



31 Days of Prayer

MOUNT AERY BAPTIST CHURCH
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From the Pastor

Namaste My Brothers and Sisters,

Many of us know the power of prayer for our individual lives and we have even seen the workings of prayer in the lives of others. For many of us, 2016 was filled with what seemed like one issue, one crisis, one challenge after another. We know that it was our relationship with God through prayer that gave us the power to endure. Because we don't know what 2017 will hold for us, it is incumbent that we reinforce and live out the scripture where Jesus declares, *my father's house shall be called the house of prayer*.

It is for that reason that we present to you our 31 Days of Prayer booklet. Within this booklet, you will find some familiar devotions that have been revised and adjusted from previous days of prayer that have blessed us in the past.

Let me thank Pastor Porsha Williams, Deidra Williams and Ramona Berry for their great efforts in pulling this booklet together. Mount Aery, I believe more than ever that God has called us to be *a praying people with the powerful witness of a perfect God*.

Join me and your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in this 31-day journey.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Anthony Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Pastor Anthony L. Bennett, D. Min.

From the Editor's Desk

Namaste Sisters and Brothers,

Happy New Year to you!

Another year has come and gone once again. 2016 presented us with a rollercoaster of events and emotions. Many of us experienced personal loss and grief, while some of us experienced triumph and excitement. Regardless of your experience, you can say that you made it through another year.

While we do not know what 2017 will hold for us, we do know who holds our 2017. This season is an opportunity for us to humble ourselves and devote ourselves to 31 days of prayer as we begin this new year.

With a new year, we tend to make resolutions around food, finances, and family. In many instances, we do not keep those resolutions or commitments due to a lack of focus and finding other things to become our priority. In this season as a church body, we are committing ourselves to prayer. As God continues to equip us for community engagement, we must also equip ourselves through our prayer and our study time.

During the month of January, we will be praying 3 times a day: on the prayer line at 7am, as well as noon and 6pm at the church. During our bible study time, we will study and practice different forms of prayer: consecration, praise, intercession and petition. It is our hope and our prayer that you would join us during this time weekly.

This journal is also adapted from the 2006 "40 Days of Prayer" journal that was compiled and edited by our beloved Pastor Thomas A. Williams. With care, thought and consideration, we have updated the journal. Each day you will have a devotion to read along with scripture and insights to consider, as well as an action.

Please read the original note from the editor, which is enclosed in this booklet as well for more information on the history, compiling, and contributions of the disciples of Mount Aery.

Peace and Blessings,

Pastor Porsha D. Williams

Pastor Porsha D. Williams

Editor of the 2017 Journal

From the Editor's Desk

Beloved,

It is with great expectation and anticipation that we introduce our latest entry of the **40 Days** series: **40 Days of Prayer**. I thank you all in advance for your patience and I appreciate everyone's excitement. After preparing two books on Purpose, one on Health & Wellness, one on Financial Freedom, and another on Laughter, it truly is time for Prayer.

God has already granted us our first prayer and given us a fresh anointing and perspective for this **40 Days**. We have redesigned our layouts, changed our flow and brought in new writers. Ever since Dr. Bennett shared his vision of praying from Resurrection to Pentecost, our staff has been pumped full of energy, thinking about the possibilities for the miraculous. Just think of the potential when an entire community of faith unleashes the power of prayer in their lives.

I would like to say a special thanks to our veterans of the **40 Days** series, our wonderful team: Assistant Editor, Gale Jones and our writers, Bridget Franklin and Dr. Jean Fuqua. I would like to recognize and applaud our awesome production crew of Ramona Berry, Monica Dennis, Sadie Bristow, Rhonda Bryant, and Jacqueline Tyson-Wright who tirelessly review, correct, print and produce these books. We also thank God for answering our second prayer and sending us new writers and contributors: Betty Hill, Brenda Seldon, Rev. Alicia Tyson-Sherwood, Anthony Baldwin, and Pastor Paulette Higgins.

My favorite chapter in the book is chapter one where we strive to answer the question "What is prayer?" Right on cue God stepped in with three new voices for our **40 Days** series: Pastor Mildred Williams from the First Baptist Church of Kenilworth, New Jersey; Mount Aery's Director of Ministry Development, Pastor Paulette Higgins; and our Senior Pastor, Dr. Anthony L. Bennett. The three of them share their thoughts on prayer through testimonials, poetry and expository lessons. I also feel privileged that Sister Nanette Malone, who has battled chronic illnesses for years, shared her personal prayer of triumph with us. Moreover, Sister Brenda Seldon shared one of her family traditions by allowing us to publish her family prayer.

Lastly, I am reminded of Solomon's warning, "where there is no vision the people perish." From the testimony of those who have read our **40 Days** series, not only have we not perished, but we have actually flourished! To have all of the wonderful people who worked on this book come together and give of their time and talent is in no small part due to the vision of our Senior Pastor, Dr. Anthony L. Bennett. Dr. Bennett not only preaches the vision but he lives it and it inspires all of us to excellence. *"Doc, thanks for giving us equal parts of encouragement and freedom; then allowing us to use our gifts to glorify God in the process."*

Mount Aery and Friends, we invite you to immerse yourself into the 40 Days of Prayer!

Stay prayerful,

Pastor Thomas A. Williams

Pastor Thomas A. Williams

Editor in Chief

Chapter 1

What is Prayer?



NYANSAPO **“wisdom knot”**

Symbol of wisdom, ingenuity, intelligence and patience.

What is prayer?

The following lessons seek to ask and answer the fundamental question that new and old Christians alike wrestle with, “What is prayer?” We want to examine it from a pastoral perspective so we have asked three pastors with a praying heart to share their insights with us. Please note we have not engaged them in a heavy theological discussion, rather we have asked them to share from their heart their personal thoughts on prayer.

