



PART 3: CHAPTER 10

Power Through Prayer

We are in partnership with God;
He makes divine decisions and
implements them through our prayers.

Do you rely on the prayers of other people? Maybe you have trouble concentrating, finding time in your schedule, or successfully practicing daily quiet times. You know others who pray: your parents, your pastors, or your church's resident prayer warriors. It may be time to ask yourself a few questions. Do you let others take your vacation for you? Eat for you? Take your place to walk hand-in-hand with the one you love? Of course not. Then, why would you let prayer be a second-hand experience?

Come close to God, and God will come close to you...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. (James 4:8a & 10, NLT)

Spending time with God is one of those things that you need to do for yourself. Your prayer life won't look like your spouse's, your neighbor's, or that of your Bible study leader—it is a conversation between you and your Creator. Engaging in prayer with God yourself is an essential part of being in relationship with Him. He is waiting to hear your voice.

God didn't yell at Abraham to get his attention. He simply gave instructions to a man who was listening (Genesis 12). God didn't reach out and grab Moses either, but instead put a burning bush in view that Moses could choose to investigate or not (Exodus 3). God did call Samuel's name in the middle of the night, but despite the temptation to roll over and go right back to sleep, Samuel chose to listen to God's voice (1 Samuel 3). Ananias was praying when he heard God tell him to go minister to Saul, who was a man on a mission to kill followers of The Way. Ananias' first response may very well have been, "God, surely you didn't say 'Saul!'

Tell me I misheard the name!” But he went to see Saul in spite of having every earthly reason to hide from the man (Acts 9).

What did these Biblical people have in common? God was at the center of their lives: they knew Him, trusted His voice, and obeyed. Their relationships weren’t formed through occasional visits squeezed into hectic schedules; they made spending time in the presence of God a habitual part of their everyday lives.

WE ARE PRAYER PARTNERS WITH GOD

Even though God is wholly self-sufficient, He designed our relationship with Him to include prayer. He waits for us to pray.

For us, prayer is as essential as breathing. We need to breathe to live: to exhale the dirty, used-up air in our lungs and inhale life-giving oxygen. Prayer provides that same essential pattern of give and take for our spirits: as we exhale our pain, sin, and sorrow, our Good Shepherd powerfully provides all we need as we inhale His goodness.

I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one. (Ezekiel 22:30, NLT)

In Ezekiel, God was yearning to grant mercy to Jerusalem, but not one person was praying for God to spare His people. God has placed Himself in partnership with us, bound Himself to not act without a human intercessor. God set up a system of prayer in which He withholds—judgement, mercy, revival, etc.—unless righteous people pray. In the Bible, God invites, exhorts, and implores us to pray in His name, in His will. Not only that, He promises that any ordinary, sincere, born-again believer can pray and trust that God will answer. Prayer is a part of being in close relationship with God: this is His will and our need. **We are in partnership with God: He makes divine decisions and implements them through our prayers.**

Prayer changes things; it makes a difference for good in this world. Interacting with God, as individuals or in groups, brings

God's power into the battle against evil. In addition, God provides a complete suit of armor for us to wear, to face each day as warriors ready for combat: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet coverings of readiness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:14-17). Scriptures show us a sequential pattern—a chain reaction—that readies each piece of armor for us to wear every day.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. (Philippians 4:6, NLT)

WE HAVE A HISTORY WITH GOD THAT INCLUDES PRAYER

In God's perfect, intentional will, we were created and placed in the Garden of Eden. It was there that "He walked with us, and He talked with us, and He told us we were His own" in the words of Charles Austin Miles' old hymn. Unlike God's beautiful garden, our sinful world is a war zone. Because of our own choices, both then and now, our sin lays roadblocks and landmines inside us that can separate us from God, but God made a way for us to remain in Him despite our sins (John 3:16-17).

After God brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, they wandered in the desert for forty years. During that time, they were attacked by the Amalekites. Moses instructed his general, Joshua, to lead the fight while he prayed. Moses climbed to the top of a hill above the battlefield and prayed, holding his staff high so that all could see. However, his staff was heavy, and as the day wore on, Moses found himself unable to keep it raised high in the air. Since the Amalekite warriors prevailed when he lowered his staff, Moses sat down, and his companions, Aaron and Hur,* held his arms up for him while they continued to pray together until sunset. God answered Moses' persistent prayer with victory (Exodus 17:10-13). Notice that Moses and his friends prayed fervently, but it was God's response and strength that brought the Israelites a victory over the enemy that day.

Elijah didn't have any super powers either, but when he prayed, God unleashed His heavenly power to control the weather.

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. (James 5:16-18, NIV)

God not only stopped the rain, but when Elijah challenged Baal's prophets, God sent fire down from heaven. Then Elijah prayed for the drought to end, and God sent a wisp of a cloud to signal an oncoming deluge. As an added bonus, He gave Elijah the strength to run in front of the king's chariot all the way to Jezreel (1 Kings 18). When Elijah prayed, "the power of the Lord" came upon him and enabled miracles. And afterward, when despair and depression grabbed hold of Elijah, God cared for him and gently reminded him that the God of the Universe was his shepherd.

Jesus prayed for us, all the time; "My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you" (John 17:9, NLT). Believers in the early church followed his teaching and made time to pray together a part of every day (Acts 2:42).

Before Jesus went to the cross to die for us, He went to the Garden to pray for us (Luke 22:41). He spoke to His Father about you and me, about our "unfair" world filled with sin and sickness. Full of passionate love, Jesus decided in the Garden that He would rather go to hell than not have you, me, us, with Him in heaven.

It is through the cross that we receive the victories of atonement, access, and inheritance. Jesus wasn't defeated by death and hell, but achieved victory when He rose up from the grave—He's alive (Mark 16:6)! It's hard to imagine a love so wide and deep, but that's the kind of love our Good Shepherd has for us (John 10:11-15).

God's will for us now, in our present earthly circumstances, hasn't changed. He still desires an abiding relationship with us—He has never left us and will never leave us alone. Praise, faith, and prayer bring the power to disable every explosive situation that threatens to detonate and create a breach between us

and God. But God promises that we will never be separated from Him (Romans 8:38).

Listen up, believers! Praying for an outflow of God's power did not just happen in ancient stories. **God still answers our prayers with His power today and will do so for all of our tomorrows.**

An important part of conversation is listening, and sometimes we have a hard time distinguishing God's voice among the distractions and worries of life. We get to a quiet place, but our minds speed through a loop of questions and doubts that only lead to more problems and insecurities. When that happens, we might not understand, or even hear, His replies. We are not alone in this issue.

John the Baptist, the man who introduced Jesus to the world, was overwhelmed by doubt when imprisoned in a dark dungeon cell. How did John the Baptizer, the man who had heard the voice of God from heaven say, *"This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy"* (Matthew 3:17, NLT), become John the Doubter? His forced inaction and fear-filled circumstances gave plenty of time for his mind to spin in circles. He had seen Jesus and heard God's voice, but it didn't match up with the picture that he still held in his mind of the Messiah—a Savior who would rescue his people from their earthly problems. John's doubts made him so miserable, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus to explain.

Jesus answered, *"Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor"* (Matthew 11:4-5, NLT). In other words, John, needed to take another look at what Jesus was doing. What did God's voice say to him, both in Jesus' spoken words and through the scriptures? Imagine John's abashed smile as he finally figured out that the Messiah wasn't about rescuing the Israelite nation from Roman rule; Jesus was on earth to resolve heavenly issues.

You could call this conversation between John and Jesus a prayer. After all, the dictionary tells us that a conversation involves "an exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas." Prayer