the right direction. In order to ensure that safety, users have to obey the rules of the road.

That is a powerful picture of the purpose of a nation's laws. They are there to ensure the safety of all its inhabitants. When they are violated in some way, safety is compromised. And we have authorities in place to ensure that rules are known and followed, and that violations are punished so they are not repeated.

Those authorities are under attack in our nation right now with potentially disastrous consequences for all of us, and so it is important for us as Christians to understand the importance of civil authorities and to pray for them.

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist incur judgment...for the authorities are ministers of God." Romans 13:1,2,6b.

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:1-3

Government and law enforcement are ministers of God and exist by His appointment, even when they misbehave. Paul wrote this awaiting his execution in a Roman prison, under a government that was unrivaled in its brutality. And yet he called upon the believers to pray for them, for this is pleasing to God and is related to the guarantee of peaceful and quiet lives, and the advance of the gospel. It defined a Christian's view and response to authority for all times, and it has never ceased to be relevant and needed.

During the last year or two chaos and hatred have been unleashed and much of it has been directed at law enforcement, with disastrous consequences that the daily news does not see or report. I see more of it because I served as a chaplain to several law enforcement agencies for 15 years and still speak regularly with the people in blue who are on the receiving end of all this hatred.

And I am deeply concerned.

All of them are angry with the fatal brutality of a few that has unleashed waves of anti-police sentiment and has destroyed decades of relationship building with the community. They are deeply concerned that policing, and the appropriate use of force on violent suspects, is now being criminalized and that officers will quickly face prosecution in the face of public perception that they have gone too far - often based on inadequate information. Many feel that elected officials are turning against them and are forcing reform on them without adequate knowledge and insight of policing issues. The increasing calls to defund or dismantle the police further gives them the sense that the community as a whole is turning against them. They also fear that criminal elements will feel increasingly empowered to do what they want as the power of police is being curtailed, and that anarchist movements will metastasize and repeat nationwide what they did in a few of our cities. As a result, morale is at an all-time low. Many agencies are reporting mass sick-outs, walk-outs retirements and resignations, and as a result critical staff shortages.

It would seem that Jesus' warning in Matthew 24:12 that in the last days lawlessness will abound is unfolding before our eyes and has just taken a great leap forward.

How do we, as the people of God, respond?

With earnest, heartfelt prayer. And an earnest, heartfelt show of support.

Today's prayer assignment

I plead with you to pray for our law enforcement agencies, 12,000+ of them with nearly 700,000 officers, in all their diversity, as well as our appointed and elected civil authorities. Here are some pointers:

- Pray for spiritual revival to come to our police departments. They are ministers of God whether they know it or not. Pray that they come into their true identity as "appointed by God."
- Pray for divine wisdom to come upon every sheriff and police chief in our nation to turn grief into constructive self-reflection on how to better serve the evermore complex needs of the communities they serve.

- Pray for protection on our police officers and their families in light of increasing aggression against them and danger on the job. In 2020 so far, 109 officers have died in the line of duty - Four by vehicular assault and 25 by gunfire.
- Pray for God to stir in the hearts of the communities to come alongside them, dialogue with them, and help them with reforms where needed out of a place of love and support instead of a place of anger and hate.
- Pray for the plans of the Enemy to promote lawlessness, anarchy and hate to come to nothing and for God's hand of restraint on the armed and violent extremists - on the political left and right.
- Pray for the civil authorities that have caved in to extremists and are promoting agendas and ideologies that are contrary to God's will for the US to see the error of their ways and for their power to be neutralized.

Even if the situation seems hopeless at times, let us be assured of this: Bringing supplication and intercession for authorities is pleasing to God, and threatens the enemy more than protests, plans, or opinions.

Fellowship with the Father
Day 21

Pray For Those In High Positions!



"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high places, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

Big plan: God wants all people to be saved. Plan detail: praying for people in authority helps open the way for that.

Especially during crises, when God's finger urgently seems to point to the truth He wants people to come to know - salvation in Christ from the wrath to come.

