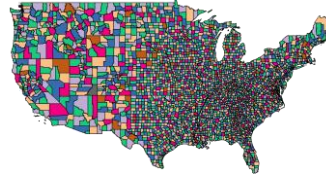


Reaching America Ministries



The “Why Pray?” Prayer Emphasis Guide

Sermon and Worship Service Ideas

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Table of Contents

First Sunday Pg. 3

“It’s Me Lord, Standing in the Need of Prayer”
Jeremiah 15:10-20

“Sweet Fellowship with the Lord”
Matthew 6:5-13

Second Sunday Pg. 7

“We Three Kings of Disorient Are”
II Kings 3

“When the Answer Keeps Knocking”
Acts 12:1-19

Third Sunday Pg. 11

“The Day the Choir Went to War”
II Chronicles 20:1-30

“10 Days of Waiting”
Acts 1:1-5, 12-14

Fourth Sunday Pg. 14

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Stew”
II Kings 4:38-44

“Don’t Give God Any Rest!”
Luke 18:1-8

Fifth Sunday Pg. 17

“The Jericho Walk”
Joshua 5:13-6:10

“50 Tons of Bones Wanted!”
I Timothy 1:1-14

Lenten Service Ideas Pg. 21

Prayer songs Pg. 28

Prayer IllustrationsPg. 33

First Sunday

Theme: The Importance of prayer as Relationship

Prayer topics for the week:

1. Prayer is important because of our relationship with the Lord
2. Prayer is important because we are dependent upon the Lord
3. Prayer is important because it enables us to be intimately enfolded into God's Spirit on a "supernatural" level.
4. Prayer is important because it is a time for the Holy Spirit to fill and empower us.
5. Prayer is important because it links our needs to God's infinite resources
6. Prayer is important because it is a time to share our discoveries with Him.
7. Prayer is important because it is an instrument of "ruling"

Sermon outlines:

Sample 1 (Old Testament)

"It's Me Lord, Standing in the Need of Prayer!"

Jeremiah 15:10-21

- I. Introduction: Standing in the need of prayer. . .
 - A. Are you standing in the need of prayer today?
 - B. How about our nation? The World?
- C. **Jeremiah's need of prayer**
 1. Briefly introduce this prophet and his calling. . .
 2. Jeremiah's message wasn't popular. In chapters 7-15 you will find examples of Jeremiah's sermon content. . .it wasn't very popular. . . here are some examples (7:32-34; 9:22; 10:17-18; 13:12-14; 15:2-4)
 3. In chapter 15, Jeremiah pours out his soul to the Lord- he will do this six other times in this book.

II. Jeremiah's experience teaches us two basic principles of prayer as we begin our 40 day prayer emphasis: God really does listen to us and He really does respond!

A. Jeremiah cries out to God and he tells God how he feels and why he is hurting.

1. "Lord, I'm Lonely!" (verses 10, 17)
2. "Lord, I'm in Pain!" (verse 18)
3. "Lord, I'm frustrated with You!" (Verses 15, 18)
4. When was the last time you really opened up your heart and cried out to God?
5. Jesus is our great High Priest who is able to sympathize with us according to Hebrews 4:14-16

B. God responds to our cries as a partner with us in prayer

1. Sometimes God doesn't do something about the complaint, rather, He does something to or says something about the "complainer" (i.e. Job)
2. God responds to Jeremiah in three ways in verses 19-21
 - a. He tells Jeremiah to repent and crawl out of the pit of self-pity
 - b. He tells Jeremiah to remember his calling, "Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them." (vs. 19)
 - c. He tells Jeremiah to remember the promises given to him-a promise taken from Chapter 1.

III. God responds to us, but are we listening? Why don't we take the time to listen? In these next 40 days, we will learn how to develop our listening skills (You may want to finish this message with one of the stories of how God responded in specific ways to listening prayer found in the Why Pray? book or Journal)

Sample 2 (New Testament)

"Sweet Fellowship with the Lord"

Matthew 6:5-13

I. Introduction: *If the Father knows what we need before we even ask, why then do we need to pray?*

A. The joy of "sweet fellowship" with the Lord like a child with a parent.

(Use some of the examples given in week one of the Why Pray? book)

B. The joy of having a true "spiritual" experience with the Lord-something that people around the world are, sadly, seeking in all the wrong places. . .

- C. You may wish to give a personal testimony of your own daily fellowship with the Lord. Or, consider the experience the Great Awakening Pastor-Jonathan Edwards had when he spent time alone with the Lord on his daily walks in the woods around his home:

“I had a view that was for me extraordinary, a view of the Son of God. . .and of his wonderful, great, pure, and sweet love. God in the communications of His Holy Spirit has appeared as an infinite fountain of divine glory and sweetness; being full and sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul; pouring forth itself in sweet communications, like the sun in its glory, sweetly diffusing light and life.”

(From Edwards own diary, The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1)

II. How do we foster “Sweet Fellowship” with the Lord?

A. **Begin by opening up your heart to the Lord**

1. Jewish hypocrisy in prayer (vs. 5)
2. Praying like a pagan (vs. 7)
3. In contrast to these two “types” of praying, Jesus told his disciples to pray in secret with sincerity
4. How do we do this in our fast-paced world?

(You may wish to give personal examples)

- a. Shut-out the world. . .by turning off_____
- b. Pour out your heart to the Lord. . .by approaching “Our Father who is heaven. . .as a father” and honestly pour out the secrets of your heart to him.
- c. Sometimes words are hard to express when the pain is great. Remember the words of O. Halseby:
“A tear is enough water to float our requests to God’s throne”

B. **Be still by opening up your heart and your ears before the Lord**

1. In Psalm 46, the Psalmist calls us to be still! The word for “still” used here is a word of rebuke. It reminds us of the rebuke Jesus gave the winds and the waves- to be still while he and the disciples were on the boat.
2. What are some of the raging storms going on in the world today? What are the raging storms in our hearts?
3. After we have poured out our hearts to the Lord and told him about the raging storms within, we can be still. We must be still in order to hear his voice. But how can we be still like a weaned child?
 - a. The word “Father” in the Lord’s Prayer reminds us Who we belong to. . .
 - b. The word “Heaven” in the Lord’s Prayer reminds us who God is. . .
4. In the next 40 days, we will learn how to be still and how to listen to the Lord’s voice even in the midst of the most raging storms of life.

Second Sunday

Theme: The Priorities of prayer (When to pray?)

Prayer topics for the week:

1. Prayer is both talking and walking with God in surrender to His will.
2. Prayer is inquiring and listening for the Lord's direction before we take action.
3. Prayer is fixing our eyes on the Lord in faith
4. Prayer is praising the Lord for who He is and what He has done.
5. Prayer is the first step in winning the world to Christ.
6. Prayer is beginning each day asking for his direction as Jesus did.
7. Prayer is the key to unlock the resources of heaven and the resistance of hell.

Sermon outlines:

Sample 1 (Old Testament)

“We Three Kings of Disorient Are”

II Kings 3

I. Introduction: Impatience with God

- A. Give some famous and/or historic examples of people who “Rushed in” and failed. Or, give a personal example of how you failed to ask and listen for the Lord's direction in the past as a young person.
- B. Set the stage for this passage by explaining that a new young king has taken control of the Northern tribes of Israel. Joram, the son of wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, is faced with a political dilemma that he now has to address. The vassal state of Moab has rebelled against Israel. What will Joram do? And what about Jehoshaphat, the king of the Judah, will he help Joram go to war against Moab? What voice or whose voices will these kings listen to as they decide to go to war?
- C. As we learn how to listen for God's voice in this 40 day period, we too need to learn how to discern God's voice from all others in prayer.

