

Serving the Lord Powerfully Through Prayer

(Revision # 1)

Text: *Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man (person) is powerful and effective. James 5:16 NIV*

Contextual Principles:

- 1. The compassion of God -- He does not enjoy pain!**
- 2. The historic fact -- sickness and death have come from the Fall.**
- 3. The implied provision -- the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.**
- 4. The possible relationship between sin and the need of healing.**
- 5. The commanded procedure: confess sins and pray for healing.**
- 6. The promise: Prayer is powerful/effective and brings healing.**
- 7. The implied exhortation: believe, confess, pray, expect healing.**
- 8. One powerful way we serve God and one another is to pray.**

Serving The Lord - Powerfully - Through Prayer

Introduction

- A. Too often we consider prayer as the most dull and powerless area of the Christian life.
- B. In contrast, prayer, in the Bible, is often associated with power.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within us.** Eph 3:20.

Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power... And pray in the Spirit** on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Eph 6:10, 18

The prayer of a righteous man (person) is **powerful and effective.** James 5:16

- C. It may be difficult for us to approach prayer by faith, and with a high degree of expectation, because we listen to our emotions, suffer under the hindrances of the enemy, have not had the privilege of praying with those who know how, and have not been taught how to pray.
- D. How does healing/intercessory prayer differ from “ordinary praying”?
 1. In the light of the Bible and God’s eyes — there is probably no difference.
 2. In our experience there seems to be a world of difference. The reason may be that we have trivialized prayer by doing it incorrectly and accepting that procedure as our model. We may “pray” without expecting God to be present or to do anything. We may not plan on God being present and working among us. The result is a life of religious formality — powerless — largely meaningless — and a “religious word” activity instead of involvement with God and His Kingdom.
 3. How should we define healing/intercessory prayer? A provisional definition: Healing/intercessory prayer is a spiritual activity in which the one praying enters into a cooperative ministry with the Holy Spirit to bring the person or group prayed for into the presence of God so the power of God’s Kingdom may be released in harmony with His will for the person or group at that moment of their life.
- E. The purpose of these thoughts is to present a Biblical context in which prayer has been designed to operate and to make a few practical suggestions. Please keep in mind that this effort is provisional and each section needs more study and revision. And, I do not want to duplicate the excellent material recommended in the bibliography.

I. The Context of Creation — We have been Created in the Image of God.

So God created man (persons) in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Gen 1:27

- A. This verse teaches that we are basically spirit — spiritual — as the quality of our personhood.
- B. We are not basically mind, emotions, will, body — or a social person. We are spirit.
- C. Being in the image of God means our most fundamental, basic, and greatest abilities are all in the spirit — spiritual — area of our life. And, it means that our basic needs are “spiritual” in nature. We will not please God, or succeed in life, if we treat ourselves as mind, emotions, will, body or a social person. Healing/intercessory prayer is a “spirit involvement” with God and the person with whom we are praying.

II. The Context of Calling — We are Called to Exalt the Lord Jesus.

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:13

- A. It is overwhelming to see that we have been “called” (I Cor 1:9; Rom 8:28,29) to exalt the Lord Jesus. Healing/intercessory prayer is a vital part of fulfilling this calling.
- B. We must recognize the seriousness of this “calling,” and its relationship to prayer.

III. The Context of Transformation — We Have Been Redeemed.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come ... And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation II Cor 5:17, 19

- A. Through salvation, the old relationships and defilement are gone. We are reborn. John 3:3,5
- B. Through salvation, the image of God and all spiritual equipment has been renewed. Hebrews 13:20,21

IV. The Context of Enablement — We Have Been Given the Holy Spirit.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Romans 8:15,16

- A. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as the seal (guarantee/protection) of our salvation. Ephesians 1:13,14
- B. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to enable us to pray powerfully and with wisdom. Romans 8:26

- C. The Holy Spirit has given us gifts and will give us “temporary gifts” to equip us to know and do His will in praying for one another. I Cor 12 and 14; Heb 13:20,21
- D. The above truths will have little effect in the life of a person who is not in “step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25) and is not “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Many believers know very little of full surrender on a practical daily basis, know little of the fear of God, know little of the joy of the Lord, know little about practical faith, and know very little about a compassionate concern for other that leads into healing/intercessory prayer.