We are blessed with contributions from Pastor Mildred Williams of the First Baptist Church of Kenilworth, New Jersey and our own Pastor Paulette Higgins. We have a double blessing because we have given our Lead Pastor, Dr. Anthony L. Bennett the assignment of sharing why we pray, what our prayer agenda is about and why we need to pray for the community.

The Call to Action for all of these is to read and reflect on these, Pastor’s various insights, then pray about them and see what the Lord reveals to you. It is our prayer that God will give you fresh insight and understanding for your own prayer life.

January 1, 2017

What is Prayer?

By Pastor Mildred Williams

Prayer on its basic level is communication with God, seeking, asking, knocking and receiving. Prayer is the means by which humanity can access great power. I believe this power changes us first, then is extended to those around us and finally to the world at large.

Prayer is communion with God, which requires talking with God. Communion must also be spent in silence, at times. *Be still and know that I am God* (Psalm 46:10A). Prayer is fellowship and we should be quiet in order to listen. Prayer is adoration and gratitude for the love and mercy God extends to us.

As a young nurse, I developed the habit of praying “on the run” whether driving to Newark at 7 a.m. or working the midnight shift. The poem, “Are you Running with me Jesus” was a favorite of mine. At that time, I believe the above prayer habit taught me to *pray without ceasing* (1st Thessalonians 5:17). I also value my daily devotional, and quiet times of prayer.

There are different levels of prayer. The deepest level is achieving intimacy with a Holy God. For me, this continues to be difficult because I am confronted with all my faults, smallness and failure. These are times when I must admit any righteousness of my own are “as filthy rags;” these are “Isaiah moments” for me. Woe is me, for I am a woman of unclean lips, and live in the middle of people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts! Therefore, when I really draw close to God, I see His Holiness and stand prostrate and weeping before Him.

January 2, 2017
The Reason You Pray
Pastor Anthony L. Bennett, D. Min.

The reason you pray is to:

- ❖ Build a relationship with God;
- ❖ Learn who God is;
- ❖ Learn the Nature and Character of God;
- ❖ Learn who you are;
- ❖ Seek to understand and then act on God's purpose for your life;
- ❖ Grow in the Faith;
- ❖ Learn how God desires to use you to bless someone else;
- ❖ Gain access to what God desires you to have; and
- ❖ The scriptures remind us that we must always pray because prayer for the believer is like breathing.

January 3, 2017

The Communal Nature of Prayer & Praying for the Community

Pastor Anthony L. Bennett, D. Min.

It is often shared in Christian circles that prayer time ought to be more about seeking God's face (His presence) moreover than His Hand (His provisions). The point of the previous thought is using our time in prayer with God as an opportunity to build our relationship with Him and not just use Him to get what we want or even think we need. Those in our lives who only call, come to see us, or seem interested in us when they need something from us will miss the best part of us, that is getting to know us. And although we may even share some of what we have with them, the more they seek to build a relationship that is accompanied by gratitude, the more willing we are to share with them.

The same is true for our God. God wants to grant us the desires of our heart as well as supply our needs. The key to this happening is for us to desire His will in our lives. The way in which to discern God's will is to spend time with Him not just for what He will do for us, but also what we can learn from just being in His presence. Prayer time is really about communing or connecting with the One who knows and is eager to satisfy our deepest longings and desires.

The scriptures are full of examples of powerful prayers uttered by individuals in times of stress, struggle and success. And yet, the Bible is also replete with examples of collective and national prayers as well. When God's people were in trouble, whether from their own disobedience or from outside forces, the people of God would often lift a collective voice and petition to the God of their salvation. We all recall the response God gave Solomon to his prayer while dedicating the temple, *"If my people who are called by my name would humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked (harmful) ways then will I hear from heaven, I will forgive their sins and heal their land."*

These are the words of our God who calls us not only to be in communion with Him but also one another. At times, God calls us to lift our corporate voices in praise and petition knowing that our individual needs can also be met in the midst of the community. There are issues we face within the community that the enemy hopes we do not bring to God in prayer. So often, the enemy attempts to convince us that we are the only ones dealing with particular issues. However, God's spirit knows there is strength in our collective prayer and support of one another as we experience life's joys and pains.

January 4, 2017

Intercession and Why We Do It

Pastor Anthony L. Bennett, D. Min.

There is a song that Minister Eli Wilson sings that says, “Lord, I come on behalf of my brother, even though I have needs of my own.” These words speak to the truth and essence of intercession. For when we pray for someone, we are not forgetting, denying or minimizing our own needs; however, we are moving beyond our needs to lift the needs of someone else. There are times in which it is easy to become so absorbed and consumed with our own issues that we need to take a break from an inward focus in order to focus on the needs of others. When we pray for others, we are asking for God’s blessing, bounty and guidance in whatever situation our brother or sister is facing.

The Bible is full of examples of effective prayers of intercession. I know that there are some recent reports that have questioned the positive impact of this kind of prayer, however, I know there are many who would agree with the song, “Somebody prayed for me, had me on their mind, took the time to pray for me.” The truth of the matter is, most of us have experienced the powerful benefits from giving and receiving intercessory prayer. This kind of prayer stretches our faith in that it challenges us to believe that as we lift the needs of someone else, God is that much more aware of what our needs are.

January 5, 2017

Our Prayer Agenda

Pastor Anthony L. Bennett, D. Min.