II. This passage describes Four different voices. Three voices will always lead us down the road to defeat, but only one voice will lead to victory. What voice did they listen to? What voice or whose voices are you listening to today?

A. The first voice is the voice of the flesh.

1. Joram is quick to go to war. He is driven by the voice of the flesh as he makes his decision. There are two factors driving this fleshly decision:
 - a. There was a financial issue to consider. Moab raised sheep for Israel. Mesha, King of Moab, had to supply Joram with 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. The Israelites were used to eating “high on the lamb.” And what about all of the nice wool coats and blankets which will not supply Israeli department stores?
 - b. The second factor was his pride. As a new king, he didn’t want to appear weak. He wanted to be as tough and “successful” as his father.
2. Looking at Joram’s decision, we might have done the very same thing because his actions seemed logical. If an action seems to benefit us or, if it feels right to take a certain course of action or, if it strokes our own egos, why should we wait? These are often signs of the flesh.
3. All too often we try to make quick decisions or rush into judgment without asking God to show us the right course of action. Sometimes we are confused by the voice of the flesh-what seems good and right in our own eyes. Paul tells us how to silence the voice of the flesh in II Corinthians 10:5

B. The second voice is the voice of the world

1. Joram seeks aid from King Jehoshaphat of Judah. This made sense to Joram because his father, King Ahab, had also asked Jehoshaphat for help years earlier resulting in victory. (See I Kings 22:40). But before Jehoshaphat helped Ahab, he first inquired of the Lord.
2. What will Jehoshaphat do this time? Verse 7 tells us that Jehoshaphat quickly agreed to go to war with Joram. He didn’t seek out the Lord to inquire what the Lord wanted him to do. No, he allowed his own nationalism to dictate his decision. After all, might of makes right!
3. Sadly, because these kings listened to the voices of the flesh and the voice of the world, they were left out in the desert totally confused, disoriented, demoralized and without water.

C. The third voice is the voice of Satan

1. We move on to the end of the chapter and find these three kings at the capitol city of Kir Haresth. The King of Moab was desperate so he took his own son and sacrificed him on the city wall to the Moabite god Chemosh.
2. At the sight of this horrible scene, the three kings, Israel, Judah and Edom, withdrew. Why? Because of fear. They fearfully thought the god of the Moabites would surely respond and aid Moab after such a costly sacrifice. These kings listened to the voice of Satan as he lied to them about the power of the Moabite god.
3. Sadly, because they listened to Satan's voice and withdrew, the Moabites were left to continue their raids against Israel and the god of the Moabites was credited for the victory. We are told in I John 4:1 to "Test the spirits to see whether they are from God. . ."

D. The final voice is the Lord's voice of victory

1. Jump back to verses 10-20 in the passage. Here is the only victorious aspect of this entire passage. These three kings of disorient were left in the wilderness tired, confused and without water. Finally, Jehoshaphat does the first right thing-he asks for a prophet of the Lord to ask the Lord what to do next.
2. Elisha teaches us two things about inquiring of the Lord for direction:
 - a. Elisha used the harp to help him concentrate and listen for the Lord's counsel.
 - b. We need to believe and act upon what God calls us to do even if it seems illogical or impossible from our point of view.
3. The end result was victory. Because they believed and obeyed God's voice. . .a God-sized thing happened. Can you imagine what would happen today if God's church earnestly inquired of God for direction and actually followed it, rather than making plans and then arrogantly asking God to bless these plans!

Sample 2 (New Testament)

"When the Answer Keeps Knocking!"

Acts 12:1-19

I. Introduction: Peter in Prison

- A. Explain the context of Peter's imprisonment, or share a surprising answer to prayer you have experienced in your own life. Or, perhaps share the example of the three pastors found in Day 11 of the Why Pray? book.

- B. The church had been fervently praying for 7 days for Peter's release. But, when Peter comes knocking on the door, they think Rhoda is crazy when she tells the praying Christians that Peter is free and is the one knocking on the door.

II. Why did they doubt? For the same two reasons we often doubt or fail to listen and watch for God's answers.

A. Reason #1, because of unanswered prayers in the past.

1. Why do these early Christians doubt God's answer to their prayers when they had already witnessed many powerful things in the life of the early church?
2. Verse 1 gives us the answer. While it is not mentioned, it's assumed that they had also prayed for James. (Explain who James was and why his death was a great loss for the early church)
3. The early church prayed with fervency, but one wonders if by the seventh day the church was losing hope of Peter's rescue?
4. We often lose hope if we don't see instant change on our time schedule. But if you believe God answers prayer, we should expect God to answer our prayers in one of three ways:
 - a. Sometimes the answer is an immediate "YES"
 - b. Sometimes the answer is "NO." The early church needed to know that God said no to James' release for reasons beyond their ability to understand. Sometimes the answer is NO for other reasons that the Bible makes clear to us. . .
(See Matt 5:23,24; I Peter 3:7)
 - c. Sometimes the answer is "YES, BUT NOT YET" The request is right, but the timing is wrong. Maybe we need to grow in our faith, or the Lord is preparing us for an even greater work or answers to prayer for His glory.

B. Reason #2, because of insurmountable obstacles in the present

1. Notice how Luke gives great detail in this passage concerning Herod's security around Peter. . .
2. How often don't we look at the obstacles rather than the one who is larger than every obstacle we face in our lives?

II. Are the answers to your prayers already knocking at your door?

- A. Dr. Henry Blackaby in his book "Hearing God's Voice" has helpful guidelines to help Christians listen and watch for the Lord's answers. . .some of these are God's Word, circumstances, the Church etc.
- B. But before we can listen, watch and wait for the Lord's answers we may need to make two major changes in our prayer lives:
1. We need to pray spiritually, "Praying in the Spirit on all occasions" Eph. 6:18. Pray with passion as the Lord places burdens on your heart.
 2. We need to pray specifically. Often our prayers are too general and we often forget what we even prayed for, let alone, actively look for God's answers knocking at the door.

Third Sunday

Theme: The Focus of prayer (Who should we pray for?)

Topics for the week:

1. Prayer plows the fields and prepares hearts for the seed.
2. Prayer shines the “spotlight” of God’s love into communities
3. Praying with praise and thanksgiving prepares our hearts to pray for others.
4. Prayer powerfully binds and releases the spiritual captives.
5. Prayer can transform neighborhoods and even nations!
6. Praying together for our neighbors brings Christ’s presence to a dark area.
7. Pray with great vision!

Sample outlines:

Sample 1 (Old Testament)

“The Day the Choir went to war!”

II Chronicles 20:1-30

I. Introduction: Your enemies are about to attack!

- A. The nations of Moab and Ammon are marching toward Jerusalem with an army three times the size of Judah’s army. . .
- B. What enemies are marching toward our neighborhoods, schools, and families?
- C. King Jehoshaphat gathers all of the people to gather at the temple to pray and fast for God’s help against this enemy. What a moving scene this must have been to see even the little children praying for God’s help!
- D. God’s answer was puzzling: “You need not fight in this battle. . .you will see the salvation of the Lord. . .Tomorrow go out against them and the Lord will be with you.”
- E. What was even more puzzling is that Jehoshaphat orders the choir to march ahead of the army equipped only with robes and a song to sing.

