

A Christ Awakening and the Movement of Prayer



By David Bryant

For about twenty-five years as I've been traveling in the prayer movement worldwide, I've been asked many questions. One of the questions asked most often is, "What is the most formative moment in your life for giving you a heart for prayer?" That is an easy one to answer.

It goes back to 1970 when I was pastoring a little church adjacent to Kent State University in Ohio. I stood on the campus the day the National Guards shot into the students, killing four, maiming about eighteen others. A real revolution began on that campus that transformed events on the other side of the globe and in a sense transformed the course of history.

Our church had a strong ministry to students on the campus so we were caught up in what was happening right from the start. We finally reached that point as a church where we couldn't do anything else but pray. But none of us knew how to pray, including the pastor of that church who had never had a course on prayer in his life and probably had not prayed more than

five or ten minutes at a time up until then as far as I could remember.

A group of elders in that church decided with me that we would meet together for six weeks, four nights a week, for two hours a night to seek the Lord in the midst of a revolution. That first night the question was in our mind: how are we going to fill the time for six weeks, four nights a week, two hours a night with prayer that makes any difference, or even with any kind of prayer at all?

Finally someone suggested we pray through the book of Ephesians, one chapter for each of the six weeks. Each night of that particular week we would re-read the chapter for that week, and maybe we would talk five or ten minutes about some of its implications as we saw what it might mean for what was happening all around us and for our church. Then we would simply get down on our knees in a little circle at the chairs where we were and lay our Bibles open on the chair to that chapter of Ephesians and basically let God guide us for the rest of the two hours with the words and the phrases and the insights and the promises that were in that particular chapter. A lot of things came out of those six weeks of prayer. We saw a lot of answers to prayer even for the next four years on that campus, where we saw literally hundreds of students come to Christ. God did an amazing work on that campus that touched the whole world before it was over.

So to the question: "What is the most formative moment to bring you into a commitment to prayer?" My answer is that it was when I got down on my knees with a group of men who didn't know any more about prayer than I did, and we struggled together, and God's Spirit taught us how to pray as we learned how to pray God's Word back to Him, as we worked through one of the greatest blueprints of revival you can find anywhere – the Book of Ephesians. I have never thought about revival the same again. I saw it as nothing less than a Christ Awakening.

My Most Meaningful Moment in Prayer

A second question I'm often asked as I travel around the Body of Christ is, "What might be your most meaningful moment of prayer?" There have been quite a few, but if I had to pick one that was the most meaningful in my own experience, it would be a moment when nobody prayed.

It was 1997 on the Mall in Washington, D.C. One and one-half million men had gathered for six hours of prayer and repentance to seek God for revival in our nation. I was assigned to get up on the platform toward the end of the second hour and give a short message and then get the crowd back into prayer again. I went to a little prayer tent behind the platform where all speakers were to go to be prayed over before they got up on the platform.

While the prayer team was praying over me in that prayer tent, I began to weep, because I saw a vision in front of me, at least in my heart and mind, of something happening on that Mall, which in fact did take place about twenty minutes later. I knew God was saying to me that He didn't want me to give my talk at all, but He wanted me to get up and do what I did twenty minutes later. I was to read from Revelation, chapter one, the glorious vision that John had of the Lord Jesus Christ, where His eyes were like a flame of fire, His face shining like the sun, His voice like the thundering of many waters. It says that John fell down at His feet like a dead man, and he stayed in that position until Jesus reached out His hand and touched him and said, "Do not be afraid. I have the keys of death and Hades, and I want to show you what is and show you what is to come."

So on the platform, I read that portion of Revelation, chapter one, and then I invited one and one-half million men to prostrate themselves flat on their faces on the ground like dead men, and to take the next three minutes and be like a dead person in absolute silence before the One who was the

answer to all the prayers we were praying on that platform and who was the heart and center of the revival for our nation for which we longed. That's a moment I will never forget, to look out as far as the eye could see and see men flat on their faces, silent before God.

I've had a number of people come up to me in the years since and say, "David, the moment that changed my life was the moment when we did nothing." I believe that was the most significant moment of prayer for me personally – just to be silent before Him because every answer to prayer always begins and ends in Him. That day was truly a foreshadowing of the Christ Awakening that is coming to the Church.

A Valuable Prayer Principle

Another question I'm often asked is, "David, of all the things you have taught on prayer, what would be the most valuable principle you could share with people concerned about prayer?" If there is one I would pick out of hundreds, it would be one that dawned on me one day after I had completed a number of weeks traveling to about twenty-five cities of the world, holding urban consultations on united prayer.

Leaders of various churches and ministries in these cities came together to spend a whole day looking at what it would take to raise up a movement of united prayer in their cities. Most of that time I was writing down the things I was learning from these Christian leaders. I began to discover what I have come to understand is the most important principle for uniting and sustaining a work of prayer, whether in your own life or in your church or in a city-wide movement of prayer. It is to be clear on the hope that you are praying toward – the hope that God has given us in all His promises – and to be sure that that hope is shaped by nothing less than the power and glory of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. In other words we need to be clear on what God's promises would look like if they would be fully revealed in our lives and in our churches and

in our cities, and to become so possessed by that hope, so hungry for the glory and power of Christ and His Kingdom, that we can do nothing else but pray.

