

Praying for Leaders and Those in Authority

By Gary Davel

Introduction – Jesus’ Mode of Prayer

In the Bible there are profound references to prayer and they are all vital to gain deeper insights into the many facets of our heavenly Father’s heart. One such example is in Matthew’s gospel. It demonstrates what our prayers are meant to accomplish; *“to bring God’s will into our reality.”* (Matt. 6:10) Arguably, this highlights the severity of our responsibility to partner with God in order that His manifold wisdom be made known *through* the Church. Eph 3:10-11—*“to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places....”* (NKJV)

Prayer then is not some idle, boring exercise of the will but it is meant to be productive, creative, and inexhaustible. In short, this study will not address “why” Christians should pray, but rather build a strategy of “how” Christians should pray. The Bible is packed with a plethora of such strategies intended to bring the believer into a fruitful, understanding of the deep truths found in the knowledge of the will and wisdom of God.

Forty-Nine Day Challenge

This prayer strategy has seven key elements: one for each day of the week. I would like to extend a challenge to the members of River of Life Church. Would you consider praying this prayer for a period seven weeks? This is not a typo, you read correctly – seven weeks. During this time we are going to experience Spirit-formation, and among other things we will receive clear direction as to how God desires to not only change others but also change us.

You may recall a message I preached recently entitled, “Creating a Culture of Honor.” I addressed the severity of how dis-honor can create cycles of destruction, whereas honoring others in spite of their failures brings us into tremendous blessing. God is revealing Himself – why, you might ask? Well, there are several reasons but for the sake of time I will mention but one – God’s desire is to reveal Himself because the blood of Jesus Christ has removed the dividing wall that once separated man from God.

The primary function of New Testament believers is to stand in the gap for those who need a fuller understanding of God’s manifold wisdom. Our desire is to see God’s will accomplished in the life of our leaders. The Apostle Paul’s prayer in Colossians, Chapter One, is universally applicable and can be adopted for any situation. In this study I will emphasize in particular how to pray for those in authority whether it be in a secular arena or in a spiritual capacity. (I would in fact encourage everyone to pray this over his loved ones.)

The Apostle Paul's prayer

Who better to direct our thoughts than the great Apostle Paul himself - a man of tremendous character, and one who knew what it was to walk in integrity in spite of many heart wrenching disappointments and calamities. Let me turn your thoughts to his powerful prayer:

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”(Colossians 1:9-11 NKJV)

In all probability Paul did not know these believers in Colossi. It appears that there are some divisions within the local church. Writing to strangers but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he addresses a practical need with a spiritual solution. Might I add just a thought here? For the most part, 100% of our practical needs should always first be addressed in prayer and supplication before the Lord. Thus we move out of the realm of our limit and into the limitless realm of His provision. (Too often we are too quick to address matters within the context of how we feel at the moment rather than what the Word (Bible) says. Typically we all feel we hear from God correctly.) This is a classic prayer where there was division in a church and Paul was seeking unity in Christ.

Without realizing it we bring our own woundedness, wish-lists, and perceptions to the table. But we run the risk of moving into spiritual witchcraft and/or ineffective prayer simply because we have our own agenda. Let's be honest, we have our own ideas of where our leaders need to “grow.” We have our own ideas of where they can be better leaders. This clutters our prayers, rendering them ineffective.

I believe this prayer in Colossians comes as an example of such patterns while at the same time it equips the believer for the work of the ministry and, in the final analysis, God will be glorified (Ephesians 4:12).

What is the job of an intercessor? Simply, “to pray God's will into reality.” Can you see here that there is no manipulation and we are on safe ground, especially when we pray scripture? You will notice each one of these seven concepts is designed to grow the individual. Let's get to work! In order to gain some familiarity with our topic let us first take a brief look at the passage in summary form before we unpack it in its entirety.

Seven Concepts - summarized

Please reread the passage and begin to commit to memory each component.

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”(Colossians 1:9-11 NKJV)

DAY ONE (Monday) –Verse Nine: Three components: 1) The knowledge of God’s will, 2) spiritual wisdom and understanding and, 3) be “filled.”

DAY TWO (Tuesday) –Verse Ten: “walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him.”

DAY THREE (Wednesday) –Verse Ten: (Two components) 1) Being fruitful and, 2) in every good work.

DAY FOUR (Thursday) –Verse Ten: 1) “increasing in the knowledge of God.”