The scriptures teach us that sometimes our prayers can be amiss, that is off track or not in line with the process or purpose of God's will. At the same time, Jesus reminded the disciples that we sometimes have not, because we ask not. The question that emerges from these two different extremes in prayer (that is being off track or not asking at all) is how do we ask in God's will and yet lift up those issues that are on our mind? I believe a part of the answer is found in developing a prayer agenda. In doing so, we are placing the concerns, hopes and desires before God and seeking God's guidance on how we proceed.

Mount Aery's prayer agenda is broad enough to cover both our individual and collective needs, yet our agenda is specific enough to address many of the personal and private issues that eventually affect our public participation in ministry. It is my prayer that each of us will use our prayer agenda as a guide to focus our time of intercession for one another as well as the ministry issues effecting Mount Aery. You may also desire to add to this list, or even create your own personal prayer agenda to complement our congregational agenda.

Our Prayer Agenda

- Renewal of passion and participation in worship
- Greater number of stories/testimonies of healing (physical, emotional, spiritual)
- Greater participation from disciples in FRANgelism
- Greater participation in Edify, Equip, Engage in social service and social justice ministries
- Renewal and recommitment to greater participation in the teaching ministry of Mount Aery
- More people participating in financial steward, i.e. percentage giving to tithing
- The replenishment and rejuvenation of servant leaders

Chapter 2

Historical Perspective & Tools



SANKOFA

“return and get it”

Symbol of importance of learning from the past.

During the picking season, my grandmother would get out of bed at four o'clock (she never used an alarm clock) and creak down to her knees and chant in a sleep-filled voice, “Our Father, thank you for letting me see this new day. Thank you that you didn't allow the bed I lay on last night be my cooling board, nor my blanket my winding sheet. Guide my feet this day along the straight and narrow, and help me to put a bridle on my tongue. Bless this house and everybody in it. Thank you, in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Maya Angelou from “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”

January 6, 2017
Prayer: A Historical Perspective

Prayer is something that almost everyone knows about and it transcends most religious boundaries. We hear individuals make reference to praying in speeches when things have or look like they are going bad. We have often heard President Barack Obama use the term in addressing the events of the world. It is so much a part of our fabric that no one ever questioned when and where did it all begin.

Genesis 4:25-26

Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in the place of Abel, since Cain killed him." Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.

Insights

If you read the first four chapters of the book of Genesis, you will find the familiar story of Adam and Eve. You will discover that in the beginning, we "lived" with God on a daily basis. You will also find the story of the "fall of Man" where the relationship changed. With this relationship change the communication process changed. You could say God's availability began to require us to seek Him. Hence, men began to call on the name of the Lord. Throughout the Bible you will find reference to prayer, and you will notice how it changes from being third party to direct contact. Prayer becomes a key ingredient in the recipe for a "Believer." For African Americans, prayer has been the fabric of our survival over the years.

Call to Action

"My grandmother prays relentlessly every morning and every night. My mother does the same. We always say grace, and pray for those who seem lost." T.D. Jakes made a point that the prayers of today are very different than the prayers of yesterday. If you were to look back over your prayer history and how traditions were handed down, what would you find? Do you remember when you first called on the name of the Lord? Do you call on Him the same as you did before or is it a new deal today? Have you abandoned childhood practices for adult conveniences?

January 7, 2017
Prayer and Meditation

This book is about a journey to building a closer relationship with the Father. We are going to share tools to help you move your prayer life to a new level.

Psalm 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Insights

People often are confused about the difference between prayer and meditation. Others are even skeptical of meditation because it seems like a new age thing that doesn't have a basis in Christianity. However, meditation is rooted in the Bible and we are even commanded to meditate. Joshua 1:8 tells us, "Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Meditating is a way to sit in the presence of God. Psalm 48:9 "Within your temple O God, we sit and meditate on your unfailing love." For our purposes here, we are going to look at prayer and meditation as two sides of the same coin. Both are necessary in dialogue with God. In prayer we give thanks, we praise, and we ask. Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything but by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." In meditation, we hear and we listen.

Meditation is mentioned all throughout the Bible. Meditation has also been practiced since ancient Christianity. As far back as the 4th century A.D. a form of prayer/meditation was practiced called lectio divina. Lectio divina, or sacred reading, has four stages. The first stage, lectio (reading), would be the reading of a scripture slowly. The second stage, meditatio, would be pondering or "meditating" on the text. The third stage, oratio (prayer), would be praying to God about the reading and asking for discernment about what this reading meant for you today at this time of reading it. In essence, what is the truth of the passage and how does it relate to you? The last stage, contemplatio (contemplation), would be sitting in God's presence. The second and fourth stages offer two types of meditation. One is active – contemplating on God's words, which is expressed in many places in the Bible. Psalm 119:23 "...your servant will meditate on your decrees." The fourth is more passive – sitting in God's presence. Although I am saying it is passive, it actually takes a good deal of work to be able to sit quietly in God's presence. Our minds will be filled with so many thoughts, or easily be taken off of our focus. So here are some guidelines to helping achieve quietness so that we may sit in God's presence. (See *Posture of Prayer* tomorrow.)

January 8, 2017
Posture of Prayer – Part I

For meditation, let yourself be comfortable. Sitting is perhaps best but lying down is also ok. Sit in a comfortable pose if on the floor. Sit in any way that will be comfortable enough to stay in for a length of time. If sitting in a chair, place soles of both feet on the ground. Un-cross, your legs and arms. Place palms in lap facing up to the heavens . If lying, lie on your back with hands to the side of your body or resting lightly on your legs, palms facing up. If kneeling, make sure you will be comfortable enough to be able to focus on what you are doing.

Steps

Our intention is to just be closer to God; to be still enough to feel His presence and sit in it. There are also so many ways to do this. Let us start with this technique.