We need our governments to realize the limitations on their knowledge and ability to handle a crisis of this magnitude.

We also need our leaders to turn to wisdom from above, which is in plentiful supply for those who ask, and involve God directly in their handling of the crisis.

So whether you agree with a government's policies, or like or hate the people in power, pray for them. They are our sitting government. God allowed them to sit. They need Him.

Pray then that their eyes may be opened and they may have an encounter with the Holy Spirit that will lead to godly decisions and actions.

I can recommend using the Intercessors For America resources to familiarize yourself with who-is-who, how to pray for them, and receive alerts for urgent prayer requests. Visit them at www.ifapray.org.

I have to confess that I frequently have to push past dislikes and disagreements and remember that Paul wrote this when the oppressive Romans were in power in order to get serious about praying for our

government. They brutally persecuted the church. Hardly the winners of a popularity contest among Christians!

Today's prayer assignment

I invite you to join me in setting feelings about who is in power aside, remembering that praying for our government is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, and that the Holy Spirit will help us know what to pray (Romans 8:24).

Let us be to our President and his team, as well as our state and local leaders, what Aaron and Hur were to Moses, and hold up their arms to ward off the battles they face by our Spirit-led prayers.

Take Authority In Jesus' Name!



During my early years as a pastor in the inner city of Amsterdam I learned firsthand that we are not battling flesh and blood, but the powers of darkness. We faced constant threats to our church building, vandalism, people yelling and throwing things at us while we evangelized in the park, and prayer-walked the inner city on a regular basis to do battle against the burgeoning drug and sex industries.

On one occasion I had the privilege to be the on-stage translator for the late Denis Clark, founder of Intercessors For Britain, which is still active today. Some forty years later, I remember his message like it was yesterday, and it is as relevant for us today in the US as it was for us Dutchies in the spiritual darkness of late-seventies Amsterdam.

He took us to Psalm 110:1, which reads *“The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’* His exegesis, in Cliffs-notes form: “The Lord” refers to God the Father. “My Lord” refers to Jesus, the Risen Christ seated at God’s right hand (Colossians 3:1). And the footstool? It is under the feet of Jesus, which are part of His Body. And His Body is His people – you and me, who have been forgiven, redeemed, and baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

That has tremendous implications for spiritual warfare. Already we know that God has given us a spiritual armor. Already we know that the weapons of our warfare have divine power to destroy strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4). Already we know that in His Name we have authority over demonic entities (Mark 16:17). And in Romans 16:20 we have the promise that “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” An echo, perhaps, of Psalm 110:1, which Paul knew well.

The point Denis was making then, and that bears repeating today, is that we share in the authority of Christ over Satan and his demons. We have the power to cast out demons, to bind the “strong man” (Mark 3:27), resist Satan so he will flee (James 4:7), stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). God is making Christ’s enemies a footstool for His feet through us!

This is unfamiliar thought in most church environments. We’d rather not think about doing battle with scary demons and such. But we can no longer afford to stick our heads in the sand and ignore it, and so I believe it is time for His people to awaken to the authority we have in Christ and fight the evil powers behind what is happening in our world head on!

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, Satan released worldwide *fear*, which did more damage to our society than the virus itself. Through the brutality of a police officer, he released *hatred and anarchy* in the streets of many cities, and a growing movement to trim back or even dismantle our police forces. Fear and hatred work together to set the stage for lawlessness, followed by chaos and despair, which in turn potentially begins to set the stage for the anti-Christ to step in as a “savior” to rescue mankind from its predicament and be worshiped for it (Rev. 13).

Scared? You shouldn't be. The end has already been written. We fight an enemy who has already been defeated but is seeking to wreak as much havoc as possible while going down. Just be sure to stay close to the Father, listen closely to what He has to say to you, and let Him train you for spiritual battle – from the vantage point of a victory already won, and absolute authority over the Enemy's cosmic forces in Jesus' Name. To abide in Christ is to abide in His authority and exercise it through your prayers.

