



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET
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VOLUME VIII

MARCH/APRIL, 2005

ISSUE 2

PRAYING OUTSIDE THE BOX

You may be wondering about the title of this issue of the newsletter. What exactly does "praying outside the box" mean? Praying outside the box means moving beyond prayer that is self-absorbed to prayer that covers a variety of people and needs. It is learning to pray beyond your own immediate needs and circumstances.

Praying outside the box is moving beyond self-centered prayer to prayer for those concerns that occupy the heart of God. It is forsaking the trite sayings and well-worn clichés to pray specifically about the people and the needs in our neighborhood and across the world. It is shattering our comfort zone in prayer and stretching us to pray for all kinds of people, needs, and concerns.

Praying outside the box is the opposite of self-centered prayer. Unfortunately all believers can fall into this trap. The Bible does teach that we are to bring our needs to God, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Jesus also teaches us that we are to ask God concerning our personal needs, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). God does want us to bring our concerns to Him. He loves you and is concerned about you. He wants to provide for you and meet your needs, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He never grows weary of our asking. It

shows our dependence on Him and our trust in His goodness.

Yet, we are to never allow this to become the preeminent part of our prayer lives. It should be an essential part of our communication with God. Yet, it must be balanced with a healthy focus for numerous concerns outside of ourselves.

How do we guard against self-centered prayer? How do we move away from self-absorbed prayer to prayer that reflects and is in line with God's heart? The purpose of this newsletter is to provide you with guidance on doing this. In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, you will also receive a prayer model that will enable you to pray God's heart. This prayer model can revolutionize your praying. There will also be suggestions on how to practice this in your church.



Exploding Self-Centered Prayer

The Bible warns us against self-centered prayer, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:2). There are

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times when we can become self-absorbed in our praying. When this happens, we will not receive answers and it will deaden our communication with God. How do we guard against becoming self-absorbed in our praying? The following are some suggestions on how to deal with this:

- ✓ *Don't view prayer as a means of getting what you want or need (Matthew 6:10).* Prayer is not about us. It's about God and His desire to communicate with us. Self-centered prayer begins with the assumption that prayer is for me – for getting my will done. Prayer is about a relationship to God in which you seek the heart of God concerning needs and burdens. It is the way of getting God's will done on earth.
- ✓ *Ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine your praying (Psalm 139:23-24).* It is a healthy spiritual habit to examine our prayer lives on a regular basis. Call on the Holy Spirit to help you examine your praying. Plead with Him to make you sensitive to a drift toward self-centered prayer.
- ✓ *Pray for God's heart.* As the Holy Spirit cultivates God's heart in us, it will guard us against self-absorbed prayer. It will lead us to pray in line with what is on His heart.
- ✓ *Ask God to show you how to pray in your praying (Matthew 7:7).* When you are praying, call on God to give you insight to pray. Pray that He will show you how He wants you to pray. Even when you are praying about your personal needs, use this as a time to ask Him how He wants you to pray. By doing this, it helps us to keep His perspective on our prayer requests.
- ✓ *Keep a record of your prayer requests (Psalm 5:3).* This can help you guard against becoming self-absorbed. By keeping records of your requests, it will enable you to examine the direction of your prayer requests. You can tell if you are staying balanced or if your focus is in moving toward yourself.

- ✓ *Ask God to help you develop balance in your prayer life.* Every believer will have areas that he or she will want to focus on in prayer. God does give "prayer assignments" to believers. He calls believers to pray for specific issues. I believe that my primary calling in prayer is to pray for missionaries and their labors. It is something that I delight in and spend much time in prayer over. Yet, this does not excuse me from ignoring all others concerns. The key word for your prayer life is balance. Pray that God will help you develop this balance.
- ✓ *Develop a prayer model that will help you stay balanced.* A prayer model is a guide that will help you pray for a variety of concerns. It can aid you in covering numerous concerns and issues. It will also protect you from developing a narrow focus in your praying.
- ✓ *Use the Scripture in your praying.* Praying the Word of God will give you guidance on how to pray according to God's heart. The Word of God reveals God's heart – it manifests His desire. As you pray the Word, it moves you from your agenda and your plan to God's heart and will.
- ✓ *Plead that God will deliver you from a narrow, self-absorbed prayer life.* Pray for His cleansing; ask for His strength to get out of your comfort zone. Make known to Him your desire to pray according to His heart – according to His purpose. He will delight in this prayer and will transform your praying and you.