Start your meditation with either a Bible verse as outlined in lectio divina, or just start with a prayer. At the end of your prayer, state your intentions to be close to Him and to be still enough for a few minutes to feel His presence. Next you can just breathe. Focus on your breathing, hearing the breath coming in and the breath going out. Let all thoughts that enter your mind float back out. Our intention is to just be close to Him, to be quiet in His presence. This often takes practice, so you may need to use a tool like a mantra. A mantra is simply something that is repeated over and over to help you quiet your mind. You could choose a favorite Bible verse. Or you can use one of these: “Be still and know I Am that I Am.” “Be still and know I am God.” Repeat this silently as you breathe in and breathe out. When your mind stops chattering, you can try to stop saying the mantra. At that point listen to your breathing, in and out. If your mind won’t quiet down continue your mantra. Remember, the only reason we are focusing on our breathing or using repetition of words is to help stay focused and quiet our mind. When you no longer need to use those techniques to achieve this, you can discontinue them.

Start off meditating for 5 minutes. If you do not quiet the chatter in your mind in that time, do not be discouraged. This practice! And the next time, or perhaps the time after that you will start to be more still. The most important thing is to do it! It does not have to be perfect, we are just setting aside time to be quiet with God. Out of that comes our ability to hear Him better. It is a tool to hone our listening skills. As you continue, you will find it easy to meditate for longer periods of time.

Call to Action

Use the following passage as an aide or guide:

“...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...” (Philippians 4:8)

January 9 2017
Posture of Prayer – Part II

There are many postures we can take when praying. The Bible speaks of several. We find some people kneeling, as in I Kings 8:54, *When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplication to the Lord, he rose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heavens.*” We can also stand. We can sit and we can lie in prostration. All of these postures are spoken of in the Bible. Indeed, we all practice most of these postures. On a Sunday morning, we may stand in prayer, and we also sit. Some of us kneel to say our prayers at night or in the morning. Sometimes we will see someone lie prostrate. Most of us are comfortable with these poses. There are times when you are called to stand in prayer. There are times when you are called to kneel. You will stand or sit or kneel or lay on the ground. We can probably all agree that each of these positions is valuable at different times. So let’s explore a posture that people may not have experienced. This will allow us to see what benefits this posture brings and when we might use it.

Lying in prostration is a very powerful position for prayer. Why is it powerful? Because of what a humbled and vulnerable position you have put yourself in before the Lord. There is something to putting yourself physically in a position where you have bowed down as low as you can. I am always humbled when I am at His feet. It is a show of adoration for the Lord. And in this position, similar to the meditative part of the above prayer, we can be still and listen to God speak to us.

Call to Action

Lie face down on the floor.

What we are doing is surrendering to God. Surrender is a complete act of obedience. Lying in prostration is an act of complete humility. In this prayer form, let us not ask for anything. Just present yourself to God. Offer yourself. Offer praises, thank Him for being our way maker, for sustaining us. Here are some words you can use:

“Here I am at your feet Lord, use me.”

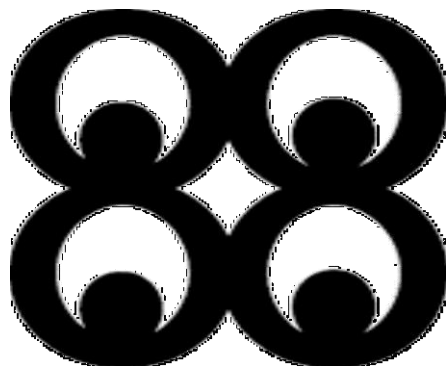
“Into your hands, I commit my spirit.”

“Be it done unto me according to your will.”

“Thank you.”

Give at least 10 minutes of time. You will be surprised at how your life begins to change. God will talk to you! You will also see how your prayer transforms. As you meet God in this space, you will regularly feel that peace that surpasses all understanding. In this place, you might find yourself praying less for specific things and more for His will.

Chapter 3
Building a Prayer Life



MATE MASIE

“What I hear, I keep”

Symbol of wisdom, knowledge and prudence.

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

Ephesians 3:16-18

January 10, 2017
When Should I Pray?

New believers may ask you, “When should I pray and how often should I pray?” To which, one could reply, “How often do you talk to your best friend? You want to pray at least that much.”

When you were introduced to Jesus, you were introduced to your new best friend. In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, he teaches them about Christian conduct and includes prayer.

1Thessalonians 5:12-18

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Insights

In this passage, Paul doesn’t give us a formula or a “how to,” but rather he gives us a mindset for Christianity of which prayer is a key ingredient. Notice that Paul teaches us to be respectful of leadership and to hold them in high regard. He encourages us to be encouraging, helpful, patient and joyful. Then, he points out that we must pray continually. In the King James version it reads, “...pray without ceasing.” This is important because without prayer we won’t be encouraging, helpful, patient and joyful. The concept of continual prayer is analogous to breathing. It should be done effortlessly, comfortably and it should be an essential part of your life. Hold your breath and you get light-headed and weak. Hold your prayer and you become powerless.

Call to Action

The idea of praying effortlessly and comfortably should be liberating. It says we can come as we are and stay in constant dialogue with God. How comfortable is your prayer life? Relax and get into dialogue with the Almighty.