Today's prayer assignment

Pray that God opens your eyes to the authority you have in Christ Jesus, and that what comes at you daily in the form of discouragement, disruption, doubt, and fear is from Satan.

Make a point of memorizing Ephesians 6:10-18 and praying the mindsets of the spiritual armor over yourself every morning. I have made a point of doing that while I'm getting dressed every morning.

Pray without ceasing. Commune with God throughout the day and you will have an unbroken, reassuring sense of His Presence in you and around you.

Pray for God to unleash the hosts of heaven to counter hatred in the streets with love, unrest with peace, lies and deception with truth, attacks on the President and his team with protection.

Pray also that the Lord awakens His people, a giant lulled asleep by comfort over the last decade or so, to the urgency of the battle and a hunger to seek His face, pray, and win great triumphs through faith-filled intercession for our nation.

Pray again for a spiritual revival to sweep all segments of our divided nation. Socioeconomic, racial and political strife are the "dividing walls of hostility" embedded in our sin nature. They will not go away through the works of committees, task forces, community initiatives or even laws. Only Christ can, through His atonement and the indwelling of His Spirit (Ephesians 3:14-16). The cross literally kills hostility in our hearts, so let us pray for the death of hostility through the power of revival!

Be strong in faith, and vigilant in prayer this week. He will never leave or forsake you!

Wage War in Divine Power!



The US barely began the process of reopening the country in 2020 when one act of fatal police brutality against an unarmed black man caught on camera set the nation ablaze with protests, riots, looting and arson in a matter of hours. To my dismay, the flashpoint was in Minneapolis, where I once led a movement of prayer unifying tens of thousands from hundreds of churches in united prayer and Marches for Jesus for spiritual revival.

This has prompted me to pray intensely that the riotous expression of anger over racial oppression, fanned into flames of looting and arson by paid protestors and anarchists, would awaken a desperate hunger for God in the hearts of His people. A hunger that would transcend our theological quarrels, our denominational, socioeconomic, and racial divides, our differences in ministry vision, worship culture and size, and galvanize His people to cry out with one voice to the Lord for an outpouring of His Spirit in our hearts with self-abandoning, self-sacrificial, unconditional, unifying love.

The Bible urges us to see beyond the riots of flesh and blood and recognize the spiritual battle behind it for the soul of our nation. One nation, under God. The indivisibility, liberty and justice for all flows from being that one nation surrendered to God. And we must be one nation under God because with all the wealth of resources we have a key role to play in the world, especially in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. At least until that mission is fulfilled, we can never allow the US to fall into the hands of anti-Christian ideologies and systems.

So I urge you to do battle in prayer. Here are some insights and scriptural points to guide you:

- Don't allow the world's news to black out heaven's news - ask for and keep God's perspective.
- The stakes have never been this high. This is the most embattled election in history because it will determine America's place in the world economic and political sphere versus that of the anti-Christian nations of China and Russia.
- No movement will resolve racial prejudice that does not have authority over the devil. The church is the only movement that can through the spiritual weapons that God has given us.

- Remember the power of prayer that is beyond compare: *"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds."* (2 Corinthians 10:3,4).
- Likewise, *"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.....praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication."* (Ephesians 6:12,13, 18).
The panic prayer "O God, keep us safe and make this go away" is not going to cut it.

Satan fears your prayers because they move the mighty hand of God. He has decreed for things to work that way in the spiritual realm. It is therefore only way to defeat racism and every other divide that is destroying our nation's soul. We simply cannot afford to stick our heads in the sand and go back to business as usual. The access to the throne of grace is free and 24/7. The power of prayer is greater than any other power. The responsibility to use it, however, is entirely ours.