The Acts 1:8 Model: Building A Prayer Life After God's Own Heart

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea

and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Acts 1:8 can help you to pray according to God’s heart. You can develop a prayer model from this verse of Scripture that will aid you in having a balanced, powerful prayer life. It will also deliver you from self-absorbed prayer.

You may be wondering why Acts 1:8 can provide us with a model to pray. There are a few basic reasons for this:

- (1) *It is a revelation of God’s heart* – In this verse of Scripture, we see what God has a heart for – people from your neighborhood to the ends of the earth. This verse is an open door into God’s heart. He is concerned about all people whether those around you or a world away.
- (2) *It offers a basic guide for praying about people and needs outside the four walls of your church or home.* This verse shows us the basic outline for how to pray outside the box. It is an excellent tool for moving you beyond immediate concerns to those around you and across the world.
- (3) *It is a simple outline that is easy to remember and to use.* The outline in Acts 1:8 is not too detailed but it enables you to cover your area to the ends of the earth.

In this prayer model, you will cover four basic areas:

JERUSALEM:

Your Community or City

God is concerned about the people and the needs in your area. He has a heart for those around you in your neighborhood, your community, or your city. To pray according to God’s heart, you will need to include intercession for those around you. How can you pray for your “Jerusalem?” The following are some suggestions that you might consider:

- (1) *Make a list of your neighbors and pray consistently for them.*
- (2) *Pray for area pastors and churches.*
- (3) *Intercede for local leaders.*

- (4) *Make a list of the schools in your area and pray for the students, teachers, administration, and parents.*
- (5) *Pray for your law enforcement and fire officials.*
- (6) *Pray consistently for the medical centers, doctors, nurses, and patients in your area.*
- (7) *Ask God to give you discernment concerning the problems in your area; pray regularly for the removal of these things.*
- (8) *Plead for the removal of the obstacles to the gospel in your area.*

JUDEA:

Your State

Another area of concern is your state. This could be one of the most overlooked areas in the prayer lives of believers. Many times believers will pray over local concerns and national concerns, but the statewide issues and needs often receive little prayer coverage. Our prayers for our state and its needs do make a difference. We can impact our states through intercession. How can you pray for your “Judea”? The following are some suggestions are:

- (1) *Research and make a list of the key issues in your state. Call on God to intervene and work in these things.*
- (2) *Pray for your governor, lieutenant governor, and other state officials.*
- (3) *What denominations are in your state? Ask for God’s blessing and work in these denominations.*
- (4) *Pray for the universities and colleges in your state.*
- (5) *Make a list of the counties or parishes in your state; pray over these on a consistent basis.*
- (6) *Pray for the National Guard troops in your state.*
- (7) *Pray for the gateway cities in your state – the largest and most influential cities in your state.*
- (8) *Plead for spiritual awakening in your state.*

SAMARIA

Your Nation

God has placed you in this nation, "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings" (**Acts 17:26**). He has made you a citizen of your nation. He now desires that you intercede for that nation. How can you intercede for your nation?

- (1) *Pray for our President, Vice-President, and other government leaders.*
- (2) *Pray for our troops in the country and those scattered across the world.*
- (3) *Plead for spiritual awakening in our nation.*
- (4) *Make a list of the states and pray regularly for them.*
- (5) *Stay informed about the pressing issues in the nation; use this as fuel for your intercession.*
- (6) *Pray for the media.*
- (7) *Plead for God to work in and through Hollywood.*
- (8) *Pray for God's protection over and work in the nation.*

The Uttermost Parts

Your World

Our praying is to extend to the ends of the earth. God is the global God. He has compassion for all the peoples of the world. He longs to extend His message and His mercy to the ends of the earth. He can and will do this through our praying. How can you pray for your world? The following are some suggestions that you might want to consider:

- (1) *Get a list of the nations of the world and pray regularly for them.*
- (2) *Get a list of world leaders and pray through this on a regular basis.*
- (3) *Find out about Christian persecution in the world and pray for the persecutors and the persecuted.*
- (4) *Get to know missionaries and pray consistently for them.*
- (5) *Adopt a nation or a people group. Do research on them and use this as fuel for intercession.*

- (6) *Contact your church or denomination and find out what prayer needs that you can pray over.*
- (7) *Stay informed about what is going on in the world; use this as fuel for your intercession for the world.*
- (8) *Learn about the 10/40 Window and pray fervently for the nations in this window.*

Implementing The Acts 1:8 Prayer Model

The Acts 1:8 Prayer Model provides you with a basic outline to use in your praying. It will help you move out of your comfort zone in prayer. It will also guard you from falling into the trap of self-centered prayer. How then can you implement this prayer model into your prayer life?

- Ask for God's guidance in this matter.* Plead with God to show you how to use this prayer model to shape your praying.
- Don't get into a rut.* You don't have to use this prayer model in just one way. This prayer model is a guide – a way to help you stretch your prayer life and to pray according to God's heart.
- You can use this model each day.* You might consider praying about some need or concern from each of these areas daily.
- You can use this model weekly.* You might consider dividing these areas up for certain days of the week. An example is Monday – My Community, Tuesday – My State, Wednesday – My Nation, Thursday – My World. You could then use the other days to focus specifically on one or a combination of these areas.
- Keep an Acts 1:8 Journal.* You might consider keeping an Acts 1:8 Journal. Divide a notebook up into four sections, labeling them according to each of these areas. You could record what you are praying about in these areas and when you have prayed it. This can help you keep an eye on the direction of your praying. It can help you maintain balance in your praying.
- Rejoice in your opportunity.* Your praying can make a difference everywhere – from

your community to the ends of the earth. Rejoice in this! Take this responsibility seriously! Don't see praying for these areas as a chore – see it as a delight and an opportunity to make a difference in the world for Jesus!



The Acts 1:8 Model And Your Church

The Acts 1:8 Model can be used to encourage and strengthen your prayer meetings. They can help you to build variety and purpose into your prayer meetings. Creativity and variety are needed to build healthy and powerful prayer meetings. There is nothing worse than a dull prayer meeting. The Acts 1:8 Model can be used to help you build healthy and powerful prayer meetings. How can you use this Acts 1:8 Model for your prayer meetings?

- *Use this outline for your weekly prayer meetings.* During your prayer meetings, spend time praying over your area, your state, your nation, and your world. You might develop a handout with prayer concerns for each of these areas.
- *Designate your prayer meetings for Wednesday nights.* For instance, on the first Wednesday night, you might focus on praying for your area. On the second Wednesday night, focus on the state. Each Wednesday night will focus on a particular area from Acts 1:8. When a month has five Wednesday nights, you can focus on our witness – individually and corporately.
- *Have a concert of prayer.* During your Wednesday nights, pray corporately over each area. You could have handouts, overhead projection, or Powerpoint. Share about a particular prayer concern in that area. Then give the people time to pray over those issues.

- *Utilize small groups.* Have the people divide up into groups and pray over the concerns for the night.



To Whom Do I Pray?

One of the questions that I am asked most frequently is, "To whom do I pray?" This question expresses uncertainty about which member of the Trinity to address in prayer. People want to know if they should pray only to the Father or if they should even address Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Some have been instructed that they should never address Jesus or the Holy Spirit. How then should the believer pray in this matter?

The Word of God reveals that God is one, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (**Deuteronomy 6:4**). The Bible also teaches that God hears our prayers, "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles" (**Psalm 34:17**). Yet, the Bible also teaches that God reveals Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (**Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:2**).

Each Person of the Trinity is a supreme communicator who speaks and who listens. Each member of the Trinity speaks and listens! Because of this, it is not incorrect to speak to or listen to any member of the Trinity. You can speak to and listen to our almighty Father, our loving Savior, and our indwelling Holy Spirit. The very names and titles our God are invitations to relationship and that relationship is sustained and strengthened through communication. Each member of the Trinity can listen to you, hear you, and speak to you.

A biblical example of this is found in **Acts 7**. In **Acts 7:55**, Stephen recognizes the power and the authority of the Father, "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Following this, Stephen cries out directly to Jesus, "And they