January 11, 2017
Jesus, In His Own Words

The following two interviews are excerpts of Jesus of Nazareth teaching on prayer. The first excerpt was recorded by the apostle Matthew as Jesus was teaching the disciples about prayer. The passage is often referred to as the Lord's Prayer, but it is truly the Disciples, or the Model Prayer since Jesus used it as a model for them. Now, let's examine Jesus teaching on prayer. This lesson was given during Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. Here is the Master, in His own words:

Matthew 6:5-15 (begins in NIV and at v 9 changes to KJV)

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Insights

It is often missed in our Sunday Schools and Bible Studies that Jesus often spent time teaching his disciples what not to do. Jesus starts off his lesson on prayer by telling us not to desire to be seen by the crowds. This is not a ban on public prayer! Rather, it is an insight that our posture or attitude toward prayer ought to be humble. If not, Jesus views us as hypocrites who have already received our reward. Conversely, Jesus tells us to go into the closet. Many of the older saints used to take that quite literally but suffice it to say, find a quiet place where you can commune with the master.

Secondly, He warns us not to babble or get caught up in vain repetitions. He reminds us that the power of prayer is not in the number of words. The second insight is that God already knows what we need before we ask. Then He shares His model.

Bishop T.D. Jakes outlines it this way:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

This shows praise.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

This shows purpose.

Give us this day our daily bread.

This shows provision.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

This shows pertinence.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

This shows acknowledgement of God's sovereignty.

It is interesting that right after Jesus finishes sharing His model, he begins to talk about forgiveness. This is no mere coincidence. There can be no power in prayer if there is no forgiveness in our heart. Prayer and forgiveness are intertwined. Jesus says if we want God to forgive us – and in verse 12 of the model prayer, it clearly points out that we want to be forgiven – then we must forgive others.

Call to Action

- 1) Where is your prayer closet? Do you have a private place where you can come to the Lord just as you are? If not, be intentional in getting one.
- 2) Have you forgiven those you believe have wronged you? Failure to do so could be hindering your prayer life.

January 12, 2017
The Power of Persistent Prayer

There is a popular American saying that states, “Winners never quit and quitters never win.” There is a lot of merit in the slogan because in the church we often see the enemy discourage people right as they are on the verge of their breakthrough. Great rewards don’t come out of our convenience. There is no success without sacrifice or struggle! Jesus knew we would have to deal with the disappointments of life. So, He encouraged us to be persistent.

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

For some time, he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'

And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?'

Insights

It is important to notice the contrasts of the characters that Jesus uses in His parable. First is a widow. In Jesus’ day, in Jew culture, it was a man’s world and a woman who lost her husband was usually dependant upon her family or the church. She had no political or legal standing. Then, he goes out of his way to portray the judge as “unjust.” This doesn’t mean that he is corrupt, but rather that he has no regard for God or man.

The widow is weak and powerless but the one thing she has going for her is that she is PERSISTENT. The judge finally decides that he’ll do what she wants so that she doesn’t aggravate him anymore. Jesus says if an unjust judge will do that, how much more would a just God do for us! Contrary to some interpretations, this doesn’t mean you have to pester God with a thousand of the same prayers but it does mean that you will tarry, you will press your way, that you will be steadfast and unmovable in your prayers.

Then He ends it with a question, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” This reminds us that without faith it is impossible to please Him. It teaches us that

you have to believe in your heart that God will answer your prayers. If you are going to be persistent, you will need faith.

Call to Action

Exercise your persistence by praying on a specific matter or for a specific person. For example, pray for the school system in the city of Bridgeport. Pray that the children of the community can walk in a safe, non-threatening environment. Pray that resources will go to charities or groups that need them the most. Pray for your Pastor and his family. None of these are short-term issues, but you will be amazed by the power of persistent prayer.

January 13, 2017
Praying for the Sick

One of the great privileges of our faith is the power to pray for the sick and the shut-in. Long is the list of testimonies of believers who have been healed through the power of prayer. James, the elder brother of Jesus, writes to the saints to encourage them in the provisional promise of prayer.

James 5:13-16

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Insights

James starts off by counseling the saints that if you are in trouble you ought to pray. First and foremost, we should be encouraged that we can have a little talk with Jesus and tell him all about our problems. Notice it is a two-way street. We shouldn't just talk to God when things are bad, but if all is well you ought to give God some praise!

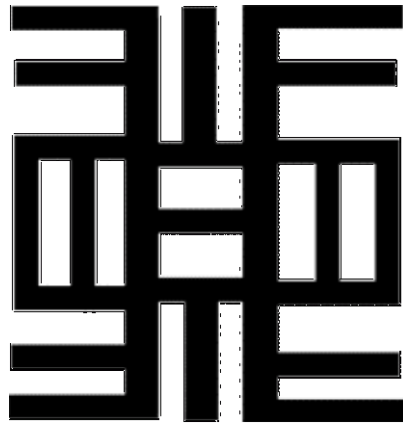
Now, James leads us into the provisional promise. If you are sick, call on the elders of the church and they will anoint him in the name of the Lord, and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. Now, note there is no power in the oil. The power is in the name of the Lord. The oil is a physical representation of God's anointing or enabling power. The prayer has to be offered in faith. Faith is our belief that God is able to do what is seemingly impossible. When we pray in faith we put our hope and trust in God. Again, it is not in the specific words or routine but it is wholly leaning and trusting in God. The trust factor is huge because sometimes the ultimate healing for our loved one is death. If everyone was healed as we saw fit, we wouldn't need cemeteries. One must remember, though we may pray our heart's desire, we must still yield to God's sovereignty. Our prayers must align with God's will.

Call to Action

We often pass by the section in the bulletin that lists the names of the sick and shut-in and barely give it a thought. Next time, take the list home and pray for each name and for their family. Remember, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Chapter 4

Types of Prayer



NEA ONNIM NO SUA A, OHU

“He who does not know can know from learning.”

Symbol of knowledge, life-long education and
continued quest for knowledge.