Today's prayer assignment

Enter the battle today with the invincible weapons of prayer. Here are some pointers:

1. Draw an imaginary circle around yourself and ask the Lord what must happen within that circle to effect lasting change for the good of His kingdom.
2. Ask Him to forgive you, and all His people for prayerlessness, lovelessness and disunity from the blatant to the subtle.
3. Call upon the Lord to move mightily, first in His people, then overflowing to the nation, with His unifying, healing, unconditional, forgiving, reconciling love.
4. Call upon His holy arm to thwart the plans of Satan against the US and against God's people through the anarchistic, socialistic, supremacist and hateful ideologies that have flourished while the church was asleep and are now coming out in the open.

Listen to the Holy Spirit in recognition that these things are so much bigger than we are, and we need His insight to pray. He desires your prayers, so He will speak to you. Remember the imagery from Day 11. They will land on the altar of heaven before the Throne of God and return to earth in the form of mighty deeds (Rev. 8:3-5).

Fellowship with the Father
Day 24

Pray That All May Be One!



Global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic create many firsts that test our social fabric like nothing else will. And one of the things that gets tested is unity in the Body of Christ.

Jesus prayed in John 17:21: *"...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*

All believers united to the Father in Christ; all believers united to each other. Now there is a relevant prayer! It's the one that Jesus prayed the night before His crucifixion, most likely because He knew that unity among the believers and intimacy with God would often be severely tested, and because the credibility of the gospel could stand or fall with that unity.

As is evident today. Churches have had vastly different responses to crises and appear to be more deeply divided than ever along racial, denominational doctrinal, socioeconomic, and political lines.

But nothing like a crisis to connect us! The 2020 COVID pandemic turned out to serve one of God's more hidden purposes in times of trial: believers making extra effort to stay connected even though we cannot meet in person.

Though Satan perhaps rejoices at the idea of us not being able to meet and aims to use it to further divide us, it has the potential to do the exact opposite and deepen our bonds - small groups meeting on Zoom, a proliferation of prayer calls, virtual services, virtual worship, virtual choirs. All working together like never before to stay connected. Nothing unites us more than overcoming adversity!

Another reason to be united more than ever surfaced as well: Civil governments forbidding churches to have in-person worship services or even home Bible studies. For health reasons and national safety, of course. For the first time in history we've seen a situation whereby the government overstepped its bounds using a crisis as justification, suspended constitutional freedoms and closed houses of worship across entire states. A sign of things to come? Time will tell. Prayerful vigilance is warranted!

Today's prayer assignment

Partner with Jesus, the Son of God, today and pray that we all may be one - with deepening bonds to each other, and to the Father. Ask the Lord today how you should pray into these weighty matters, in the spirit of Habakkuk: *"I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what He will say to me."* (Hab. 2:1)

Fellowship with the Father
Day 25

Take Up Your Priestly Mantle!



Once we have reached the point of delighting in God's friendship and self-disclosure, we have come close to His heart. And there we find that nothing He gives us is merely for our own consumption and enjoyment. He gives to us, so we can give to others.

The first, and most important, way to give is to take on the function of a *priest* and *pray*. 1 Peter 2:9 describes part of our true identity as a royal priesthood. We have the calling and ability to come before His Throne and pray for important matters beyond ourselves - our families, our friends, our churches, our cities, our nation and the world. That is what intercession means. Standing in the gap for others.

God has ordained to do mighty things through the prayers of His people. He doesn't need to. He *chose* to do so, inviting us into a prayer-based partnership to unfold the plan of redemption He has set in motion for the world.

You might say: "But I feel so unworthy!" Good! Because God doesn't accept our prayers based on how worthy, good, well-behaved, or acceptable we are. We are none of these. Period. The access to God's Throne and Ear, the right to pray, the help in knowing how to pray, to answers to our prayers, were all bought by the blood of Jesus, who is our High Priest and atoned for our sins (Hebrews 4:15,16). As soon as you placed your faith in Christ as your Savior, this became active for you. You *must* pray. To not pray is a waste of the resource God gave to us all!

You might also say: "But I don't know what to pray!" You're in good company. The apostle Paul didn't either. He said in Romans 8:26: "*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*"

That is the beauty of *listening* prayer. I know I am supposed to pray according to the will of God (1 John 5:14) but I don't know what that is. So start your prayer by asking God: "What is it that you want me to pray?", then wait till the Holy Spirit fills your mind with prayers. I tell you, He does!