II. Why send the choir out first into battle?

A. **The choir was sent out to lead the army in exalting the Lord**

1. The nature of the song they sang: *“Give thanks to the Lord for his steadfast love endures forever.”* This song would remind God’s people of his great love and remind them of what God had promised his people.

2. The focus of the song they sang: This song focused their attention and their thanksgiving upon the Only One able to help them in their time of need. This will be God's fight and He will receive all of the glory.
3. Praise and thanksgiving prepares our hearts to pray and serve Him in the battles we are called to fight.

B. The choir was sent out to lead and unify God's people

1. The people prayed to the Lord, together, for help. Now they would see the victory of God as one unified people. There will be no doubt in anyone's mind who gave the victory.
2. Singing reinforces our faith as we sing together. There is also a horizontal dimension in our worship according to Ephesians 5:19-21, and Colossians 3:14-17.

C. The choir was sent out to invite God's presence

1. In II Chronicles 5, the musicians and singers preceded the ark into the temple as they sang the same song as recorded here: "He is good and His love endures forever."
2. And as they sang on that occasion, a cloud filled the temple as God's presence filled the temple with His glory. Worship becomes an invocation or invitation for God to enter His temple.
3. You can find similar situations in the New Testament at the birth of Christ, at the Last Supper, and in the early church fellowships.
4. As we come together to pray for others, we do so with praise as we ask for God's presence to **shine on our homes and neighborhoods.**
5. God won the victory that day against His enemies. He also provided for His people through their defeat. Everyone returned home with Joy and the fear of the Lord fell upon nations surrounding them. Isn't that the ultimate goal of praying the B.L.E.S.S prayer for our neighbors and for our nation? We want others to see God in powerful ways as we plant the gospel seed, singing the same song as a testimony to His glory.

Sample 2 (New Testament)

"10 Days of Waiting!"

Acts 1:1-5, 12-14

I. Introduction: Westerners hate to Wait!

- A. Give examples of impatient people or even personal examples of impatience.
- B. The Eternal God often makes us wait for many of His good gifts:
 1. We have to wait 9 months for babies to be born.
 2. Sometimes we have to wait days and even years for spiritual babies to be born. William Carey had to wait 7 years before his first Hindu convert.

C. Jesus tells his disciples not to leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

II. Why did God make them wait? Why does God make us wait?

A. **Waiting prepares us spiritually**

1. Will they actually wait in Jerusalem where it's still a dangerous place for Jesus' disciples to be or, will they return home to Galilee and their businesses? If they choose to stay, they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Grow impatient and run away, and they will remain powerless and leaderless.
2. They stayed praying fervently. And in their waiting and praying, God was tuning their hearts for what they were about to receive.
3. Waiting upon God should not be a passive-inactive time. Henry Blackaby suggests in his "Experiencing God" book that while we wait we should be doing three things:
 - a. Praying with passion to know God better and His purposes.
 - b. We listen to other believers and find out what God is saying through them.
 - c. We watch for the circumstances in our lives to change asking God to interpret them for us-living with expectancy.

B. **Waiting positions us victoriously**

1. Why did the Disciples have to wait in Jerusalem of all places? They will find that the risen and ascended Lord was positioning them for a victory beyond their imaginations.
2. The risen Lord is going to use the very place where he was rejected, despised and crucified to be the launching pad for his church. From the place where Jesus' enemies thought they had defeated Jesus, this will be the very place where his kingdom victories begin around the world!
3. The same is true today for Christians who faithfully wait and pray. The Lord is positioning his servants for active service. It is no accident you live in the neighborhood you live in or work where you do. You may be impatient to find another job or a better neighborhood, but has the Lord placed you where you are for a victorious reason? Has he placed specific people around you at work or in your neighborhood that only you can reach?
4. As you pray the B.L.E.S.S. prayer for the people around you, and begin to care for them in specific ways, you too will begin to see the wisdom and power of God working through you for such a time as this!

Fourth Sunday

Theme: The Manner of prayer (How should we pray?)

Topics for the week:

1. Praying for our neighbors to know the Shepherd's love and care.
2. Praying for the Lord's kingdom to replace the existing kingdom of darkness in our neighborhoods and cities.
3. Praying that the Lord's will be done and His name be glorified on earth as in heaven.
4. Praying for our daily provisions and that of our neighbors and co-workers.
5. Praying for reconciliation as well as peace and stability within our homes and neighborhoods.
6. Praying for strength to withstand temptations and live lives of integrity.
7. Praying for protection against evil and the evil one.

Sample outlines:

Sample 1 (Old Testament)

“Give us this Day our Daily Stew”

II Kings 4:38-44

- I. Introduction: Listening to children pray. . .
 - A. Reflect upon how children pray. Give examples of child-like prayers.
 - B. You may also want to introduce this week's praying theme and topics as they are introduced on pages 136-139 in the Why Pray? book.
 - C. Give the greater context of today's passage introducing the prophet Elisha to your audience. Elisha's ministry lasted nearly 50 years and was marked by a more “quieter” ministry around ordinary people. He is in many ways, a type of Christ.
- II. These two miracles teach us 4 lessons about God's daily provision
 - A. **We learn that God's provision includes all of our daily needs.**
 1. Elisha visits the school of the prophets when a dangerous stew was being served during a time of famine.

2. The reason Elisha has returned to them now is to not only validate himself as Elijah's true successor, which the miracles prove, but to also encourage these "learning" prophets. (This wasn't a school for budding chefs!) But they also needed encouragement because the days were evil. . .
3. God's people are not always spared from the world's problems, wars, pestilence, and blatant evil, but God always promises to sustain us by giving us just what we need. And sometimes all we need is just something for the stew.

B. We learn that God's provision is sometimes withheld

1. We are told that there is a famine in the land. We think its part of the 7 year famine alluded to in chapter 8. God withholds his provision and blessings upon the land, and even here in Gilgal, because of the sin of the people.
2. Why does God send famines?
 - a. Sometimes God sends a famine of the word (Amos 8:11) when we do not listen and obey His voice.
 - b. Sometimes God sends a famine when all we offer to Him is apathy and multiple excuses for not being faithful stewards. (Matthew 25:29)
 - c. Sometimes God sends a famine in order to put us on our knees and truly trust in Him alone for our daily needs. The example found on pages 151-153 of the Why Pray? book may be an effective way to explain this point.
3. Ultimately, when God withholds His provisions He is saying to us "Don't put food and material things above your trust in and obedience to Me." Man does not live on bread alone!

C. We learn that God's provision can be seen in the way he blesses our work

1. Poor Gehazi! He knows that the stew looks mighty thin. Gehazi, Elisha's helper, can't seem to do anything right. In the first part of this chapter, we find that Gehazi couldn't raise the dead boy as Elisha had instructed. In the next chapter, Gehazi contracts leprosy because of his greed.
2. At the Seminary kitchen, Gehazi doesn't even know the difference between nutritious gourds and fatal ones. Likely, they had put into the pot a wild cucumber which is very bitter medicine and if too much is consumed it can be fatal.
3. Does God bless your work? Do you bring Him along to the kitchen, the factory, the office, the store etc? Making a living can be a very bitter and even fatal experience without God's blessings.

D. We learn that God's provision must be shared

1. The second miracle gives us a glimpse of Jesus. . .
2. God's provision and grace is meant to be shared with others through our testimonies of His provision and praying "OUR" Daily Bread for those around us.