The Key Passage

Another frequently asked question is, “David, what is the one passage of Scripture that has had the most meaning to you in your life and ministry and prayer?” If I had to choose just one passage, I would choose the one passage in the Old Testament that is quoted most often by the New Testament writers. That way you get the Old Testament and the New Testament all wrapped up in one text. Even Jesus Himself drew on it. It is the one text used to describe what God was doing in that first-century Church, the text that they went back to time and again. It is about prayer and the supremacy of Christ. It is Psalm 110:1-4:

“The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’ The LORD will extend Your mighty scepter from Zion; You will rule in the midst of Your enemies. Your troops will be willing on Your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn You will receive the dew of Your youth. The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’”

The New Testament writers, trying to interpret what the Spirit of God was doing among them, went to a text that talks about Jesus at the right hand conquering His enemies, moving among the nations, mobilizing an army to join Him. And that army is arrayed in the garments of priesthood, full of vigor like the youth, and laboring under the leadership of One to whom God has said, “I have sworn and will not change My mind. This is how the battle is going to be fought and this is how it is going to be won. It’s as You, My Son, remain a priest like Melchizedek,” who was both a king and a priest. The New Testament writers said, “That text helps us understand what

God is doing among us,” and I would think therefore that the text describes what God wants to do among us as well.

The Miracle, Message, Mission and Measure of the Supremacy of Christ

The central theme in the answer to those four questions is quite obvious: It is the supremacy of Christ. I can't think of a better word to describe who He is than the word "supremacy."

The supremacy of Christ is the miracle of the worldwide prayer movement. There is no other explanation for why God's people are praying today around the world in ways we have never seen them praying in the history of the Church, except to explain it by the supremacy of Christ. Nothing in us naturally wants to seek the Lord; so if I feel a spirit of prayer stirring inside of me, or if I am a part of a movement of prayer in my church or my city, I know the origin of that is from heaven itself. The mark of that prayer emphasis is the conquering power of Christ, that He could conquer my heart so fully that He is able to put within me a faith and a hope in the promises of God that would stir me to prayer. The miracle that the prayer movement even exists, the miracle of prayer in any of our lives, is explainable only by the supremacy of Christ.

The message of this movement of prayer is the supremacy of Christ. In these twenty-five years I've traveled with the prayer movement, I have heard hundreds of thousands of prayers prayed. If you were to ask me, "What is everybody praying about?" I would say, you could take thousands of prayers that I've heard and bring it down to one request, said in a thousand different ways. Whether God's people are praying for personal deliverance and healing, or revival in their church, or the transformation of their city, or the reclamation of their nation, or the evangelization of unreached people – it is really one prayer, a prayer for Jesus to reveal Himself more fully for who He is in His supremacy.

Think back over the prayers you have prayed this week. Could you be satisfied with the answer to any one of those prayers that was less than Christ revealing more of His glory and His supremacy to you or to someone else for whom you prayed? The reason I am so encouraged that we are on the threshold of a Christ Awakening in the Body of Christ is because this is what I hear God leading His people to pray. I don't believe He is stirring us up to pray for something this grand and glorious, and so in keeping with His promises, only to disappoint us and frustrate us. The message of the prayer movement is that God is getting ready to give an awakening to the supremacy of His Son, and it's not far off!

The mission God's praying people around the world hold in common is to keep laboring before the Throne of Heaven, asking and seeking and knocking until the earth is covered with the knowledge of the glory of the supremacy of Christ like the waters cover the sea. That is the mission of the prayer movement, the passion; that's what's driving God's people into prayer like never before.

Finally, the supremacy of Christ is the measure of the prayer movement. Even while God's people are praying, God has already begun to answer in them. God is first of all conquering His praying people while they pray with a fresh revelation of the supremacy of His Son to them, in the place of prayer. This is the measure of the prayer movement – the glory and supremacy of Christ.

About eight years ago I sat in the office of the pastor of the largest church in the world – a church that has grown in the last forty-some years from a church of one hundred members to one of 700,000, and all of it by prayer cells. I asked him, "Is there any part of Scripture that can help me understand what God has done in this church?" This godly man answered me quickly. "Yes, Matthew 11:12," he said. In the NIV here is what is said: "The kingdom of God is forcefully advancing and the people of force are laying hold of it." As he explained

it, the secret of the growth of this congregation is that the people have begun to sense where God is moving, where His kingdom is advancing, and then they have risen up and laid hold of God's kingdom initiative by prayer, and in the process they have become a people of force as well. The secret is no secret at all; it's the supremacy of Christ.

What Is the Supremacy of Christ?

I've spent quite a few years studying verses of Scripture on the supremacy of Christ. Thus far in my studies I've boiled it down to three little phrases: Who He is; what He imparts; and where He leads. The supremacy of Christ is who He is as the Son of God; what He imparts as the regent of God; and where He leads in the purposes of God.