DAY FIVE (Friday) –Verse Eleven: “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power.”

DAY SIX (Saturday) – Verse Eleven: “patience and longsuffering.”

DAY SEVEN (Sunday) –Verse Eleven: “with joy.”

Seven Concepts unpacked

DAY ONE – (Monday) Verse Nine: Day One has three components: 1) The knowledge of God’s will, 2) spiritual wisdom and understanding and, 3) be “filled.”

1) “The knowledge of God’s will”

Explanation - if an intercessor is not committed to God’s will they are on shaky ground to begin with – how can we effectively pray for an individual if we do not know what God’s will for that individual or organization is? Therefore, praying scripture keeps us focused and gives us safe boundaries.

- Find scriptures that speak to the challenge at hand and pray them on day one. If the scriptures are applicable to guide us through life’s daily challenges then they are applicable for addressing daily challenges – they are God’s will for us. Matthew 6:10 “...*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...*”
- Pray that God’s will is becoming a reality to that individual. God has ways of revealing Himself to mankind. We must pray to this end.

2) To know God’s will through “spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

Explanation - It creates tension and division when individuals are telling a leader what to do. While there may be seasons of bringing forth direction it is vitally important that we first pray that the Pastor / leader would be directed not through a council or some democratic process or even other leaders; but that the Holy Spirit would direct him/her. Please hear me; I am not saying that leaders should never seek counsel; I am saying that leadership by-and-large is a complex discipline and every leader must be committed to a personal prayer life.

- So, on day one, pray that the leader would receive a download of God’s will not through any other source than through the Holy Spirit.
- Pray that the leader or individual would gain their wisdom from the throne of God. As believers we understand God to be the source of all true wisdom.
- Pray that there would be no hindrances – bind any hindrances, distractions, gossip, grapevine talk and cultural influences.
- We are asking God to use spiritual wisdom and understanding to communicate His will to the leader/pastor/husband/wife. John 16:12-14 *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."*
- Romans 8:27 *"Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."* (NKJV) I’d say this is far more profitable in the long-run.

3) Note the words “be filled.”

Explanation - Pray that the leader/pastor/husband/wife is “filled” with the knowledge of God’s will - not just a partial download. Sometime we get things in part – we don’t get the full picture. John 16:12-14 *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. [Emphasis added] 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

- So pray that the leader gets “filled” with everything he/she has need of for that day/week.
- What does this look like practically? Pray that the leader sees what steps need to take place in order to get the organization to its predetermined destination. This means praying for the human resources, timing, and provisions for the assignment.
- We are asking God to make His will plain. Notice: it is “filled”, not just “satisfied.” Lord – “give the leader/pastor/wife/husband more than what they are looking for.”
- You cannot force spiritual growth but neither is it a random exercise - pray that the leader’s heart is prepared to receive this revelation and that God gives him a desire for a deeper daily prayer life.

DAY TWO – (Tuesday) Verse Ten: “Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him”

Explanation – it’s one thing to know God’s will but it’s an entirely different thing to walk in it. Let’s be honest folks, we are too quick to judge others for their lack of obedience. We are here to incarnate God’s will on earth.

- Pray that the leader will be internally driven.
- Pray that God would lift the leader’s perspective far above cultural norms and fads.
- Pray that the leader will be driven by the cultural norms of heaven.
- This means that the leader needs a revelation of the scriptures. Pray for a greater hunger for the scriptures.
- Pray that the leader will be able to act out the knowledge and wisdom received on the first day.

DAY THREE – (Wednesday) Verse Ten: (Two components) 1) Being fruitful and, 2) in every good work.

1) Being Fruitful.

Explanation– its one thing for a leader to be *faithful* but there also needs to be *fruit*. We cannot be faithful to the exclusion of being fruitful. We cannot be good at our jobs without seeing some measure of fruitfulness. John 15:16:

“...You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...” However, when a leader is not as fruitful as we would have hoped or imagined, we need to address this in prayer. There are times when a leader is unfruitful for long periods– this must be addressed in prayer and not in malicious backbiting.

- Pray “Lord, make the leader fruitful!”

If it is more cleansing – let God determine that.

If it is more training/equipping – let God be the one to empower.

If it is more discipline – let God determine that.

If it is more anointing – let God be the judge.

If it is more methodology – let God do the molding.

If they are in the wrong place – God is able to make changes (Let God do the promoting – His timing is impeccable.)