*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.*

Ephesians 6:18

January 14, 2017

P's of Prayer

- Praise:*** To bless, to declare blessed, good manner, speak to.
Psalm 8, 103:2, I Samuel 2:2, St. John 17:1b:24-25
- Promise:*** Agreement, Covenant.
II Timothy 3:16-17
- Privilege:*** Special favor, work of Jesus Christ.
St. John 3:16, II Corinthians 5:21, Romans 5:8, 8:1-2
- Partner:*** Holy Spirit, one called, helper, advocate, lawyer, enabler along side
companion, friend, strengthener. Romans 8:26
- Protection:*** Psalm 91
- Petition:*** Request, pray for self and others, situations and circumstances.
St. John 17:1-5, Genesis 18:17-32
- Posture:*** Attitude, pray anytime, anywhere.
I Thessalonians 5:17, Psalm 95:6, Genesis 24:26, Joshua 5:13-14
- Pleasure:*** Delight, satisfaction.
Psalm 91:8
- Preparation:*** Make or get ready.
St. John 17:1-5, Psalm 19:14, 139:23-24
- Practice:*** Repeat, make habit, habitual, like exercise.
Luke 18:1-8

January 15, 2017
Bible Promises to Pray – ers

(KJV)

Isaiah 65:24

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

Jeremiah 33:3

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.

Matthew 18:19-20

Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 21:22

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Mark 11:24

Therefore I say unto you, what things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

John 15:7

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 16:24

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that joy may be full.

Philippians 4:6-7

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

James 5:16

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

January 16, 2017
Confession

We are often told that confession is good for the soul. Is this really true? After all, depending on whom you tell that confession to and what you actually did, you can get yourself in a lot of trouble. Yet the confessional is an important prayer for the saints to pray.

James 5:15-16

And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Insights

By, definition to confess is to disclose one's faults or to unburden one's sins or the state of one's conscience to God. In the Catholic faith, one would go to a confession booth where, under the guise of anonymity, they tell the priest, "father forgive me for I have sinned," then proceed to confess their faults. At the end of the confession, the priest would advise the parishioner on penitence.

In our context, we often take advantage of the fact that Jesus is our direct intercessor and that we can bring our burdens to the Father through Him. However, modern psychiatry and mental health researchers are just catching up to the power of James' passage. Prayer with true confession sets one soul at ease by bringing an honest assessment to oneself and introducing repentance before God. The reality is that we have to live with ourselves. We may be able to fool our friends and family but sooner or later we have to deal with ourselves. Failure to do so prohibits us from fulfilling our potential because we always have something to hide.

One of the most powerful confessions comes from David when he finally faces up to the reality of his adultery and how that led him to conspire to murder (see II Sam 11:1-16). He pens his confession in Psalms 51. "*Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight ...*"

Call to Action

1) Read Psalm 51 in its entirety. Pray on it and then reflect on the original question. "Is confession truly good for the soul?"

January 17, 2017
Prayer of Thanksgiving

One of the most neglected prayers in our arsenal is the Prayer of Thanksgiving. Most of us were raised with this simple parental admonition, “if someone does something nice for you, you ought to say *thank you*.” Yet we often forget to take a moment and tell God thank you.

Psalm 105:1-5

Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles, and the judgments He pronounced.

Insights

The prayer of thanksgiving is very important for our Christian growth and development. It is the immature Christian who only goes to God when in need. Our conversations or prayers with God are intended to develop and grow our relationship with God. However, any relationship which is one-sided will ultimately dissolve.

Think over your life. Have you ever had a friend who you really cared about but whenever they came around all they talked about was themselves? You would look forward to seeing them but once they showed up it was all about them. Conversations were meant to be dialogue but all of yours were monologue; never a mention about how you helped them succeed, never a mention of your kindness or your involvement. It was just all about them. Then there are those friends and loved ones who only show up when they need something. Again, they never have a ‘thank you’ for you. Or send a note saying how much they appreciate your kindness.

Those types of relationships can wear one out and dampen the fellowship. The key to fulfillment is to approach God with an attitude, of gratitude. David was acknowledged as a man after God’s own heart. Why? Because he realized what God had done for him and thanked and praised God for it. Moreover, David didn’t keep it to himself but he declared it to the people and the nations.

Call to Action

- 1) To really embrace this attitude of gratitude, get an understanding of David’s praise. Spend some time in the book of Psalms and discover the many ways David told God thank you. Then employ some of these lessons in your life.

January 18, 2017
Prayers of Submission

Prayers of submission bring us into the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. Through this prayer, we yield our will and way to God. This is not the easiest of prayers given our strong wills. We don't like to yield to traffic, God or anything else, but when we submit to God we actually strengthen ourselves.

James 4:5-8

Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit He caused to live in us envies intensely? But He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and He will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Hebrews 12:9-11

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Insights

Our first insight is that submission is an act of humility and God gives grace to and exalts the humble. Why, you ask? Because as long as we are solely guided by our mind or soul, we don't give vent to our spirit. When we submit, we allow our spirit to connect with and be guided by the Holy Spirit. The James passage gives voice to this. Be humble and submit to God, pull closer to God and He will pull closer to you.

Paul's letter to the Hebrews gives us a powerful second insight. Our mindset should be that "short-term pain leads us to long-term gain." Hebrews 12:11 says, "*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*" We must lose the notion that when we submit to God we lose ourselves. Sister Fanny Crosby had it right when she penned the second verse of the Gospel classic "I am Thine O' Lord": "*Consecrate me now to thy service Lord, by the power of grace divine; Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, and my will be lost in Thine.*"

Call to Action

- 1) Reflect on your life and the situations where your will comes into direct conflict with God's will. Pray on it and submit to God. Journal on how it works for you.