The supremacy of Christ is first of all not what He is doing, but what He is as the Son of God: His character, His nature, His ways, who He is as creator; who He is as Lord of the nations; who He is as redeemer of the whole earth; who He is because of the cross; who He is because He has conquered death. The supremacy of Christ is first of all about who He is – the Son of God before the worlds were made. It is also about who He will be always for all the ages to come.

Secondly, it's about what He imparts as the regent of God. He is the One to whom God has submitted all of heaven and earth; the One who has all authority in heaven and earth, who is not only the Lord of the nations, but the Head of the Church. As such He imparts to the Church His gifts, the fruits of His risen life and His presence, His love, His holiness, His righteousness. He wants to fill His people with Himself. He brings to pass all the promises of God for all the people of God and for all people and for all the creation of God.

And finally, the supremacy of Christ is where He leads in the purposes of God as He leads His Church into the fullness of the stature of Himself; as He leads the missionary cause among

the nations; as He leads all of history into its last and final consummation when He comes as Lord of lords and King of kings in all of His resplendent glory.

When I think of His supremacy I think of Colossians 3:1-4, where Paul says to set your mind on things above where Christ is seated. Don't put your affections on things on earth; put your affections on things above, for you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God, and when Christ who is our life appears, then will you appear with Him in all of His supremacy finally displayed for every eye to see and every tongue to confess, and you'll be there in it with Him. That's who He is as the Son of God.

When I think of His supremacy, I think of Ephesians, chapter one, where Paul talks about the power that raised Him and seated Him above every rule and authority and every name that is named, not only in this age but in all the ages to come in order that He who fills the whole universe might fill His Church with the fullness of God. That is supremacy working its way out inside the people of God as He fills us with the life of His Son. That's what He imparts as the regent of God.

When I think of His supremacy, I think about 1 Corinthians fifteen, where it says He will be the first fruits of all of us whom He has raised from the dead, and then it goes on to say that He must reign until He has defeated every one of His enemies, and the last enemy to be conquered is death. But then Paul says that is not the end; he says that then even after He has conquered death, there is more of God's purposes into which we are to be led. He says that there is coming that moment in the consummation when the Son will take the kingdom which He has formed out of the whole universe, redeemed by His blood, and He will bring it back and submit it to the Father so that God may be all in all. That's where He leads us in the purposes of God.

Focus, Fullness, Fulfillment

Over the years I've coined three little words to describe these three dimensions: Focus, Fullness and Fulfillment. Who He is as the Son of God – that's the focus of His supremacy. What He imparts as the regent of God – that's the fullness of His supremacy. Where He leads in the purposes of God – that is the fulfillment of His supremacy.

Is there a difference between the centrality of Christ and the supremacy of Christ? Yes, there is. Centrality is part of supremacy, but centrality by itself is not enough. The centrality of Christ – keeping Christ at the center – means we want to keep Christ as the center of our lives, the center of what we do, the center of how we grow in the Lord, the center of where we are headed in our life in the Lord. That's important, and that is part of owning up to His supremacy. But the supremacy of Christ means more. It points us to what God wants us to be at the center of who Christ is, what He's doing, and where He's headed, and that implies a whole lot more. That has to change the way we pray.

We often say, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." That is true and that is wonderful. That is about centrality. But supremacy would say it this way: "God has a wonderful plan to bring glory to His Son for all the ages to come, and He loves you enough to give you a place in it." It isn't just that God has a plan for my life from Jesus. It's that my destiny is locked into who Christ is and what He's doing and where He is headed. My life is about God's plan for His Son!

Implications for the Prayer Movement

Once this gets hold of you it will change the way you study the Scriptures and what you see in the Scriptures. It will change the way you pray. It will change the way you spend your money. As you live your life you will think, "How does this fit into who Christ is, what He is up to, and where He's headed?" Psalm 110 says, "The troops will be willing in Your

day of battle.” In other words, the troops aren’t all wrapped up in whether the king is coming among them and bringing the blessings they desperately need in their lives. The troops are looking at where this Priest-King is headed, how He intends to fight the battle, and they are saying, “We’re ready! We’re going to go with You. We’re going to go where You’re going, and we’re going to do it Your way. It’s Your day of battle. Lead on!”

When you say, “I pray this prayer in Jesus’ Name,” what does that mean? Does that mean I pray this with His authority? Yes. Does that mean I pray this because I belong to Him? Absolutely. You’re taking His identity upon yourself. That’s what gives you the authority and the right to come before the Throne of Grace.

But may I suggest that no prayer is valid if we cannot also say at the end of it: “Father, I pray this in Jesus’ Name – because I believe that if You answer this prayer, it will increase the focus of many on the supremacy of Your Son; it will increase our experience of the fullness of the supremacy of Your Son; if You answer this prayer I believe it will help to advance the purposes of Your Son.”

That’s what it means to pray in Jesus’ Name. That’s what gives me confidence that if I ask according to His will I have what I ask (1 John 5:14-15). If it is all about the Son, if it is all about the life that is in the Son, if I pray with that understanding and that agenda – then I know He hears me and will answer me.