Sample 2 (New Testament)

“Don’t Give God any Rest!”

Luke 18:1-8

- I. Introduction: Persistent praying and listening. . .
- A. You may wish to introduce this message by sharing the story of Mary Gee found on pages 160-163 in the Why Pray? book or the summarized version on pages 2-4 in the Why Pray? Journal booklet.
 - B. You may also wish to share Herb Miller’s comical illustration found in the Prayer Illustration pages.
 - C. Introduce the passage and its context. . .
- II. Why should we continue to pray?
- A. Because persistent praying develops greater dependency upon the Lord**
 - 1. The widow in this parable gives us a picture of man’s dependency
*Describe the plight of widows in Jesus’ day. . .
 - 2. The widow in this parable illustrates the kind of humility which is fervent and persists, as we bring all of our needs before the Lord.
*Describe the way she seeks out the help from this judge. . .
 - B. Because persistent praying defines the nature of God and our relationship to Him**
 - 1. Jesus is NOT teaching us here in this parable, that God is like this harsh, selfish, aloof and unjust judge. On the contrary, Jesus is teaching just the opposite: If this selfish, ruthless, unjust, and godless judge finally answered this woman’s request. . .how much more readily will our loving, righteous, and merciful Father answer the requests of His children!
 - 2. Sadly, many people think God is like this judge:
 - a. They think they have to make deals with God and bargain with him for answers. Remember, the widow had nothing to bribe the judge.
 - b. They think that God has some kind of prayer- counter in His hand and when we reach a certain number of prayers He will reward us with an answer.
 - c. Because God didn’t answer their prayer the way they wanted, they believe God is unjust and doesn’t really answer prayer.
 - 3. Jesus teaches us two wonderful truths about persistent prayer:
 - a. We can be persistent in prayer and come before the throne of Grace often and anywhere! God doesn’t keep office hours.
 - b. We can be persistent with great assurance believing He will answer our prayers because of who we are as His children through Christ.

C. Because persistent praying demonstrates our faith and commitment to God's Kingdom

1. Jesus ends this parable with a surprising ending which seems out of place. He has been describing persistent prayer and then ends with the statement: "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"
2. What do faith and the second coming of Christ have to do with persistent praying? The answer is simple: Our persistence in prayer demonstrates our faith in the God who is willing and able to answer our prayers.
3. When Christ returns will he find a praying church? If the Son of Man were to return today, would he find you praying earnestly for His kingdom to come and His will to be done here on earth? Will he find people passionate enough and committed enough to keep praying until he returns?

Fifth Sunday

Theme: Our wonderful privilege and authority to pray,
and, to intercede for others.
(What happens when we pray?)

Topics for the week:

1. One of the hindrances to prayer is our failure to realize our high position in God's creation. (Made in God's image)
2. Prayer is the "scepter" of power by which we rule the universe as God's redeemed children. (Redeemed as Christ's Bride)
3. Prayer rewards- we enjoy His presence in glory and witness the fruits of our persistent and passionate praying.
(We are more than Conquerors)
4. Praying with authority to prohibit evil.
5. Praying with hope and confidence for God's provision for ministry.
6. Praying for the very presence of the Risen Lord to be light to a dark and cold world.

Sample outlines:

Sample 1 (Old Testament)

“The Jericho Walk”

Joshua 5:13-6:10

I. Introduction: God’s plans always prove victorious!

- A. Joshua receives God’s plans on “holy ground” as he encounters a pre-incarnate Joshua (Jesus) standing before him.
- B. Joshua fell down to the ground in fear and worship. The warrior must first become a worshipper.
- C. Joshua quickly obeyed the war-plans that came straight from the throne-room of God, even though they were plans he would never have conceived on his own.

II. God’s surprising War Plans

A. Joshua is to begin by targeting the strong-hold of Jericho

- 1. Jericho was the physical strong-hold for the entire region and God tells Joshua to start here at this most fortified city in all of Canaan.
 - a. Notice the wisdom of God. Jericho was located on an old river bed that went all the way up to the city of Ai. Control Jericho, and you control the gateway to the entire hill country.
 - b. Consider how the down-fall of Jericho would demoralize the rest of the cities of Canaan. “. . .how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man!” (Matthew 12:29)
- 2. Jericho was also a spiritual strong-hold. In chapter 6:1, we are told that the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because of the Israelites. Yes they were afraid of the Israelites, but the closed gates speak more about the hard heartedness and rebellion of the city’s inhabitants.
 - *What if the King of Jericho and all of the inhabitants had the faith of Rahab and opened up their gates for God’s people? Instead, they believed the lies and deceptions of Satan thinking that their gods and their mighty walls would protect them.
- 3. There are plenty of spiritual strong-holds today in our cities and neighborhoods. Ed Silvoso in his book called, “That None Should Perish” describes a spiritual strong-hold as: “a mind-set impregnated with hopelessness that causes us to accept as unchangeable, situations that we know are contrary to the will of God.” (p.154)
- 4. Paul tells us how to deal with strongholds in both II Corinthians 10:3-5 and in Ephesians 6:10-20.
- 5. You may want to share the stirring story given on pages 195-198 in the Why Pray? book

B. Joshua is to fight this enemy in silence.

1. The soldiers and the people are to be silent and not say a word for six days as they march around the walls of Jericho. One wonders if the people inside those walls laughed at them even taunting them to do something?
2. They must have looked foolish just walking around in silence not doing a thing militarily. Why did God call them to walk around the walls in silence? God wanted them to know that it's "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord almighty!"
 - a. Marching around the walls in silence, seven days in a row and then 7 times on the last day, was an expression of faith in God's ways.
 - b. Marching around the walls in silence was an expression of persistent faith waiting upon the Lord, trusting in His plans and purposes.
3. What a powerful lesson for the church today! A good example of how to pray and demolish strongholds is found on pages 105-107 in the Why Pray? book.
4. What would happen if the church followed this example and simply listened to God in silence and waited for His battle plans! Review the example found on pages 4-5 of the Why Pray? Journal.

Sample 2 (New Testament)

"50 Tons of Bones Wanted!"

II Timothy 1:1-14

I. Introduction: Spurgeon's Prayer

- A. The Spurgeon illustration about the "50 tons of bones wanted" is given in the Prayer Illustration section.
- B. Why was Timothy fearful? We have some clues from other passages in Paul's letters:
 1. Physical problems (I Tim. 5:23)
 2. Shy nature (I Cor. 16:10)
 3. Youth (I Tim. 4:12)
- C. Timothy, including all of us in the 21st century, need not be timid because. . .

II. God isn't the author of fear but of Triumph!

A. God is the author of triumphant power

1. God is the author of limitless, life-changing power.
2. All Christians can and must seek this power, pray for it, and then believe that God will give it.
3. Use the example of Luke found on pages 172-175 in the Why Pray? book.

B. God is the author of triumphant love

1. God gave us the gift of triumphant, intentional, and sacrificial love. God uses that love to bring glory to himself and lead others to salvation.
2. Jesus described this Triumphant Love in the gospels as:
 - *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you and great will be your reward in heaven.
 - *Love one another and all will know that you are my disciples
 - *Let your intentional love and good deeds be evident to men so they will be led to praise God.