January 19, 2017
Prayers of Intercession

Interceding for others is a way to ask God for covering for another; being specific often for an answered prayer for someone in need of a blessing. This is a time when you put your own desires aside and lift up others who God has laid on your heart to pray for. Someone may even ask you to pray for them. The key thing you need to know about intercession is that you are going to God on behalf of another.

1st Kings 13:1-6

By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. He cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD: "O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'" That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out."

When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD.

Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So, the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before.

Insights

In our text, a man of God is sent to prophesy against the King of Jeroboam. The King of Jeroboam moves against him and is immediately stricken by the power of God fulfilling the prophesy that the man of God has spoken against him. But right there the action shifts as the King asks him to intercede to God on his behalf. Often in our lives, our adversaries and those who have persecuted us will turn around and ask us to intercede on their behalf. It is at that moment you grasp the principle of intercession. It is no longer about what God can do for you but you are asking God to help another.

Call to Action

Take a few minutes every day and pray for a brother or sister who might not know the power of prayer. When you can earnestly do this as a practice, not only will you see that person's prayers answered but you will receive a blessing as well.

Chapter 5
The Power of Prayer



GYE NYAME

“except for God”

Symbol of the supremacy of God;
It is by far the most popular for use in
decoration, a reflection on the deeply religious
character of the Ghanaian people.

*Therefore I tell you, whatever you
ask for in Prayer, believe that you
have received it, and it will be yours.*

Mark 11:24

January 20, 2017
Praying for Deliverance

Why is it that we always try to work it out first, then we pray? Why is it that sometimes others have to tell us to pray? It is when we first pray for God's will in our deliverance that our prayers are answered.

2 Kings 20:1-6

In those days, Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover." Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.'"

Insights

During Hezekiah's reign as king of Judah, he went about the business of restoring God's people back to God. It was troublesome and threatening times for Hezekiah. In chapter 19 (please read), Hezekiah received a threatening letter warning him not to side with the Egyptians and that his God could not save him from the Assyrians. He prayed and God kept the land safe by destroying the Assyrians. Then Hezekiah became ill. He was told to get his house in order because he is going to die. Instead of giving up, he prayed to the Lord again in earnest. Do you notice he doesn't directly ask for a healing? He asked to be remembered for his faithfulness, devotion and his works. Then he wept. He gave it over to God and God heard his cry and healed him. He not only healed him but he gave him fifteen more years. He also promised he would deliver the city from the hand of Assyria.

Call to Action

Today, notice your prayer. Are you giving over to God for deliverance or asking for what you want first?

January 21, 2017
What Shall I Pray For?

Some of our most familiar prayers, if the truth be told, are prayers for “stuff” i.e., material desires. As Dr. Johnny Ray Youngblood, reminded us years ago, “We, as a people, know how to pray so therefore we must be praying amiss.” So, if it’s not about what we want or what we need, since God already knows our needs, then what should we pray about?

Matthew 6:33

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Insights

We have heard this familiar passage many times, so let’s look at an interpretation of what it could mean. First, this is a passage taken from a discussion Jesus is having about worrying. In essence, He is telling us not to worry about things. He has it covered. Rather, He tells us to seek His kingdom first, which we define as the place where God rules (sometimes called heaven). Then seek His righteousness, which will be defined as actions based on a love for God and a relationship with God. Now, in order to do this effectively, it will require us to have wisdom and understanding, knowledge gained by experience. We don’t always have the experience to be righteous in our actions, so we need wisdom from God. The best example of this can be seen in the story of Solomon. He was the wisest man who ever lived. In the story, you recall that God asked Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted and He would give it to him. Solomon, you see had no experience leading God’s people and wanted to be able to do what was right. As the story goes, he asked for wisdom to lead his people and as a result, God not only gave him wisdom but riches and honor (I Kings 3:5-15).

Call to Action

What are you praying for? Are you praying for wisdom, understanding and direction on your action? Are you praying for God to “fix it”, “make it happen”, or “make it go away?” Evaluate your prayers. Then alter them and pray for understanding about your earthly situation and your walk with God.

January 22, 2017
Praying Through Your Pain

Are you going through a painful or disappointing time in your life? Hannah of the Old Testament knew what it was like to feel pain and disappointment. She was one of two women married to a man named Elkanah. Peninnah, the other wife, had borne him children, but Hannah was barren in a day when childlessness was considered a sign of God's displeasure. To make matters worse, Peninnah took cruel delight in mocking Hannah's barrenness whenever the family made their annual trip to the house of God to offer a sacrifice.

1st Samuel 1:9-17

Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

Insights

Hannah's distress lasted for years even though she was a devout and faithful woman. But in God's time, Hannah's sense of rejection was changed to joy. Hannah teaches us a lesson in faith. Because it takes faith to feel like a failure but yet you still go to God in prayer. She prayed for a son and Samuel was born. Then she didn't forget about God. She brought the child back to Eli. In verses 25-28 "... they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD."

Call to Action

In God's time and at just the right time, God gave Hannah a son, who in time would become a priest and prophet who would change the course of history. Reflect on the pain in your prayers. Then ask God to change your prayer requests into praise reports.

January 23, 2017

Does intercessory prayer really work?

How often have we been told either publicly or privately to pray for other people? How often do we pray for others, our children, our brothers, sisters, co-workers? Throughout the Bible, people were always praying for other people whether it was Moses, or Paul, or the disciples. Have you prayed for someone and seen the difference it makes?