It is good to ask yourself before you ask anything of the Lord, “To what end am I about to pray this? What do I ultimately expect to come out of this? How far into the horizons of God’s promises am I willing to look as I ask this prayer?” Then when you finish a prayer, see if you can finish with this little phrase, “Father, I ask this in order that...” Try for a few days never praying a prayer without finishing

with the phrase, "in order that...." and then you fill in the blank. I am suggesting that what you put after that phrase has to relate somehow, directly, to the supremacy of Christ.

When Jesus' disciples said, "Teach us to pray," He said, "First of all, pray the Father will reveal the matchlessness of His name." That is focus. "Pray that His kingdom come, that His will be done on earth just as it is in heaven." That is fulfillment. "Pray He will meet your daily needs, that He will keep you bound together in love and forgiveness and that He enable you to continue triumphing over every attack of the enemy." That's fullness.

In John seventeen, when Jesus is standing at the threshold of the greatest moment of all eternity and He prays, what does He pray about? Jesus prays, "Father, glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You." Focus. Jesus prays, "Father, I pray You will keep them bound together in a oneness that's like the oneness You and I have." Fullness. Jesus said, "I pray not only for them but for all who will believe because of their word." Fulfillment. The whole prayer of John seventeen is about the supremacy of Jesus Christ! He ends by praying, "That when My glory is finally revealed before the whole universe, that these who are standing in this room with Me right now, will be there with Me to see it all in its climax."

In Revelation five we read the great hymn about the worthy One: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Before singing this hymn, we see the elders offer up incense. John says that the twenty-four incense burners represent the prayers of the saints. Then they sing. It is almost like, "Here are the prayers; now here is the answer." Look at the great prayers in Revelation five and ask, "Do my prayers in

any way touch on those themes? Do my prayers in any way exalt the supremacy of Christ in the way I'll be singing about the answers for all Eternity?"

In Revelation chapter eight, again we see the incense burners and the smoke, which John says represents the prayers of the saints. He says when they are offered up there is silence for thirty minutes. Why? Because something is about to happen, the magnitude of which we don't even begin to know. Everyone is breathless and watching. After the silence the angels move into place and the rest of the Book of Revelation unfolds – with all the thunder and lightning and all the destruction, as well as the redemption, with the saints rising up and showing themselves to be overcomers and victorious through it all. The rest of the Book of Revelation is the answer to the prayers of the saints.

There is silence in heaven because God is about to answer the prayers of the saints beyond what any of them had dared to dream or believe was possible. They've had foretastes to be sure. But there is even more to come and somehow in the divine economy, what God does in the rest of the Book of Revelation is related to the prayers of His people, including your prayers this very day. The implications of the supremacy of Christ for our life of prayer are significant. As Paul says in Ephesians 3:20-21, He whose power is at work in us is willing to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. "Now to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever."

Christ Awakening – the Need of the Church

The theme of this conference is, "A Christ Awakening." Why is that such an important theme to have for a prayer conference? What does an awakening mean for a life, a church, or a whole generation? It's similar to how you woke up this morning. An awakening to Christ is God bringing enough things to invade our consciousness that we begin to arouse and to start seeing

Jesus in whole new ways. It is not God giving us something we did not have. It's all here because it is all in Christ and He is here among us right now – not part of Him but all of Him (Col. 1:27). It's God awakening faith, awakening hunger, awakening revelation of who His Son is.

Which comes first – a Christ awakening and then we start praying, or we start praying and then God gives a Christ awakening? I think it is both at the same time. They work together. The more God reveals of His Son to us the hungrier we get to seek His face, which is an expression used all through Scripture to describe a life of prayer. We are seeking His glorious face in all His glorious supremacy. To answer our prayers, essentially God wakes up an individual, a church, a city, a whole nation – to whom Christ is in new measure; He awakens us to what we have not seen in Christ before. That's the ultimate answer to all of our prayers.

There has been much prayer for revival the last number of years. Why don't we see the revival we are praying for? One of my answers to that is, "We are in the first phase of it!" God is waking up His people enough to what He wants to give of His Son and His Kingdom to this generation that they're praying like they have never prayed before. And that is phase one of the awakening. But there is so much more to come because there is so much more of Him to which we are to be obedient and which we are to proclaim to the world.

You say, "What does a revival look like?" I want to read you something from a series of lectures given in 1830 by Dr. Ebenezer Porter of Andover Seminary. He lived through what Church historians call "The Second Great Awakening" (beginning 1792), one of the great revivals of all Church history. When he was in his late 70's, Porter was invited back to Andover Seminary to give a series of lectures on what he understood revival to be. He was a scholar and theologian and had also experientially been through one of the greatest revivals in Church history. Lecture Number Four on page 102 has this

paragraph. It is one of the best descriptions of a Christ Awakening I have ever read. I believe it is what God is preparing His Church for on a magnitude that we have never known in the history of the Church.

Ebenezer Porter said, "The history of these revivals shows that the genuine tendency of such seasons is to render Christians grateful and watchful and fervent in spirit. Now many doubtless must be viewed as sincere Christians who are not necessarily consistent Christians. The wise and the foolish virgins all slumbered together..." [Note: I don't care how alive you feel you are, compared to what God is getting ready to do, you are still asleep and so am I. Even the wise virgins went to sleep.] "...but when the Redeemer comes in the triumphs of His grace to visit His churches, then His true followers are seen to be waking up from their apathy and they are seen to go forth to welcome the King of Zion and to do so with an energy and an earnestness and an ardor of affection that greatly surpasses their first love."