C. God is the author of triumphant thinking

1. Paul tells Timothy that God is the author of self-control which means sound thinking-a balanced mind. I call it triumphant thinking because when we know who we are and whose we are; anxiety, fear, and panic will not diminish our zeal. When our self-image in Christ is secure, we can approach our world with our heads held high (Psalm 3:3)
2. As we look at the situations we face through the vision of God's word, the giants seem small and the obstacles like mole-hills.
3. We can begin to pray with zeal as individual Christians, as families, as one united church with a back-bone.

Sample Sermons for the Lenten Cycle

Sermon series theme:

“Jesus’ Prayers on the Road to the Cross”

First Sunday of Lent:

“A Prayer of Praise for Child-like Faith”

Luke 10:13-24

Theme: Jesus shares the joy of the 72 who have returned from their very first mission trip. They return with a joy that is contagious. But Jesus’ joy has a different focus. He praises the Father because God has hidden his truth from the “wise” and “learned” and reveals his truth to little children. Later on in chapter 18, Jesus will say; “. . .whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

Outline: **Why does Jesus praise the Father for Child-like Faith in this prayer on the road to the cross?**

- A. Child-like faith believes God’s Truth with simplicity
- B. Child-like faith receives God’s truth with dependency

Application points: We are able to believe and receive God’s truth because we know and implicitly trust the source of that truth. Jesus contrasts the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum with old and proud cities like Tyre and Sidon who would have repented had they heard the same truth Jesus was teaching. The former cities knew Jesus and yet rejected him and his message. How are we doing in that regard as a church, or as a nation? How are we doing personally? Are we responding to God’s Word? Are you growing in your knowledge of both the Father and the Son? Is our faith growing to “Child-like status?” The best indicator of our child-like faith is demonstrated through a dependent, enfolding, empowering and intimate prayer life.

Second Sunday of Lent:

“A Prayer of Thanksgiving for being heard”

John 11:38-44

Theme: Jesus gives thanks for hearing Jesus’ prayer to raise Lazarus from the dead. There are lessons on prayer here in this passage which the sermon outline will unfold. However, the lessons on prayer are against the back-drop of Jesus’ approaching time of suffering and crucifixion. Jesus gives thanks knowing that the resurrection of his friend Lazarus will cause the Jews to begin their plot to kill him (Vs. 50).

Outline: **Two unique aspects of Jesus’ prayer in the context of suffering people and of his own imminent suffering on the cross.**

A. Notice how Jesus prays personally to the Father

B. Notice how Jesus prays publically before others

Application points: Jesus prays with intimacy as he addresses God with the term “Abba”. He talks to His Father as a young Hebrew child might address his or her father. It was a relationship of dependency as Jesus listened and joined the Father in the Father’s ongoing work (5:19-21). We too can pray with this kind of intimacy because of Christ’s work of redemption and his ongoing work of intercession. We also learn from Jesus’ prayer, prayed publically, that this would be another sign (the last one in John’s gospel) that the Father sent the Son.

The prayer also teaches us about Jesus’ heart-felt desire to glorify the Father through this sign, even if the answer to this prayer will ultimately lead to a cross. Are the ultimate goals of our prayer-petitions God’s glory? It’s easy to offer up prayers of thanksgiving when God answers our prayers in a positive way. But are we still thankful when His answers to our prayers lead to continued suffering?

Third Sunday of Lent:

“A Prayer to Glorify God’s name”

John 12:20-36

Theme: John’s Gospel doesn’t contain the Gethsemane account. This passage from John isn’t John’s account of Gethsemane because it takes place two days before the Passover. Some folks have called this scene in John the “Little Gethsemane” because we see the same kind of struggle Jesus will encounter on the Mount of Olives. It has been a building struggle since Jesus was

tempted by Satan in the wilderness: “Do I follow the Father’s agenda, or Satan’s (my own) agenda?”

As Jesus draws closer to the cross, his heart is troubled, and yet, he prays for God to be glorified. God responds to Jesus’ prayer request with a grand affirmation we can summarize this way: *“I have already glorified my name through your humility and willing obedience to leave your place of glory and become a man. And I will continue to glorify my name in what is ahead of you.”* As Jesus puts the Father’s agenda before his own comfort and glory, God’s name will be glorified and His kingdom agenda fulfilled.

Outline: How will Jesus’ future suffering on the cross glorify God’s name?

- A. The cross will bring judgment upon the world (vs. 31a)
- B. The cross will bring the defeat of Satan (vs. 31b)
- C. The cross will draw all people to Himself (vs. 32)

Application points: Jesus’ prayer to glorify God’s name, despite the great humiliation he had already suffered and the great suffering ahead of him, illustrates the great love Jesus has for the Father and for His lost children. In the narcissistic age in which we live, Jesus’ agape love shines even brighter and must be an example for us (Philippians 2:1-11).

The three points in the outline present a clear prayer strategy for us as we forget about ourselves, take up our crosses and follow Jesus by praying, caring and sharing with others. Do we have a burning desire within our hearts to glorify the Father’s name by following His agenda?

Fourth Sunday of Lent:

“A Prayer for Us”

John 17:6-26

Theme: If we read this prayer without any knowledge of its context; we wouldn’t have a clue that Jesus is standing on the threshold of being betrayed by one of his own disciples, brought before a kangaroo court, and handed over to be mocked, beaten, abused and then to suffer on a cross facing the anger of the Father for our sins! And yet, the entire focus of his prayer is selfless and God-glorifying. His concern is not about his own suffering, but about the future suffering his own disciples will endure, and for the generations of disciples yet to be born.

Outline: Jesus models for us how we are to pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done so that God's name will be glorified.

- A. Pray for the Mission of the Church
- B. Pray for the Unity of the Church

Application points: As Jesus sends his disciples (his church and bride) into the world, they will face great opposition from both Satan and the power of the world in which we live. Satan wants to defeat the church and is diligent to keep the church off its knees in prayer. The world has its own agendas for us to follow and its own truth for us to believe. Jesus prays and is even praying for us now, to be kept from the Evil One and to be sanctified by His truth. We are to be set-apart for His service. But how can our prayers be effective and our witness bright if we and our families are not in the Word of God? And how can the church be a beacon light of God's perfect will and agenda if its always warring within itself? Satan does his best destructive work from within the church, and the world claims victory when big egos within the church lead it according to the world's agenda.

We are encouraged in our times of need to know that Jesus prayed for us on the eve of his suffering, and continues to pray for us when we suffer. It is also an encouragement for others to know, including our non-Christian neighbors and co-workers, that we are praying for them and their needs so that they too will one day glorify the Father.

Fifth Sunday of Lent:

"Prayer before the Battle"

Luke 22:24-38

Theme: In the context of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, and Peter proudly refusing, the disciples are vying for future positions of power and authority in Christ's future kingdom. They were fighting among each other about who was going to be the greatest in Christ's future kingdom. The scene would be comical, if it were not so selfishly misguided, as the Lord of heaven and earth stoops to wash their feet.

Peter is singled out for specific prayer before the battle-Peter's future battle and Jesus' own at Gethsemane and the cross. Satan has high hopes of not only getting rid of Jesus, but also, chipping away at any future leader who Jesus named "The Rock".

Outline: Jesus' specific prayer for Peter and all who face trials and temptations.

- A. Jesus prays that Peter's faith will not fail
- B. Jesus prays that Peter will be restored and used to strengthen others

Application points: Jesus teaches us to keep our leaders in prayer and gives us two very specific prayer requests for them. Satan knows that if he can take the shepherd out of the sheep-fold, the sheep will scatter. Our leaders need to be covered with daily prayer. We also need to pray and forgive our fallen leaders. And even to go on praying for them to be restored and used by God for His glory.