But does God really do mighty things through my prayers? James seems to think so: "*The prayer of a*

righteous person (and we have received the gift of righteousness!) has great power as it is working" (James 5:16). Then he goes on to say that Elijah made it stop raining and then rain again by a simple prayer and we're no different than he is. Because it is not about the person who prays but the Person we are praying to.

You have probably heard of FOMO - the Fear Of Missing Out. I have a bad case of FOMO when it comes to prayer. I *want* God to win great victories through my prayers. I *want* to see the joy of answered prayer. I *want* the deep satisfaction of having joined with His heart and will by praying what the Spirit guides me to pray. So I make it my aim to learn and grow in listening prayer and partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Today's prayer assignment

Be encouraged today. Remember that as a member of His Royal Priesthood you have a holy duty to pray, and that God delights in the prayers of His people, as His people delight in Him.

Re-read 1 Peter 2:9 and take up your God-given mantle. Pray it forward. There is no greater work or ministry than that of intercessory prayer. Start now!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 26

Strive In Prayer!



Does God want us to nag Him for answers to our requests? That is a question I started asking myself this past week, as we inventoried critical needs for True Identity Ministries initiatives and the overwhelming needs in our country.

The answer may surprise you. In several instances we are not just invited, but encouraged, to nag. Of course, the Bible doesn't use that word. It uses more powerful and positive words like "persist" and "strive". Here are some examples:

"I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company."

Romans 15:30-32

"On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, and give Him no rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth."

Isaiah 62:6,7

Strive, take no rest, give Him no rest, until... obstacles have been removed (Romans 15:31), God's will is done (Romans 15:32), His work has been established and He has been glorified (Isaiah 62:7).

Jesus confirms this notion in Luke 18 through the parable of the persistent widow. You remember, the widow who kept nagging a corrupt judge day and night until he gave her justice. This is what Jesus says at the end, in verse 7 & 8: *"And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"*

Hmm. Jesus is confirming that the elect - those who have been born again into the Kingdom of God, i.e. you and me - will and may cry out to God day and night to overcome obstacles, meet needs, and advance His Kingdom through suffering and adversity.

Here are a couple of more observations from these texts:

1. We may persist and strive in prayer, but from a place of neediness and helplessness, not to manipulate and get our way. The prayers we strive in are that God's will be done and His plans be established, therefore we have to know what His will is.
2. Striving in prayer is a form of "productive waiting". Sometimes the answer to our prayers is not yet ready and sometimes we are not ready for the answer. Like God worked upstream and out of sight to stem the flow of water as the people of Israel were waiting to cross the river Jordan, He may be working "upstream and out of sight" to prepare an answer that will come to you in His time. And like the people of Israel were waiting productively by praying, purifying and preparing themselves for a crossing, your persistent prayer ensures that you keep your eyes on the Lord, and prepare your heart to receive His answer.
4. Striving in prayer is a test of faith, as Jesus implies in Luke 18:7. It strengthens your faith by testing it, and deepens your desire to see God move, and intensifies your enjoyment at the answer when it finally comes, just like a long awaited package delayed in the mail. And your delight glorifies God. He delights in your delight!

Today's prayer assignment

I encourage you to put "striving in prayer" to the test. Perhaps even fast a meal to give greater focus and intensity to the desire you express in your prayers.

Identify an urgent need in your life, a friend's or loved one's life, perhaps an initiative in your church, or a particular situation in our nation that touches your heart.

Then seek God's guidance on how to pray into that need or situation, and keep bringing that before Him throughout the day and during your fast, whenever you can – until you sense that the burden to pray is lifted and you receive a sense of peace in your spirit that God has heard and answered. Be prepared, though: the urge to keep striving may last more than a day. In that case, don't stop!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 27

Worship and Give Thanks!