I've often heard revival sermons on the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2 and how Jesus said, "Come back to your first love." That's wonderful, but Porter says that what he observed was that when Jesus visits His churches and reveals Himself as the King that He is, it stirs His people with such an ardor for Him, such a willingness to live for Him, to follow Him, and to be with Him where He is, that one has to conclude that the love he sees flowing out of their hearts for the Savior is even greater than anything they had when they first met Him.

The Prayer of All Prayers

All of this brings us to the last prayer of the Bible. It is for a Christ Awakening. In a sense it is just one word. All the prayers of all God's people for all the ages can be boiled down to one word. That word is "Come." What is that prayer asking to happen? When John says, "Come" at the end of the Book of Revelation, having seen the consummation of all

history, having seen the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of the anointed King upon His throne, John is saying, “Come, Lord Jesus! I want to see You reveal Your supremacy to that degree and no less, so there will be an awakening to You that saturates this entire universe, that scatters all the darkness, destroys all the enemy and quickens all the saints forever!” That’s how the Bible ends – with a one-word prayer for a Christ awakening!

Should not such a passion for His glory possess the modern day prayer movement, and all of us who seek God for genuine revival among the nations?

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The Accuser Versus the Intercessor

By Dave Butts

We live in a time of spiritual intensity. There is a very clear battle going on for the souls of men and women. It is not a time for drawing back or shirking our responsibilities. For Christians especially, every word and action counts for something. It is a time of choices, where those choices may mean life or death.

Though this battle is being fought on many fronts, I want to focus today on the words that come out of our mouths. Words are powerful weapons in this war. They have the power to heal

or destroy. It's why the Bible has so many commands concerning our mouths and how we use what we say. We have very clear choices every time we open our mouths. Most of us recognize that fact. What we may not have seen is that when we speak we are making a choice between two people...two lifestyles.

As we speak we are deciding whether we are going to follow the Accuser of the brethren or the Intercessor for the brethren. By the words that come from our mouths we demonstrate whether we are following Satan or Jesus. In Revelation 12:10, Satan is called "the Accuser of our brothers." In Hebrews 7:25, we are told that Jesus "always lives to intercede" for us. The Accuser versus the Intercessor—whose side are you on?

The vast majority of you reading this article would immediately say, "We follow Jesus, the Intercessor!" But I would say to you that your words spoken in everyday life might betray you. Let's look at how the Accuser operates:

Dean Sherman, in his great teaching on spiritual warfare, demonstrates that Satan, as the Accuser of the brethren, comes against us in accusation in three ways:

1. He accuses us before God
2. He accuses us before men, and
3. He accuses us before ourselves.

When Satan accuses us before God, he is defeated most readily. He points out our sins to God and demands justice. Fortunately, in the court of Heaven we have an advocate—a defense attorney who has never lost a case. His name is Jesus. His plea on our behalf is always the same. "Your Honor, the defendant is indeed guilty, but the penalty has been paid. I Myself paid the ultimate penalty for his sin and died in his place." The Judge of the living and the dead always rules in our favor—not guilty!

It is in the area of accusing us before others that Satan seems to be the most effective. He uses other people to accuse

us . . . sometimes for real things we have done . . . sometimes falsely. But these words of accusation and criticism harm us and bring damage to our lives.

What is so serious about this is that Satan often uses Christians' words to damage other Christians. We must ask ourselves, "Are we doing the Accuser's ministry for him? Are we carrying around in us the weapons of the Enemy—words of anger, bitterness and criticism?"

We must understand that there is no spiritual gift of criticism, though many seem to think so by their actions. Criticism seems to come naturally to all of us. We say absurd things such as, "Well . . . I'm entitled to my opinions about that person." Who said so? Where did you find such a thing in Scripture? All I find is that I have been crucified and that it is no longer I who live, but Christ living in me. The only opinion that matters is that of Jesus. And the only thing I want to hear coming out my mouth about a brother or sister in Christ, is the opinion of Christ. Who am I to judge the servant of my Master?

How are we to avoid such a grievous sin? Could I suggest that we make a pledge to ourselves? Perhaps a pledge such as this: "I will speak no evil of anyone. If I feel that it is necessary to rebuke a brother or sister because of sin, I will do so only after I have asked my Lord for permission to do so." Truly living out such a pledge would keep our mouths shut much more, but would keep our lives free from being followers of the Accuser.

The third area the Accuser operates in is to accuse us to ourselves. Many Christians go through life feeling condemned and worthless. That's not God; that's the Accuser. Satan will even try to get us to beat up on ourselves, talking about what miserable persons we are. Dean Sherman spoke a line once that I have never forgotten. He said, "Never let yourself hear yourself say untrue things about yourself." Satan is a liar.

And if possible, he'll get you to believe his lies about yourself, rather than to believe what God has said about you as His child. He has said that you are redeemed, bought by a price, and made holy by the blood of Jesus.