Praying for difficult areas in our cities and communities that are living under spiritual bondage may seem hopeless at times. Even praying for people who are unlovable and who many deem "unredeemable" will be a challenge that tests our patience. But fervent prayer in the most difficult situations and people demonstrates faith in the Lord who restored the two great apostles of the early church-Peter and Paul.

Sixth Sunday of Lent: (Can be used for Palm Sunday)

"A Prayer to Remove the Cup"

Luke 22:39-46

Theme: We need to see the Triumphant Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as setting the stage for a battle which will take place in Gethsemane. As the people line the streets praising Jesus as King, and as the Disciples lead Jesus into the city with visions of grandeur before their eyes, Jesus is facing a dilemma: "Will I be obedient to God's will and suffer like a criminal bearing the guilt and sin of the world or, will I take the easy way out and lead these people as their king in the present as Satan had offered?" The people were already worshipping him and following him as their king.

As we hear Jesus pray and ask for the cup to be removed from him, we wonder if Jesus is contemplating doing it Satan's way? Or, does Jesus have another plan or idea in mind to fulfill God's purposes?

Outline: Why does Jesus pray for the cup of wrath to be removed when he knows its God's will for him to suffer and die on the cross?

- A. The Prayer demonstrates the reality of his humanity
- B. The Prayer demonstrates the reality of his divinity

Application points: Doctor Luke describes the humanity of Jesus' battle with Satan in the Garden. Luke is the only Gospel writer who mentions the role or activity of Satan in the Passion Week. He also highlights the bodily suffering of Jesus while being "pressed" like an olive on the Mount of Olives. This was no mere image of a man suffering or some computer generated picture of a man suffering. No, he took on flesh and blood and grew weary as he considered

the prospects of physical death and the prospect of being separated from the Father. When we pray, we know we have one who has suffered like us in every way.

Jesus also demonstrated the reality of his divinity in that he knew the Father's agenda, while Satan was tempting him to do his own thing. We should be thankful that the heavenly Father restrains Satan from unleashing the full power of evil against us. Jesus also knew, as the second person of the Trinity, what being separated from the Father meant. He didn't want to experience the weight of God's just and righteous anger-an anger many people will experience for all eternity if they do not turn to Christ. Gethsemane reminds us that God isn't "Soft on Sin".

As the 40 Day Prayer Emphasis winds down, the summary application is; are we willing to take up our crosses and follow Jesus by listening to him and responding to his agenda for our lives? Are we willing to make our homes places of prayer and pray for those who are lost and living in what can only be described as "foretastes of hell"?

**Note: Eugene Peterson devotes an entire section on Jesus' prayers and prayer life in his book entitled "Tell It Slant" (Wm. Eerdmans Pub. 2008).

Liturgy for a Maundy Thursday or a Good Friday Service

Theme: The three prayers Jesus uttered from the cross assure us of God's love and grace. They also remind us that the **ONLY WAY** to the Father is through his suffering on the Cross.

“Jesus’ Prayers on the Cross”

Prelude

Choral call to worship (Or an appropriate scripture reading)

Opening hymns: “What Wondrous Love” (S. Mead’s A General Selection, 1811)
“Lamb of God” (Donnie McClurkin)

A Prayer of Forgiveness *“Father forgive them!”*

Scripture reading: Luke 23:26-34

Meditation

Prayer

Song of response: “No Weight of Gold or Silver” (Timothy Dudley-Smith 1972)

A Prayer of Anguish *“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”*

Scripture reading: Matthew 27:45-47

Meditation

Prayer

Song of response: “Alas and did My Savior Bleed” (Isaac Watts)

Communion

Prayer

Song of response: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” (Latin, medieval)

A Prayer of Completion *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”*

Scripture reading: Luke 23:44-46a

Meditation

Song of response: “Man of Sorrows-What a Name” (Philip Bliss)

Closing scripture reading: Mark 15:36-39

Notes:

****Choral music that highlights each of these prayers may be substituted for the songs of response in each section.**

****The Communion service could also be placed at the end of the service or omitted**

****This particular service ended in silence at the end of the closing scripture reading**

Prayer Songs

Songs of Communion with the Lord

Breath of God

Vicky Beeching
Integrity Music

Close to Thee

Fanny Crosby, Silas Vail
Public Domain

Fill Me Up

Don Poythress, Jared Anderson
Hosanna Music

Give us your Presence

Jesse Manibusan, Sarah Hart
Spiritandsong.com

Grant Us Peace

Ken Canedo
Spiritandsong.com

How Long Has it Been

Mosie Lister
Southern Faith Songs/Mosie Lister songs

In the Secret Places

Ken Bible, Mosie Lister
Southern Faith Songs, Pilot Point Music/Mosie Lister

Nearer, Still Nearer

Leila Morris
Public Domain

Pour Out my Heart

Craig Musseau
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing/Vineyard Songs Canada

Soften My Heart

Graham Kendrick
Make Way Music

Wonderful Peace

Warren D. Cornell, W. George Cooper
Public Domain

Breath on me Breath of God

Edwin Hatch-Public Domain

Commune with Me

Kirk Dearman
Word Music LLC/Maranatha Music

Fill My Cup Lord

Richard Blanchard
Word Music

God Be in My Head

Jared Anderson, Sidney Lytlington
Integrity Worship Music

How I Love You

Henry Seeley
Planet Shakers Ministries Int. Inc.

I Need Thee Every Hour

Annie Sherwood Hawks, Robert Lowry
Public Domain

Intimacy

Matt Redman
Thankyou Music

Our Heart

John Chisum, George T. Searcy
Integrity's Praise Music/Integrity's Hossanna

Quiet of This Moment

Terri Butler
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Sweet Hour of Prayer

William W. Walford, William Bradbury
Public Domain

You Are My World

Marty Sampson
Hillsong Music Publishing

Prayer songs voicing our dependency upon the Lord

All in All

Katie Reider
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Every Promise of God

Michael Hudson
Ariose Music

Gentle Shepherd

William J. Gaither, Gloria Gaither
William J. Gaither, Inc

Holding on to Me

Andy Judd, Lynda Thoms
Lynda Thoms/Garage Hymnal/Andy Judd

Just a Little Talk with Jesus

Cleavant Derricks
Stamps-Baxter Music

My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Ray Palmers
Public Domain

Speak O Lord

Keith Getty
Thankyou Music

Standing in the Need of prayer

Afro-American spiritual

Teach Me Lord to Wait

Stuart Hamblen
Hamblen Music Company

The Potter's Hands

Darlene Zschech
Hillsong Music Publishing

Give Me Ears to Listen

Timothy Smith
spiritandsong.com

I Lift My Eyes Up

Brian Doerksen
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing/Vineyard Songs Can.

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

Ken Medema
Hope Publishing Company

Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord

Paul Baloche
Integrity's Hosanna Music

Spirit Song

John Wimber
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Take it All

Mac Powell, Tai Anderson, Brad Avery, David Carr, Mark Lee Consuming Fire Music

The Lord is My Strength

John Barnett
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Intercession for others and Prayers for Revival

Ask, Seek and Knock

Dale Garratt
Scripture in Song

Fill My Eyes

Ken Chant
Word Music, LLC

If My People Will Pray

Jimmy Owens
Bud John Songs, Inc

Kindness

Chris Tomlin, Louie Giglio, Jesse Reeves
Worshiptogether.com songs/sixsteps Music

Light the Fire

Bill Maxwell
Bloodsmith Music

Can a Nation be Changed

Matt Redman
Thankyou Music

Holy Spirit Come

Sam Evans, Jonathan Hunt
Planet Shakers Ministries Int. Inc

Jesu, Jesu

Tom Colvin
Hope Publishing

Let Your Glory Fall

David Ruis
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Lord Make Us One

Marvin Frey
Frey, Marvin V.