During a worldwide crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, and national crises like racial unrest, unemployment and natural disasters, we often see the fragility of mankind trying to operate without God on display. I don't know about you, but in me that magnifies the sense of how great God is. The words from Isaiah 45: 6b,7 come to mind: *"I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord who does all these things."* The purpose of calamity is to expose our weakness and remind us that we are created beings, not gods. And we were created to depend on God. To walk in reverent awe of His greatness while being deeply grateful for His loving kindness and grace toward us.

So as we, His people, slow down, simplify, come, are still, listen, pray and bless, we do so with an underlying attitude of worship and thanksgiving. Even when we wage war and strive in battle.

Worship - because we see His might at work. We are on the winning side.

Thanksgiving - because we may have confident trust that whilst He is busy shaking the world with pestilences and such, He still loves us, hears us, meets our needs, works in us. And when I say us, I mean the "people of His own possession" (1 Peter 1:9). Millions of people around the globe that have been saved and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the same time!

I have no words for the awesome greatness and glory of our God. Fear and warm fuzzies at the same time. Fear because my great Father is taking the world to the woodshed. Warm fuzzies because daily He whispers my name and reassures me of His love and the orchestration of my life in the midst of this chaos.

Today's prayer assignment

Worship! Give voice to your reverent delight in His glory. Give thanks for His great mercies toward us who believe. All day. Every day.

As you drive or walk around, observe His glory in nature and let it spur you to give voice to your admiration for His glory on display.

As you enjoy the little things we so often take for granted – a roof over our head, a car that works, a good cup of coffee, a tasty meal – and remember to give thanks for His care for you.

Here is God's promise to a grateful heart:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (here it is!) let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 4:6,7)

Fellowship with the Father
Day 28

You Have A Kingdom Assignment!



"Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him." 1 Corinthians 7:17

Pastors, church growth leaders and trend watchers have talked for decades now about the 20-80 reality in the life of most churches: 20% of the people doing 80% of the work and vice versa. The implication is that 80% of the people that shuffle in and out of our church campuses are passive. Perhaps they prefer to put money in the plate and pay professionals to do the ministry for them, rather than to be equipped to do the work themselves. Or they feel in some other way fearful and alienated from being actively involved in ministry. Or their churches don't really have a strong mechanism to engage them. Or there is an "in-crowd" that won't let them. Or perhaps it's a little bit of everything.

The 20-80 problem is an important prayer topic as we continue to pray for God's people to humble themselves, pray, seek God's face and turn from wicked ways, even as the country is opening up again and churches are planning a return to in-person worship services.

Because God has given each of us a unique kingdom assignment. That is implied by the text at the top of this page, and a couple of others:

- The text from 1 Corinthians implies that God has a life for us to which we are assigned and called. Jesus echoes that in John 15: that each branch that does not bear fruit, he takes away. He gets specific in Matthew 28:19 where He states before being taken up to heaven that the gathered disciples, and the world-wide church they are about to birth, are to make disciples of all nations. That is the overall assignment of His church that still stands today, and in which each believer has a part.
- Paul speaks at length in 1 Corinthians 12 about the fact that when you receive the Holy Spirit (i.e. when you are born again), He gives you gifts - not at random, but specifically formulated for you according to His master plan. *"All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who*

apportions to each one individually as He wills." (12:11)

- Not just that, but He apportions faith and grace (which in this context means power) to go with it (Romans 12:3-6). It enables you to use your gifts and carry out your assignment.

God has given us supernatural gifts, faith and power with the clear expectation that we will bear fruit. We are the ones who have to step out in obedience. He will and guide direct us, but not while we are sitting down. A ship moored to the dock cannot be steered. Since God is a missionary God, and we have all been born again and baptized into His mission, He gets very upset with us when we shirk our responsibilities and do not seek out our kingdom assignment and pour ourselves into doing it, especially since He has supplied all we need and we do not have to do it in our own strength. The Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25 is a dire warning.