There is a much better way for us to follow than the way of the Accuser. It is the way of Jesus, the Intercessor. Hebrews 7:25 says, speaking of Jesus, "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." The present day ministry of Jesus is that of intercession. He is praying for us. What wonderful assurance! Jesus is continually before the Throne of His Father on our behalf.

What is really exciting is that you and I are called to join Jesus in His present day ministry. We are called to intercede—especially for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul, in his command to intercede in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 focuses our prayers especially on leaders. I want to encourage you to pray for leaders. They have great responsibility and because of that face even greater attacks from the enemy. Satan has limited forces and focuses his attacks on those in leadership, whether it is among nations, or in the Church. If the Enemy can take down a leader, many other people are usually badly damaged. So Paul tells us, "pray...for all those in authority."

Dave Butts is the co-founder and president of [Harvest Prayer Ministries](#). The content of this article is expanded upon in his book, [The Devil Goes to Church](#). [A cd of Butts teaching](#) on the subject is also available.

Guarding the Minds of Our Children

By Kim Butts

Author, Stormie O'Martian, in her book, *The Power of A Praying Parent*, says, "The battle for our children's lives is waged on our knees. When we don't pray, it's like sitting on the sidelines watching our children in a war zone getting shot at from every angle. When we do pray, we're in the battle alongside them, appropriating God's power on their behalf." She also says, "Whenever you pray for your child, do it as if you are interceding for his or her life—because that's exactly what you are doing. Remember that while God has a perfect plan for our children's lives, Satan has a plan for them too."

We have an enemy who wishes to damage our children. He wants their hearts and their minds. We are in a battle for the lives of our children, and, as quoted above, the battle can only be waged on our knees in prayer. We can't wish the enemy wouldn't bother us, or hope he will go away. We can, however, defeat him by the power of the Word of the Living God. Read carefully and claim the mighty message of Ephesians 6:10-18: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of

righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

We can defeat the enemy because we are enabled to be strong in the Lord and in HIS mighty power. We can put on the full armor of God in order to take our stand against any scheme the devil might attempt to throw at us, at our children, and at our families. This armor will allow us to firmly stand our ground. It will allow us to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, and it will allow us to defeat the enemy as we wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God!

Have you noticed that the sword of the Spirit is the only offensive piece of the armor? Every other part is used to defend against the enemy; however, the Word of God is used to defeat him—just as Jesus did when the enemy was tempting Him in the desert. Jesus defeated the enemy using the Word whenever Satan began to tempt or try to do Him physical harm.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ Again, the devil took

him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."' Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him." (Matthew 4:4-11)

His example should be our own, because the enemy's tactics are still at work today. Satan wishes to cause our children to fall morally and spiritually. He desires to poison the minds of our children so that they will be unable to be of service to the Living God. As parents, grandparents, teachers, youth workers—and others with children in our sphere of influence—we must stand firm against the enemy and declare that he cannot have the minds of our children. We must fight for them in faithful prayer and teach them to fight for themselves! It is foolish and dangerous to ignore the schemes of Satan, for he is powerful, and looking for every weakness. This is a lifelong battle, and we must never let down our guard. We must diligently pray and teach our children how to pray the Word of God as a sure defense against the one who continually seeks to destroy. Only through the powerful Word of the Lord can victory be won over our sinful natures.

Teach children how to pray for protection by putting on the armor of God daily. Then, teach them to guard their minds with the Word of the Almighty God! Here are some specific ways to pray the Word of God into the lives of your children or grandchildren:

- Pray that your child's mind will be controlled by the Holy Spirit so that he or she can be pleasing to God and filled with life and peace. "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind

controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God" (Romans 8:5-8).

Sample Prayer: Holy God, give my child the mind of the Spirit, set upon what the Spirit desires so that his life will be characterized by life and peace. Help him to fight against the sinful mind that the enemy would seek to place within him so that he will live a life submitted completely to You.

- Pray that your child will continually ask the Lord to examine his heart and mind so that he will be able to walk in truth and purity. "Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth" (Psalm 26:2-3). "You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar" (Psalm 139:2). "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).
- Pray that your child will use his mind to understand and search out wisdom so that he can recognize the stupidity of wickedness. "So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly" (Ecclesiastes 7:25).
- Pray that his mind will be steadfast as he trusts in the Lord. "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal" (Isaiah 26:3-4).
- Pray that your child will keep the greatness of the Lord's faithfulness always in his mind, so that he will have hope. "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have

hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:21-23).

- Pray that your child will love the Lord with all of his heart, soul and mind. "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'" (Matthew 22:37).
- Pray that your child will not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but will be transformed by the renewing of his mind. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).
- Pray that your child will always have the mind of Christ. "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16b). "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:8-9). "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess" (Hebrews 3:1). "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- Pray that your child's mind will never be led astray, and that he will always have a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not

think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Romans 13:14).

- Pray for your child to be made new in the attitude of his mind, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).
- Pray that the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard the heart and mind of your child in Christ Jesus. “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).
- Pray that your child’s mind will be set on things above—not on earthly things. “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2).
- Pray that your child’s mind will always be prepared for action, so that he can live out a life of holiness. “Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:13-16).
- Pray that your child’s mind will always be aware of the enemy’s attempts to tempt him into sin. “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that

you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:11-13).