Make Me a Servant
Kelly Willard
CCCM Music/Maranatha Music/Willing Heart

Prayer of Peace
Leigh Newton
Newton, Leigh

Revive Us O Lord
Steve Camp
Birdwing Music/ unaffiliated Catalog (UC)

Save Us O God
Kevin Prosch
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Send Me Out
Steve Fee
Six Steps BMI Designee/Worship Together Music

Shine Jesus shine
Graham Kendrick
Make Way Music

You're Calling Us
Graham Kendrick
Make Way Music

Prayer for the Church
Jerry Riddle
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Rain Down
Martin Smith, Stuart Garrard
Curious? Music UK

Revive Us Again
William P. Mackay
Public Domain

Send a Great Revival
B.B. McKinney
Broadman Press

Shine on Us
Michael W. Smith, Deborah Smith
Sony/ATV Milene Music/Deer Valley Music

Touching Heaven Changing Earth
Reuben Morgan
Hillsong Music Publishing

Prayer Songs that Teach us How to Pray

Adoration-Exaltation

Ancient of Days
Steve Southworth, Gina Southworth
Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Come Thou Almighty King
Author unknown, Felice De Giardini
Public Domain

Glory of God
Jared Anderson
Integrity Worship Music/Don Quixote Pub.

How Great Thou Art
Carl Boberg
Public Domain

Our Father
Don Moen
Integrity's Hosanna

The Risen Christ
Phil Madeira, Keith Getty
Phil Madeira Music/Thankyou Music

Beautiful Savior
Joseph A. Seiss
Public Domain

Father God
Dave Bilbrough
Thankyou Music

God of Wonders
Marc Byrd, Steve Lytlington
New Spring/Never Say Never Songs

Oh Lord You're Beautiful
Keith Green
BMG Songs, Inc/ BMG Songs, Inc/Birdwing

O Worship the King
Robert Grant
Public Domain

Confession

Create in Me a Clean Heart

Norman Johnson
New Spring

Lord Have Mercy

Graham Kendrick
Make Way Music

Prepare Our Hearts

David Moffitt, Sue C. Smith
CCTB Music/New Spring

Restore My Soul

Sylvia Rose
Srose Publishing Company

Take Me Back

Andrae Crouch
Bud John Songs, Inc.

Kingdom and Will of God

Almighty Fortress is Our God

Martin Luther
Public Domain

Christ Shall Have Dominion

Public Domain

Rejoice, O Pure in Heart

Edward H. Plumptre
Public Domain

Seek Ye First the Kingdom

Karen Lafferty
Maranatha Music

Provision, and Strength during our times of Trial

A Shelter in the Time of Storm

Vernon J. Charlesworth, Ira Sankey
Public Domain

All That We Need

Mark Altrogge
Dayspring Music/Integrity's Praise Music

Calvary

Bruce Bremmer
Scripture in Song

Grace Alone

Scott Wesley Brown, Jeff Nelson
Maranatha! Music

Give Us Clean Hands

Charlie Hall
Worshiptogether.com songs/six steps

My Jesus I Love Thee

William Featherstone
Public Domain

Purify My Heart

Jeff Nelson
HeartService Music, Inc/Maranatha

Search My Heart

Matt Crocker, Joel Houston
Hillsong Music Pub.

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Matthew Bridges, Godfrey Thring
Public Domain

Jesus Shall Reign

Isaac Watts
Public Domain

Rejoice, the Lord is King

Charles Wesley
Public Domain

A Shield About Me

Eoghan Heaslip
Vertical Worship Songs/ Song Solutions

Amazing Grace

John Newton
Public Domain

God Will Make A Way

Don Moen
Integrity's Hosanna Music

I Must Tell Jesus

Elisha Hoffman
Public Domain

In the Hour of Trial

James Montgomery
Public Domain

Lord, I Run To

Tommy Walker
Integrity's Praise Music

Your Grace is Sufficient

Martin Nystrom
Integrity's Hosanna Music

Jesus, Please Watch Over Us

Robin Mann
Kevin Mayhew Ltd/Mann, Robin

More Than Enough

Gary Oliver
Revilio/Integrity's Hosanna Music

Prayer Songs that speak of Spiritual Warfare and Temptation

Above All Else

Kirk Dearman, Deby Dearman
Integrity's Hosanna! Music

Christian Do You Struggle?

Andrew of Crete, John Neale
Public Domain

Just One Touch from the King

Godfrey Birtill, Gill Birtill
Thankyou Music

Let the Walls Fall Down

Anne Barbour, John Barbour, Bill Batson
Maranatha Praise Inc

Onward Christian Soldiers

Sabine Baring-Gould, Arthur Seymour Sullivan
Public Domain

The Lord Reigns

Dan Stradwick
Scripture in Song

Am I A Soldier of the Cross

Isaac Watts, Thomas Augustine Arne
Public Domain

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Charles Wesley
Public Domain

Lead on O King Eternal

Ernest W. Shurtleff
Public Domain

O Church Arise

Keith Getty, Stuart Townend
Thankyou Music

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

Jamie Owens-Collins
Fairhill Music

Victory Song

Dale Garratt
Scripture in Song

Sermon Illustrations and Quotes

The Privilege of asking for our daily bread

The late Dr. Bill Bright would often share the story of the famous Yates Oil Field. During the depression there was a sheep farmer by the name of Yates. Yates wasn't able to make enough money on his ranching operation to pay the principal or even the interest on the mortgage so he was often in danger of losing his entire ranch. He barely managed to feed and clothe his family, let alone pay the mortgage. Then one day a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told him that there might be oil on his land. And sure enough they struck one of the largest oil reserves in Texas. 80,000 barrels a day were pumped from his land and Mr. Yates owned it all. Yates was sitting on one of the largest and richest reserves of oil in the United States, and yet, he was living in abject poverty. Many Christians live like Mr. Yates. We are sitting on the richest of spiritual reserves and yet we think ourselves poor. Our Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills and yet we fail to ask him to help us through one day.

The German reformer Martin Luther thought the petition for daily bread meant the following: "What is meant by daily bread? Answer: Everything that is required to satisfy our bodily needs such as food and clothes, house and home, fields and flocks, money and goods, pious parents, children, servants, godly and faithful rulers, good government, seasonable weather, peace and health; order and honor, true friends, and even good neighbors."

Andrew Murray used the following illustration to make the point of why we don't receive. One day a very dependent man who never expected to have any of his prayer requests answered, was transported to the King's store house. To his amazement, he saw packages and packages with his name written on them. But he also noticed on the side of each box a sticker that read, "Return to Sender". They all had been delivered as a result of prayer, and yet, when they were delivered, they found the door closed. He never expected the packages to arrive, never watching for their delivery.