V. The Context of God’s Present Kingdom — The Kingdom is now but also not yet.

But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
Matthew 12:28

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. I Corinthians 15:25

- A. These passages clearly emphasize the presence of the Kingdom today and the truth that the full realization of that Kingdom is yet future.
- B. The presence of God’s Kingdom simply means that He has provided for many of the redemptive benefits of that Kingdom to be available to us today. This “mystery of the Kingdom” is the reason why some may be healed, as an answer to prayer, and some may not be healed.
- C. It is helpful to keep in mind that “Jesus message is that in his own person and mission God has invaded human history and has triumphed over evil, even though the final deliverance will occur only at the end of the age.” (George Ladd, **A Theology of the New Testament**, Eerdmans, 1974, pp. 67,68)

VI. The Context of Office — We Have Been Given the Office of Priesthood.

You also, like living stones, are built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. I Peter 2:5

- A. To be a priest means we have the authority (right) and power (enablement) to serve God.
- B. The office of priesthood is a legal relationship. We do not discern our office emotionally.
- C. The provisions of our office must be practiced — for it’s power to be released.

VII. The Context of Ministry — We Are to Administer God's Grace to Others.

*Each of us should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, **faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*** I Peter 4:10

- A. Consider the power of God's provision — a believer can dispense (give away) grace!

B. One of the gifts all believers has been given — is that of prayer. **We can pray the will of God into some degree of actuality** in the life of others. Eph. 6:18-20; James 5:17,18

1. Old Testament examples: Elijah, I Kings 17:1 (See Deut 11:16,17; 28:23); Daniel, Daniel 9:1-3.
2. New Testament examples: Epaphras, Col 4:12; Paul, Gal 4:19; The Church at Phillipi, Philippians 1:19.

VIII. The Context of Priority — Effective Prayer is Rooted in Spiritual Honesty.

*Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, **because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.*** I John 3:22

- A. An honest priority of worship, Psalm 63:1-8; John 4:23,24.
- B. An honest priority of loving God and one another, Matt 22:37-40.
- C. An honest priority of seeking to know Jesus Christ, Eph 1:17; Phil 3:7-10.
- D. An honest priority of cooperation with the Holy Spirit, Rom 8:12-17; Eph 6:18.
- E. An honest priority of knowing and doing the will of God, Matt 6:9-13; Col 1:9-14.
- F. An honest, simple, practical obedience before God in the light of His Word, Luke 6:46.
 1. Honesty in confessing the need for and seeking healing prayer for our own problems.
 2. Honesty in confessing our sins and weaknesses to one another.
 3. Honesty in accepting the fallen character of life and the inevitability of problems.
 4. Honesty in accepting the war we are in and the necessity of involvement in warfare.
 5. Honesty in dealing with sin in our own life — aggressively and Biblically.

IX. The Context of Promise — Prayer: a Major Channel of Divine Healing and Grace.

*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? **If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!***
Matthew 7:7-11

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man (person) is powerful and effective. James 5:16

- A. All of the above provision and truth can be channeled to another through prayer.
- B. It is in prayer that our office of priest becomes most effective — through God's power.
- C. Many people are unable to repent, confess, and grow until they receive healing prayer.
- D. As likened to members of the body we need the ministry of one-another's prayers.

X. Suggestions for Application.

- A. Suggestion # 1 — Utilize the prayers of the Bible.

It is very helpful to make use of such prayers as The Lord's Prayer, and the prayers in the Epistles. Experiment with developing the thought of each petition or truth. Example: As you pray for an individual or a group, consider what it could mean, or what God desires, for that person/group to experience what it means to have God as Father. Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as to how to use these various petitions and which one(s) to use. I have found this to be very beneficial.

- B. Suggestion # 2 — Study and utilize the models given to us in the Scripture.