Now that you have the Lord’s perfect strategy for keeping the mind of your child protected from Satan, be diligent in your prayers. Be consistent in your teaching of the Word, and in your personal study and devotion. Most of all, be a godly example for your child to follow as he or she matures in Christ.

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Prayer Strategy for Ministry

By Dave Butts

All too often we look at prayer as a “quick fix” to a difficult situation. Have you ever said, “I’ve tried everything else—I might as well pray! Often we only have “time” to offer a few quick prayers hoping to bring God into the situation so that everything will be fine. Sometimes this proves to be the case (although probably more because of God’s great love for us than from the power of our prayers).

If you are involved in a work of God, and hopefully we are all active in a ministry of some sort. you need to look at prayer not as a quick petition, but rather as part of the longterm strategy for accomplishing the work that God has called you to. It involves a commitment to pray and work until you see completion. An illustration from the sports realm might be helpful. Many would liken prayer to a series of sprints while instead, we would be better served to see prayer as a long-

distance runner would view the course before him.

Nehemiah saw prayer this way. In Nehemiah 1, we see that he had a difficult task ahead of him. After hearing a report of the poor condition of Jerusalem and its inhabitants he believed that God called him to travel to Jerusalem and take the lead in seeing the walls of the city rebuilt. As you look at this story, please note how prayer is an integral part of this mighty work of God . . . not as a quick fix. but as a continued dependence upon God for help and direction.

As an important government official in Babylon, Nehemiah received word of the demoralized Jewish remnant in Jerusalem and the sad condition of Jerusalem's walls. His response was to weep and pray: "For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Neh. 1:4). Out of this time of mourning comes this powerful prayer, recorded in Neh 1:5-11, "O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name.

Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”

Nehemiah’s prayer was not an act of devotion wedged into an already busy schedule. He stopped what he was doing and gave himself fully to God in prayer. The task ahead was too daunting for anyone but God Himself. Nehemiah’s example reflects some important issues in prayer that we should follow when interceding:

RESPONDING IN OBEDIENCE

(Nehemiah 2:12). Although it is not mentioned in the passage from the first chapter of Nehemiah, we learn later on that God had placed the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls upon Nehemiah’s heart (“I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem”). Nehemiah simply was aware of what God desired to accomplish, and made himself available to be used in a powerful way to fulfill God’s plan.

HAVING AN ATTITUDE OF WORSHIP

(Nehemiah 1:5). Nehemiah did not enter lightly into God’s presence. He reverently acknowledged the awesomeness of the God of heaven, asking for His divine attention.

PERSISTING IN PRAYER

(Nehemiah 1:6). Nehemiah refers to the fact that he is praying day and night for this particular issue.

PRAYING IN HUMILITY

(Nehemiah 1:6-7). He approached God with humility, confessing his sin and the sin of his people. He repentantly accepted God’s judgment upon them as right and just . . . no excuses . . . no whining! He simply humbled himself before God and stated his case.

CLAIMING GOD’S PROMISES IN SCRIPTURE

(Nehemiah 1:8-9). Nehemiah recalled God’s promises to Israel that if they fell through disobedience and were exiled, but would repent and turn back to Him, He would bring them back

from the most distant places: “and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.” (Deuteronomy 30:2-4) Praying God’s Word back to Him is powerful!

PRAYING WITH CONFIDENCE AND BOLDNESS

(Nehemiah 1:10-11). Knowing then, that what he was asking for was according to God’s Word, Nehemiah prayed that God would provide the necessary resources to restore the fortunes of Jerusalem.

PRAYING SPECIFICALLY

(Nehemiah 1:11; 2:4-5). The particular resource that Nehemiah wanted needed to come from King Artaxerxes. Therefore, he asked God for favor in the presence of the king as he went to make his request known. He didn’t expect or ask for a mystical sort of provision. but instead asked specifically that God would give him favor with the man who could help. when the king asked him what he wanted, he prayed once again, and then very specifically said, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

TAKING A STEP OF ACTION

(Nehemiah 2:1-9). Nehemiah knew that he was the man whom God expected to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. His strategy was prayer. He first asked God to prepare the way for him to receive favor from the king. But then, he knew that he must ASK the king for his help. Having confidence in the Lord’s plan and provision, he did just that, even though he was afraid. How many of us pray, but then don’t continue on in

faith to be the answer to our own prayers? Do you wonder how many prayers God might have answered differently if we had just been obedient in our actions? Sometimes God desires (and requires) the next step beyond obedience to intercede, the obedience to act on behalf of the person or situation for whom or for which we are interceding. An interesting note; Nehemiah breathed a prayer to God just before responding to the king's question, "What is it you want?" (Neh. 2:4-5). He utilized the strategy of prayer for preparation and also to gain the wisdom to speak the words God wanted him to say ("Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king . . ."). Jesus tells us not to fear when we stand before kings and authorities on His behalf for He will give us the words to say (Luke 21:12-15). Nehemiah experienced this same promise from God.