Today's prayer assignment

Pray about God's Kingdom Assignment for you today. Here are a couple of pointers:

1. Pray for God to reveal, or clarify, your unique kingdom assignment. If you don't know what your spiritual gifts are, take an inventory to find out. You can find them online, or your church may have one.
2. Pray for your own church, that the people will come to worship with a passion for serving and a hunger to discover their kingdom assignment and spiritual gifts.
3. Pray for your pastoral and ministry staff to have a vision to equip their congregation for ministry and help people discover their spiritual gifts, and create ways for those gifts to be used.
4. Pray for the awakening to a kingdom assignment and discovery of spiritual gifting to be part of God reviving His people, and that it will translate into larger numbers of people being vessels for His power and glory and impacting others for Christ.

There is no greater thrill to think that God has given us supernatural gifts, faith and power to participate in the advance of His Kingdom here on earth. And once you know that, there is no excuse to get engrossed in pursuing the things of this world and letting it all go to waste!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 29

Pray To Be Prepared!



James, the brother of Jesus and the Overseer of the first church in Jerusalem, wrote to the believers that had been dispersed throughout Asia Minor due to persecution: *"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."* (James 1:2)

He wrote about suffering, which was part and parcel of being a Christian in the early days of the church. It wasn't unexpected. Jesus had warned the Twelve about it before His crucifixion in Matthew 24: 9 - *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for My Name's sake."*

Throughout church history, missionary endeavor, church growth, and even revivals have been accompanied by persecution and suffering.

And it continues today. China has unleashed persecution on Christians like never before, even on the government sanctioned Three Self churches. Buildings are being razed and pastors are being sent to labor camps. In most Islamic countries it is a crime to convert to Christianity or to persuade someone to do so. It can cost you your head, and frequently does. And in post Christian Western Europe Christians often face ridicule and ostracism for their faith because Christianity is considered a thing of the past.

But that would never happen in the US, right? Think again.

Intercessors for America just reported that seven pastors and a number of their congregants in five states (interestingly enough all Democratic run) are facing fines and jail times for "violating coronavirus policies" and meeting in person. Governor Gavin Newsome of California encouraged protests but forbade churches to meet and even went so far as to outlaw home groups.

All of these charges may very well be dropped, but they are a warning signal of what may come at a grander scale at some point: state, federal or local governments suspending constitutional rights for the sake of national safety, and declaring churches to be hazardous to that safety and therefore in need of shutting down. That is exactly what is happening in totalitarian countries.

But do not let this dismay you. If persecution and suffering is part and parcel of being a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ, embrace it. After all, James, clearly states in his letter to the persecuted church that it has a purpose: steadfastness by testing of our faith.

In the US we don't have much experience with persecution, and so we don't have a solid theology of suffering. It hasn't been taught in churches that I'm aware of. But persecution is almost inevitable, because it is rooted in the world's hatred for Jesus Christ. However, it is also God's chosen instrument for deepening our faith and devotion to Him, and ultimately strengthening our character.

Other nations where persecution is rampant provide an encouraging example for us: In China, the number of Christians grew from 750,000 in 1948, when the communists took over and kicked out all missionaries, to an estimated 67 million today! In Iran, pastors are imprisoned regularly, and converting to Christianity is a crime. Yet according to Voice of the Martyrs it has the fastest growing church in the world! Apparently, Christianity thrives while under pressure because it turns believers into "all or nothing," unstoppable followers of Jesus. No room for comfort zones, only bold faith!

As Christians in a nation that has allowed us to worship in freedom and comfort, we should pray that God prepares us for the tide to turn. It already is. With more and more people turning away from the gospel of Christ, we may well find ourselves ridiculed and marginalized in favor of tolerance, gay rights, and progressive thinking that has no use for morality and godly standards. And we may very well be at the receiving end of government restrictions that sees Christians as out of compliance with anti-discrimination laws and national safety policies, and thus a threat.

How do you pray to be prepared? Good question!

I think the best thing to do is invest deeply in your personal relationship with the Father. The deeper your awareness of His Presence is in your day-to-day life, the more resilient you become against fear or threat.