1. Abraham in Genesis 18. The intercession of Abraham for his relatives living in Sodom and Gomorrah touches the heart of our relationship with others. And it reveals God's heart. Abraham's compassion, reverence, boldness, and pleas for mercy based on God's holiness, justice and faithfulness presents an example that should lead us into a deeper understanding of what it means to be a compassionate person, a person of faith, and how to exercise our office of priesthood.
2. Moses in Exodus 32. One cannot read this chapter without being moved by the cry of Moses' broken heart. His boldness in reminding God of His promises and of the danger to His reputation, if He did destroy the Israelites presents us with essential principles upon which intercessory prayer is built.
3. Hezekiah in 2 Kings 19. What a picture is presented to us in these chapters. Think of it — a mighty and seemingly victorious king outside your city demanding surrender! When Hezekiah received the letter of Sennacherib's proud and arrogant demands — he took it into the presence of God. And, he prayed for deliverance. The desperation in King Hezekiah's prayer and how he recognized that the LORD was Yahweh and Elohim and that He was involved in Jerusalem's existence (the Living God) explains what it means to believe in the Lord as our Hope (Romans 15:13). The attitude, actions, and prayer of King Hezekiah should lead us to confront our seemingly impossible situations with the "prayer of faith."

4. David in Psalm 23. While not specifically a prayer of intercession, David's "Prayer of the Shepherd," presents many truths that can be readily transferred to any type of prayer. His prayer is a model for us as to how to make affirmations of truth — creatively — a part of our worship and intercession. Consider the way his simple/profound statement, "The LORD is my shepherd" could lead us to say "The LORD is my Helper" (Hebrews 13:6), or "The Bible is my blueprint for life." While such an approach in prayer could easily get out of hand, it would not if we prayed with the reverence, respect, faith, love, and hope that motivated David.
5. Daniel in Daniel 9. This chapter may be the best model yet. Daniel, God's faithful servant, had lived most of his life among the captives in Babylon. As he read Jeremiah he realized the promise of God, that after 70 years the Israelites would be released from their bondage and returned to their homeland was about due — and he started to pray the Israelites back into Palestine! Daniel's prayer is a good example of what is being called "identificational repentance" by many today. While one must be careful as to how such a relationship is defined and applied it is surely a Biblical principle. See, for example the fine presentation by Clinton Arnold in his book, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*. The humility of Daniel, his understanding of the relationship of past generations to the present, his acceptance of the righteous judgment of God for sin, his plea for mercy, his desire for God's glory, his desperation, faith, and perseverance in prayer — all point the way for us.
6. Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1. This godly prophet, upon hearing the bad news regarding the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem, made the right response: he wept, fasted and prayed prayers of intercession for a number of days. Everything said above regarding Daniel could be said here. What stands out in Nehemiah is his willingness to be a part of the answer to his prayers. And God honored his willing attitude. The rest of the book is a testimony to the power of intercession and the relationship of believing prayer and dedicated activity. The light these men and their prayers shine upon our lives reveal so easily how far we often are from the practice of Biblical prayer. May God bring us to the type of repentance that will change our lives and cause us to pray more in harmony with the models before us.
7. Paul in Ephesians 1, 3 and Colossians 1. The truth so clearly seen in these intercessory prayers of the Apostle has to do with the will of God. What does Paul pray for when he makes intercession for others? It is for the realization of God's will in their life and Church. While there are warfare aspects to intercession as witnessed by Ephesians 6 and 2 Corinthians 10, a significant basis of prayer appears to be that of praying the will of God into actuality in individuals, groups, Churches, and organizations. When we utilize these prayers recorded in the Bible, as stated in Suggestion # 1, we are on a Scriptural foundation.
8. Epaphras in Colossians 4. This man, called "a servant of Jesus Christ," is also a good model for us. Paul's testimony of his co-worker was that "*He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*" And then Paul added, "*He is working hard for you.*" It appears to be quite clear that Epaphras was often praying for his fellow-church-members back home and doing so with fervency, deep concern, and perseverance. Consider again the emphasis upon the content of his intercession being the will of God.

C. Suggestion # 3 — Utilize the invitations of the Bible.

Consider with the person or group the significance of one of these invitations. Talk about it in its Biblical context. And then, pray with the person or group about responding to the invitation, about what it could mean in daily life, the effects of internalizing and making choices according to the invitation and being able to share that invitation with others.

Example: The invitation of Matthew 11:28-30. The thought of God inviting us to “come to Him,” is staggering in itself. If the person or group has some specific need, then pray that need “into the hands of the Lord Jesus.” Such as: “Lord Jesus, we do respond to Your wonderful invitation, and Susan and I pick up her sick mother and place her in Your hands of loving care. We do this because You have invited us and told us to ‘cast our care upon You.’ And, I pray that Susan will now be able to think of her mother as being in Your hands of tender and loving care.”