STOP AND THINK: *Let us go easy on telling God how to solve the problem. Let God determine what needs to be done to bring forth the fruit.*

- Our job is to “bless” and not “curse.”

2) In every “good” work.

Explanation– One the most devious traps of the enemy is in success, because we have a tendency to settle in times of prosperity. At the point of our success we are tempted to settle down rather than move on to what God’s further will is. If the Devil cannot get us to do that, he will at the very least try to get us to be satisfied with some good works and fall short of God’s best. This is typical for all believers. In our day, part of the challenge is that all too often leaders are freeze-framed by the culture.

- Pray that the leader is fruitful in “every” good work. If the enemy cannot get us into hell at the very least he will get us to focus on things that we are not designed to do so we do them poorly and the net result is we don’t experience the fulfillment of God’s best.
- Pray that the leader would bear fruit in “every good work.” As the leader begins to hear God’s will – as they are filled with spiritual wisdom and knowledge – as they begin to walk out and bear fruit – a trap of the enemy is that they will bear fruit “in only one dimension.” Notice: “Bear fruit in *every* good work.”
- Pray that the leader will not be tempted to camp on their strengths but to launch out in areas that stretch them – this means growth for the whole organization. This means people are empowered.
- Pray that the leader is not rendered ineffective because of insecurity.
- Pray for obedience to walk out the will of God in “every good work.”
- God’s wisdom is multi-directional and has many facets (Ephesians 2:10.)

DAY FOUR - (Thursday) Verse Ten: 1) “increasing in the knowledge of God”

Explanation - Not just “filled” but “increased.” We know a lot about God but do we know God? When we know someone we are more apt to know his ways and intentions better. Hebrews Ch. Eleven accounts for people who were radically changed as a result of an encounter with the Living God. We are not seeking an electric voltage encounter. Knowing God always happens incrementally. There are many within our community who know *about* God but cannot incarnate Him into their daily life and environment. This has serious implications. They appear to have all the goods but there is no Spirit transformation. Paul wrote about such people in 2 Timothy 3:5. He said, “...there are those who have a form of godliness but not the power to change...” This is a travesty for anyone who professes to be a born-again believer.

- Pray that the leader grows incrementally (Romans 12:1-2.) There is the good, the pleasing, and the perfect will of God.
- Pray that the leader will embrace God’s will without drawing back from receiving increased revelation and knowledge. We want to know God but this is not something we can acquire through our own will – rather it is God who reveals Himself.
- Pray for God to reveal His character to the leader. We all need to be embraced by the Father. We all need a revelation of the Father’s love. (Romans 8:15)
- Pray that the Father’s love would create a desire and hunger in the leader to want more. To cry out “Abba Father!”
- Remember – we cannot force spiritual growth but neither is it an exercise at random. Pray that the leader walks in a measure of obedience.
- Ultimately it is God’s will to reveal Himself to man - ask God to remove the hindrances or barriers. Let God do the cutting and pruning. He knows best.
- Pray that they would increase in the knowledge of God’s love.
- Pray that they would increase in the knowledge of God’s _____(you fill in the blank)

STOP AND THINK: Remember even hard- hearted leaders need a revelation of God’s love, mercy and grace. Always honor people. Honor does not go to just those who deserve it.

DAY FIVE – (Friday) Verse Eleven: “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power”

Explanation - Eph 2:10: God yearns to demonstrate the facets of His wisdom through the Church. If you are praying for an unsaved leader your task takes on a slightly tougher challenge. But nonetheless God is able to use anyone to fulfill His purposes. God has called us to walk in the supernatural – to go places no one has ever been. Remember – to walk in a deep measure of God’s love is supernatural. People get afraid when we talk about the supernatural but in actuality being a Christian means we have been transfigured into a new species. I think that’s pretty supernatural. God delights in taking us into

places of impossibility, because that's where he gets to run a new play. God delights to do something the Devil has never seen before. But it takes partnering with God to accomplish His will on the earth. Think of a football team, they cannot win unless all the players are working in synch.