Access to the King through Prayer

Just before President George W. Bush left office, a 16 year old teen from Norway found a secret number for the White House. He changed his voice and claimed to be the president of Norway and he wanted to talk with President Bush. The teen was amazed how easily he had gotten all the way to the President's personal secretary who then asked the teen some questions for identification. He didn't get access to the president. However, around the same time, Jenna Bush, the daughter of President Bush was making an appearance on the Oprah Winfrey show. As part of the interview, Jenna was asked to call her father. To the surprise of everyone, the president answered the phone. Jenna had immediate access to her father. We too have immediate access to our Father-the king of Kings and Lord of Lords!

The Importance of Worship in Prayer

Martin Luther, the author of “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” knew first hand the power of worship in prayer as he fought against Satan during the days of the Reformation. He once said: “The Devil, the originator of sorrowful anxieties and restless troubles flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God.”

Spurgeon’s 50 Tons of Bones Illustration

Spurgeon took a walk one day down a pier and noticed a sign advertising fish bones. The sign read, “50 Tons of Bones Wanted!” “Yes,” said Spurgeon, “Mostly backbones, 50 tons of them. I could tell you a place where they could take 50 tons and still not be overstocked!” He finished admonishing the pastors he was addressing that day to have faith in God’s word. “If God’s Word is preached, it will produce glorious results.”

Herb Miller illustration

A small church was up in arms when a night club opened just a few doors down from the church. The church began to pray against the night club, organizing an all-night prayer vigil asking the Lord to close it down or burn it down if need be. The owner of the night club knew the church was praying for his club’s demise so when a bolt of lightning actually hit the building and burned it to the ground, the club owner took the church to court. The club owner sued the church for damages blaming them for the loss. When the church members testified in court, they denied responsibility. After hearing both sides, the judge made this comment: “It seems that wherever the guilt may lie, the night club owner believes in prayer while the church doesn’t”

Fervency in Prayer

Edith Shaeffer, the widow of Dr. Francis Shaeffer reflected upon the time when they were facing a financial crisis in their ministry in Switzerland. They were overwhelmed by the prospect of raising the funds needed. Soon, they decided to send letters to people who they thought might be able to help them-people of financial means. But the Lord impressed upon their hearts that they should do nothing but keep praying. Within three weeks, enough money came in to meet their needs. Edith Shaeffer made this follow-up statement: “Not one person on the list who we were going to send a letter and ask for money sent us a dime. It was as if God said to us, ‘It is not necessary to bring money from those places you think are possibilities. I am able to make it all a surprise to you.’”

Prayer for National Revival

In between the years 1845-1855, the United States was becoming more and more secular thanks in part to two factors: Wild predictions of the return of Christ in the years 1843 and 1844 by William Miller. When these dates proved wrong, Christianity became a joke among many people. The second factor was a financial boom as people moved out west and developed farm ground; many people in the east made fortunes through stock market speculations. People were leaving churches in droves because money and the zeal to earn more, turned men’s hearts away from spiritual things. But then it hit! In October of 1857, a hurricane sunk a ship load of gold and investors started to panic. The stock market

crashed and bank after bank failed. Businesses that needed credit to operate filed for bankruptcy. New York City had 30,000 people unemployed and many were going hungry. Soon violence broke out in the streets as people robbed and looted just to buy something to eat. One of the biggest criminals in New York City was Orville Gardner or “Awful” Gardener as he was called. He made money off from people’s misery through extortion, and prostitution. And for the young people, many joined gangs like the “Plug Uglies” or the “Dead Rabbits” or “The Bowery Boys”. Society was quickly breaking down in 1857 until God led an evangelist by the name of Jeremiah Lamphier to begin a noon-time prayer meeting at the Fulton Street Reformed Church. This prayer meeting grew and became a third great awakening in the United States. The streets of New York changed and by the end of 1858, some estimates show 92,000 people coming to Christ in the East and in the Ohio River valley.

Knowing the God who calls us to Pray

“Anything God has ever done, he can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere, He can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do for me.”

A.W. Tozer

Before the United States entered World War II, the Japanese were expanding their empire into China. Their attacks upon the Chinese were cruel and relentless. But before the Japanese occupied China, another force occupied parts of that land. Christian missionaries came not with guns or military might, but through deeds of love with the message of Jesus. One of these missionaries was Gladys Alward. Gladys’ story is featured in the movie “The Inn of the 6th Happiness” starring Candice Bergman. (Who by the way, was led to Christ after meeting the real Gladys Alward). As the Japanese approached the city of Yangcheng, Gladys was forced to leave with over 100 orphans. She and the children had to travel many miles over mountainous regions to reach a safe area at the Yellow River in Siam. Gladys became discouraged trying to protect and feed these children and thought they would never reach Siam. One of the older children tried to encourage Gladys by reminding her of how God helped Moses and the children of Israel. Gladys snapped back at the 13 year old, “But I’m no Moses!” With gentleness, the young teen responded, “Of course you aren’t, but God is still God!”

William Wilberforce was ready to give up the battle to end the slave trade in England until a very old John Wesley heard about Wilberforce’s discouragement. He wrote the following note six days before his own death: “Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God?”

Martin Luther, the father of the Lutheran Church had a problem with excessive worry and even anxiety. In fact, Luther was down right depressed sometimes. Here was one of the great reformers of the church; a man who nailed the 95 thesis to the doors of the Wittenberg Castle in Germany, a man who was a Bible scholar and wrote many things about the power and love of God, living with a bout of doubt and anxiety. At one point,

his discouragement and depression had so darkened his outlook on life, that his wife Katherine took the matter into her own hands. Katherine came down for breakfast one morning wearing dark funeral clothes looking like a mourner. Luther asked his wife, "Who died?" His wife said, "I have cause for the saddest of weeping for God in heaven has died." Luther shot back, "God has not died!" She came back with this rebuke, "Well then, live like it and act like it!" Needless to say, Luther was chided for his dreadful fear and excessive worry. Someone who had been told this story even penned a poem describing this account:

**"Her gentle rebuke did not fail him, he laughingly kissed his wise spouse,
took courage, and banished his sorrow, and joy again reigned in the house."**

The Power of Prayer in advancing God's Kingdom

In the second movie of "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, King Theoden is held in the power of evil. He is a horrible looking creature manipulated by the lies of an evil advisor. But when Gandalf the White approaches him, he is freed by a more superior power. After he is freed, the evil monster that was inside of him shows itself as Sauron the White Wizard. The King becomes restored and in his right mind. His countenance expresses new life. You don't have to be a Gandalf to free people held in the bondage of sin, and the demonic. We have authority through Christ and the greatest freeing weapon at our disposal-prayer in Christ's name.

Waiting and Listening for God's Guidance

"If we really do leave the control of the universe up to God, there's no telling what He might pull. When God calls the shots, people turn into prophets, mountains get cast into the sea and dead people come back to life. But no, we would rather have it our way and be in control. We like things on an even keel. We want to know what's next."

(Wittenberg Door)

How are your listening skills? Would you listen if the President of the United States wanted to share something with you? Many didn't listen to former President Franklin Roosevelt. FDR was tired of making small talk with dignitaries during social events. He didn't think people were listening to him anyway, so he decided to test his theory. During a state dinner, people came up to him and greeted him. He responded to a number of them saying: "I killed my Grandmother this morning." Sure enough, many were not listening and responded to FDR by saying things like: "That's nice" "How Lovely!" "Keep up the good work!" Finally, one foreign diplomat actually listened and told FDR, "Mr. President, I'm sure she had it coming to her." The King of all Kings is speaking to you, are you truly listening?