D. Suggestion # 4 — Utilize the promises of the Bible.

Many of the comforting and stabilizing forces in our life are the promises of our family and friends. At the top of the list are the promises made to us by God Himself. The strength of these promises are rooted in the very unchanging character of God Himself. When it is appropriate in praying with a person or group, in reference to a specific need — considering a promise from the Bible that would apply to the issue at hand — will often create new hope and form a basis for prayer. Example: Utilize the promises of Hebrews 13:5,6. Dwell for a moment on what it means for God Himself to be always with us and then beyond that, to offer Himself to us as our “Helper.” The spiritual potential is quite overwhelming. Turning these promises into prayer will enable those prayed for to receive the promise and to learn how to apply the promises to themselves.

E. Suggestion # 5 — Utilize the names God has given to us of Himself.

One of the many facets of divine revelation is the way our Father calls Himself by various names. Such names are “spiritual suggestions” to encourage us to learn of His greatness, mercy and grace. These names may also be called “invitations for response” so we can come to Him in confidence. A number of books have been written on this interesting subject. When you pray with a person or group it may be appropriate to consider one of our Lord’s many names — as it would apply to the situation. In the paragraph above the name “Helper” in Hebrews 13:6 would be a good example. This overwhelming truth can and should motivate us to pray, trust Him, and cooperate with Him in every practical way. Consider what such a truth could mean to a person with a pressing need in their life. Praying such a name into simple and practical clarity in a person’s life could change their entire perspective.

F. Suggestion # 6 — Utilize the redemptive works of God in prayer.

It is helpful to think of the redemptive work of God as “great reservoirs of spiritual power.” Consider the power of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost. There are many passages in Scripture that describe such power and make practical applications to daily life. One example would be how the Apostle Paul explained the Crucifixion and Resurrection in Romans 6 and then gave instructions as to how to apply it to

life. Then, he goes further in complimenting the Romans for following such instructions in their life and spoke of the results as “being set free and ... becoming slaves to righteousness” (Romans 6:16). Praying the power of these redemptive deeds into the life of a person can result in many unusual benefits. Because the Crucifixion has been designed to break the bondage of sin, we can use such truths when we pray with a person or group about some form of spiritual limitation. It would be very appropriate to pray, “Heavenly Father, I join with Joe in praying about his bondage to pornography. We unite in bringing the power of the Crucifixion against that sin. We bring the power of our Savior’s death against the desires that bind Joe. We use what You have done for us, Lord Jesus, to cut off the chains that bind Joe to pornography. We declare together that You died to set Him free. Teach Joe, that the next time he is tempted to call out to You and to receive into his life that power You died to provide for Him”

Conclusion:

- A. There are many more facets of divine revelation that may be used to bring the grace and power of God into the life of individuals and groups through healing/intercessory prayer. Watch for them as you read the Bible.
- B. **You are a priest — use your authority and ability to pray the will of God into existence.**

A Few Good Books

Arnold, Clinton *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, Baker, 1997
 Blue, Ken *Authority to Heal*, IVP, 1987
 Dawson, John *Taking Our Cities for God*, Creation House, 1989
 Duewel, Wesley *Touch the World through Prayer*, Zondervan, 1986
 Dunn, Ronald *Don't Just Stand There Pray Something*, Here's Life, 1991
 Foster, Richard *Prayer*, Harper, 1992
 Jacobs, Cindy *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, Revell, 1991
 Kraft, Charles *Deep Wounds Deep Healing*, Servant Publications, 1993
 Lea, Larry *Releasing the Prayer Anointing*, Thomas Nelson, 1996
 Lea, Larry *The Weapons of Your Warfare*, Creation House, 1990
 Maxwell, John *Partners in Prayer*, Thomas Nelson, 1996
 Payne, Leanne *The Broken Image*, Crossway Books, 1986
 Payne, Leanne *The Healing Presence*, Kingsway Publications, 1989
 Sanford, John and Mark *Deliverance and Inner Healing*, Chosen Books, 1992
 Sandford, John and Paula, *Healing the Wounded Spirit*, Victory House, 1985
 Sheets, Dutch *Intercessory Prayer*, Regal, 1996

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