- Pray that the leader has the strength to do God's will. Leaders need staying power in time of stress. To do God's will requires the leader to run certain risks. In order to run risks it means the leader must be strengthened in all power according to "God's glorious might" not according to the "size of the problem."
- Pray for physical and spiritual strength.
- Pray for the leader's family.
- God places us in challenges in order that He might reveal the facets ("faces") of His manifold (poly-variegated) wisdom. (Eph 2:10 "Manifold wisdom."
Manifold: numerous and varied: many. *Poly-variegated* means: different colors, many shades or hues of God.)
- Every problem is an opportunity for the leader to grow. Pray that the leader grows in times of difficulty and challenge.
- Pray that Romans 8:28 becomes a revelation to the leader
- Pray that the leader would choose to walk in the spirit (Romans 8:1-11) and not in the flesh.

STOP AND THINK: These prayers are designed to grow the individual. Whenever we are praying for others we are allowing the Holy Spirit to do a work of grace in us also. These prayers are profoundly applicable to us all.

God is looking to the church to position itself so we can be able to reveal new facets of His wisdom.

DAY SIX – (Saturday) Verse Eleven: "patience and longsuffering"

Explanation – It takes endurance to do our daily exercises of our spiritual discipline. There is always acute pressure when birthing a new work or anything remotely spiritual. There is always much physical pain before the birth of a child. Organizations who are undergoing change will always experience a certain amount of stress. Emotions are at an all time high when we walk by sight and not by faith (Romans 8:1-11). During times of change we seem to wander – it seems like we are going nowhere in a hurry. Then there are times when there is an unprecedented lurch forward. We need patience and endurance in every season.

- Pray that the leader will not be bound by the tyranny of the urgent, but by the "will" of God.
- Pray that the leader will walk circumspectly with all humility and patience.
- Pray for extra grace

- Pray that God teaches you, the prayer warrior, to be gracious and honoring in these times. It's easy to pray "Lord, change the situation," but it takes patience to wait for the result.
- Pray that the leader receives the vision (will of God), embraces it and walks it out.
- Isaiah 37:3 – Pray for staying "power" It is amazing how many leaders quit just before God gets a chance to do something profound. We come to the point of birth but we are not able to determine what it is that God wanted birthed. This happens in organizations all too often.
- So don't pray for the leader to be "filled" without praying also for there to be endurance and patience to walk out all the prep work so in the fullness of time God's vision for him and the organization can be birthed. (Remember God has a plan for our community too. All our leaders need this type of prayer covering)

STOP AND THINK: Often time leaders are daunted by the challenge of the size of the vision. Scripture is God's vision for our lives. When we look at the challenge of believing it and practicing it we feel like it is too much to bear– so we devise a theology of failure and back out from the calling of God on our lives. This is what Isaiah 37 calls, "a day of disgrace." As believers this is a daily challenge. Is this how we execute our prayer life? Why do we pray? I take it to receive answers. Then why don't we receive answers? Because we don't believe, we have what Isaiah 37 calls, "no strength." When answers fail to surface on our schedule, we give up the fight.

Psalm 1:3 "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." Everyone bears fruit differently! It takes endurance to walk with God when there is not visible signs of fruit. Through times of barrenness, followers can either criticize or bless the leader.

DAY SEVEN – (Sunday) Verse Eleven: "with joy"

Explanation-The fruit of all this is "joy." Leadership can be a lonely place. In a lot of cases there is little if any praise for a job well done and certainly criticism for a job done poorly. When praying for Pastors / leaders remember that there is a price to be paid for pursuing God. Often times this drives a Pastor and his family into places of isolation.

- For the pastor/leader, pray that he/she would have others to share in his/her life.
- Pray that the Lord would raise up a community of radical individuals who can walk in partnership with the pastor/leader.
- Pray that the Lord would raise up a community of might men and women who can share in the spiritual growth of the pastor/leader. (These types of people must walk in a high level of honor and spiritual authority. Why? Close fellowship always reveals weaknesses. Leaders are human, and they run the risk of being misunderstood.) Integrity is key.
- Pray for the joy of the Lord to strengthen the leader. Nehemiah 8:10 "...for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

- The bride of Christ is to be filled with joy because a sad bride would be an insult to any groom. In the life of a believer sadness is the exception not the norm.
- For the unsaved leader, pray that God would bring godly Christians into his/her life.
- Pray divine appointments would cross his/her path.

These seven insights are the will of God for any leader. Take them and begin to pray. As you receive insights, please email me your thoughts - rol_church@verizon.net.

You have a divine mandate from the Lord to pray like your life depends on it. In all actuality the next generation is depending on our willingness to obey the call to pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." Let's do it!