Chinese house church leaders who spend years in labor camps often testified that the moment-by-moment reality of God's presence is what got them through. That is why I think it is crucially important to have intimacy with God. Then, when persecution does come, we are ready, knowing that He will carry us through. If we don't have that awareness of His presence it is much more difficult to conjure it up when faced with sudden tribulation.

Today's prayer assignment:

Make it a priority - in the midst of coping with everyday life, and with doing battle and striving in prayer for all that is going on today - to spend time with the Father as your Friend and deepen your relationship with Him through worship, listening, and allowing Him to reveal His friendship to you.

Take some time today to reflect on Psalm 25:14 and what it means for you personally that God wants His friendship to be yours. Ask Him to show you how to have the right heart to receive His friendship? Is He at the center of your life? Do you revere Him, love Him?

Receiving the Father's love is not selfish, and it is definitely not a waste of time!

Fellowship with the Father
Day 30

Come to the Shadow of His Wings!



In times of distress it is important for us to hear the Father's loving voice to assure us. We talked about that yesterday in the context of preparing for persecution. But it applies to any adversity or tribulation.

Reflection and repentance are what God call His people to do when He sends a disaster to wake us up. But while it may seem like stern love, the Father's heart never ceases to be tender towards His children.

Here is His voice, whispering reassurance to our souls in the midst of anxious times, from 30 passages of Scripture paraphrased to sound like He is speaking directly to us.

Because He wants to, and He does.

Be at peace in Him while you read this.

Today's prayer assignment

Meditate on each verse as you pray today and ask the Lord what He wants to say to *you*.

He knows your name. He holds you fast. He will never leave you.

Dear Child,

I am the Lord, and there is no other. [Isaiah 45:5]

I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity. [Isaiah 45:7]

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or send a pestilence among you, if you, who are called by my name, will humble yourself, and pray and seek my face, and turn from wicked ways, I will hear from heaven, forgive your sin, and heal your land. [2 Chronicles 7:14]

Repent, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from my presence. [Acts 3:19, 20]

For I discipline the one I love. [Prov.3:12].

But I am the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love to a thousand generations. [Exodus 34:6,7a]

I am love [1 John 4:8], and nothing will be able to separate you from my love. [Romans 8:39]

My desire is to gather you as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. [Matthew 23:37]

Abide in Me. [John 15:4]

For he who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. [Psalm 91:1]

I am Who I am. [Exodus 3:14]

I am your refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. [Psalm 46:1]

I am your rock, your fortress and your deliverer. [2 Samuel 22:2, Psalm 18:2]

I am your strong tower, run to me and you are safe. [Proverbs 28:10]

I am your sun and your shield; I give grace and glory. No good thing do I withhold from those who walk uprightly. [Psalm 84:11]

I am a hiding place for you; I preserve you from trouble. [Psalm 32:7]

I am the lifter of your head. [Psalm 3:3]

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. [Isaiah 41:10]

I am greater than all, and no one is able to snatch you out of my hand. [John 10:29]

I will cover you with my pinions, and under my wings you will find refuge. [Psalm 91:4]

I keep you as the apple of my eye; I will hide you in the shadow of my wings. [Psalm 17:8]

I will hide you in my shelter in the day of trouble; I will conceal you under the cover of my tent. [Psalm 27:5]

Because you have made me your dwelling place – the Most High, who is your refuge - no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. [Psalm 91:9]

Because you hold fast to me in love, I will deliver you; I will protect you, because you know my name.

When you call to me, I will answer me; I will be with you in trouble; I will rescue you and honor you. [Psalm 91:14,15]

I will heal your apostasy; I will love you freely, for my anger has turned from you. [Hosea 14:4]

I will again have compassion on you; I will tread your iniquities under foot. Yes, I will cast all your sins into the depths of the sea. [Micah 7:19]

My Child, I love you.

I will not leave you or forsake you. [Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5]

Your Heavenly Father