GIVING GOD THE GLORY AND THE CREDIT

(Nehemiah 2:8). Not only did the king grant Nehemiah's request for time off to rebuild Jerusalem he also wrote letters to governors for protection, and to obtain the timber Nehemiah needed. In addition, above and beyond what Nehemiah asked for, the king sent army officers and cavalry with him (Neh. 2:7-9). Nehemiah could have been puffed up with his own success, but instead he said, "And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests."

There is one more aspect of strategic prayer to look at in the story of Nehemiah. It came after his request was granted by the king and he traveled to Jerusalem with the king's protection and blessing to build the walls of Jerusalem. The Israelites in the city had responded favorably to Nehemiah's presence and had set themselves to the task of rebuilding the city walls under his leadership. But as so often happens in any work of God, it was not long before the enemy made his move. Opposition arose against the building of the wall.

Nehemiah's response?

WARFARE PRAYING

(Nehemiah 4:4-5). This prayer warrior moved to the attack mode of prayer: “Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.” The task was not going to be completed until there was some spiritual warfare prayer. Once again, Nehemiah did not pray and then sit back and do nothing. Prayer was primary strategy for rebuilding the walls . . . but not the whole strategy. He also called the people together and posted guards to protect the builders. He phrased it this way in Neh. 4:9, “But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.”

What a powerful combination of prayer and physical activity! Nehemiah understood clearly that prayer was as essential to the building of the wall as manual labor. In our plans and ministries, we must begin to see the strategic place that God has for prayer. With Nehemiah we saw that the project emerged out of prayer . . . continued in prayer . . . and was completed through prayer. Because of this biblical prayer warrior, we can see how this type of continuous emphasis on prayer can bring any work of God to completion in such a way that God is honored and His Kingdom advanced.

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The Prayer of Forgiveness

By Kim Butts

“Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us” (Luke 11:4).

Scripture is very clear that sin is a hindrance to answered prayer. Isaiah 59:2 states, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” In Psalm 66:18 we read, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened”

One of the most pervasive, tenacious sins in the Christian culture today is unforgiveness. It is disobedience to Christ, and it renders our prayers ineffective and powerless. Many times, an unforgiving spirit comes from a heart filled with pride. We often feel justified in our unforgiveness because of the wrong done to us. Or, the sin against us was so grievous in our own mind and heart that we cannot possibly forgive.

Probably the most common stumbling block in this area is when we say that we have forgiven someone outwardly, while still harboring the resentment or anger in our hearts. Jesus effectively illustrates God’s viewpoint on this matter in Matthew 18:23-35 when the king’s servant, who had been forgiven his debt, turned around and refused to forgive the debt of a fellow servant. The king turned his anger towards the man, threw him in jail and ordered him to pay back all that he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:35).

If you are struggling with your prayer life, could an unforgiving spirit be one area that is keeping you from

effectively touching the heart of God with your prayers? From time to time, each of us must take a deep look into the dark places of our hearts, asking the Lord to reveal our sin to us. We can find healing from the sin of unforgiveness in the Scripture, for when we truly understand how strongly God feels about forgiveness, we can seek to be more like Christ in our response to those we need to forgive.

Beth Moore, in her excellent book, *Praying God's Word*, has a chapter devoted to "Overcoming Unforgiveness." Using Scripture, she has a threefold way to become more like Christ in this area. First, she has an extensive section of scriptural prayers which ask God to do a deep work in us that we might forgive as He forgives us. Next, she recommends praying "about" the person or persons we need to forgive. In essence, she says, we are "tattling" on the person to God. We express how we feel about what that person has done through venting our anger, our exasperation, etc. This was the very way that David dealt with those who were persecuting him. As you read through the Psalms, you will see clearly how David talked "about" those persons to God. He did not hold back from expressing his displeasure: "Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit" (Psalm 5:9).

"Two important things happen," Moore states, "when we learn to pray honestly about the person who has hurt us: 1. We pour the hurt out rather than allowing it to remain and turn bitter. . . . 2. We articulate our own feelings, thereby placing them in view before our own eyes as well as God's. This way, we also get a chance to see if something seems ridiculous, out of proportion, or right on target. Our prayers can sometimes help us gain a little insight into our own hearts."

If we pour out our grievances to God, we won't be as likely to pour them out to others, which could then cause them to stumble too. Praying "about" those who wrong us saves us from

compounding our sin by turning it into gossip, or causing others to harbor the same resentments we do.

Moore says, "Envision your heart like a pitcher . . . Praying about the person we need to forgive is the means by which we tip that pitcher heavenward and slowly begin to pour our negative feelings and frustrations out to God. As we pour out, a wonderful thing happens: we make room for God to pour in. Our omniscient God knows that a heart heals when a heart changes. Until we make room for fresh contents that change our hearts, we will never be healed from the injury and subsequent feelings of unforgiveness."

The third area of prayer is to pray "for" those whom we need to forgive. Most of us are already aware that we need to do this; however, we often stubbornly hang on to our "right" not to. If we are to be like Christ, we relinquish our "rights" and take on humility, being obedient to the Lord, who says in Mark 11:25, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

If unforgiveness has been a hindrance to your prayer life in the past, remember that Satan will attack you in this area again—until your victory is firmly established in the strength of Christ Jesus. "If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:7-11).

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