Acts 12: 5-7

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

Insights

I don't know about you but sometimes I feel like I am in invisible chains and need help with breaking loose. In this passage, you see the church was praying for Peter to be free. Now if you read the entire chapter, you will find that they continued to pray even when he was already out. That is another lesson for some other time. The point is intercessory prayer is powerful and does work. Can you imagine as a congregation what would happen if we truly engaged in intercessory prayer?

Call to Action

A prayer for today:

Almighty and all wise God our Heavenly Father, tis once more and again that a few of Your beloved children are gathered together to call upon your Holy name. We bow at Your footstool of mercy, Master, to thank you for our spared lives. We thank You that we are able to get up this morning clothed in our right mind. For Master, since we met here many have been snatched of the land of the living and hurled into eternity. But through Your goodness and mercy we have been spared to assemble ourselves here once more to call upon a captain who has never lost a battle.

Melva W. Costen, From the Schomburg Center's "Invoking the Spirit" Exhibition Forum from the book, Standing in the Need of Prayer, A Celebration of Black Prayer, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, 2003.

January 24, 2017
Prayed Up for the Journey

My in-laws always pray with us when we are ready to leave and return home. It is an act of love and of faith. A lot of us travel back and forth to work on a daily basis not realizing some folks don't make it back home. Somebody is praying for you. Are you prayed up for the journey?

Ezra 8:21-23

There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask Him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions . I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to Him, but His great anger is against all who forsake him." So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and He answered our prayer.

Insights

There is nothing like being challenged in your faith. It's an everyday thing for most of us. In this passage, Ezra is getting ready for the return journey to Jerusalem. He had gathered all the Israelites, including priests and Levites. Now the road they were to travel presented the possibility of them being killed and robbed. Ezra knew this but as stated in this passage, he had to put his faith in God to see them through. After all, he put it out there that God would take care of them. Asking for protection would be counter to his claim. So, he enlisted the crowd to fast and pray. If you read the entire story, God answered their prayer and they arrived safely with all their possessions.

Call to Action

Prayer for today:

In those times of our feeling overwhelmed, speak to us, Lord. Help us remember that we do not travel distance all at one time, but step by step, day by day, hour by hour, and minute by minute, and that we walk by faith, not by sight. As we face what is ahead, give to us a sense of priority and proper ordering so that we will keep the responsibilities of life and our own strength and abilities in proper focus.

William D. Watley "I Grow Weary" from the book, Standing in the Need of Prayer, A Celebration of Black Prayer, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, 2003.

January 25, 2017
I want the Power of Elijah

Sometimes when the folks are talking about the power of prayer, you can see the look on the folk's face as if to say "Sure, for you maybe but not for me. You got it like that." I suspect the background conversation is more about what is not possible versus what is possible if you really believe that it can happen. Praying just to be praying is just that. Tapping into the power of prayer, anything is possible for all of those who believe.

James 5:17-18

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Insights

In the book of James, Elijah is used as an example of the power of prayer. Elijah was a prophet whose story can be found in I Kings 17 through II Kings 2:11. The key point here is he was human just like us and he prayed "earnestly" meaning with a serious or purposeful intent. As a result, God answered his prayers for no rain and then for rain. Want power? Pray with purposeful intent and commitment.

Call to Action

Power prayer for today:

I am renewed, authorized and cleansed by the authority of the Holy Spirit within me.

My steps are ordered, guided and blessed.

I am a worthy vessel.

I am a willing vessel.

I have been shaped and modeled by God's love.

I am available for God's love to be accomplished in me.

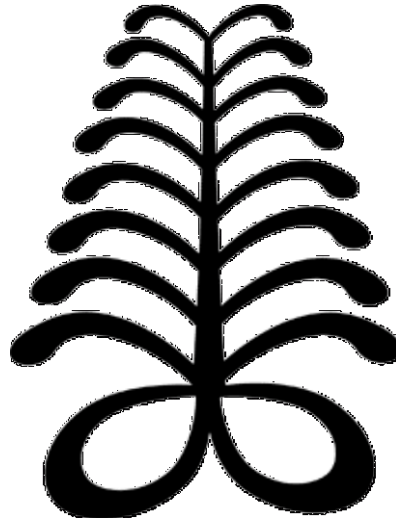
I am equipped with the skill, the knowledge and the ability to carry out the life assignments that God has given to me with love.

I now go forth peacefully, joyfully and lovingly.

I am bestowed with an abundance of good things in all of my affairs and in every aspect of my world.

Iyanla Vanzant, "I AM" from the book, Standing in the Need of Prayer, A Celebration of Black Prayer, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, 2003.

Chapter 6
Prayers that Brought Us Through



AYA
“fern”

Symbol of endurance and resourcefulness

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your
staff, they comfort me.*

Psalms 23:4

January 26, 2017
The Family Prayer

This family prayer was presented to all the immediate family members of the late Millie Mae Burton by her eldest grandson Myron and Serena Mathis. This gift was to create continuity in the family through a daily devotion for all the family members. A copy of the same prayer is hung in our homes as a reminder of God's gift, love, and how He died for our sins, and we are to worship Him daily.

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations
For you, which is your glory,

For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of Our
Lord Jesus Christ

Of whom the Whole Family In
Heaven and Earth is Named.

That He would grant you, according to the riches of
His Glory, to be strengthened with might by
His spirit in the inner man;

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;
That Ye, being Rooted and Grounded
In Love,

May be able to comprehend with all Saints
What is the Breadth. And Length, And Depth, And Height;

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,
That you might be filled with all the fullness of God

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly
Above all that we ask or think, according to

The Power that worketh in us,

Unto Him be Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus
Throughout all Ages, World without end.

Amen

January 27, 2017
A Personal Prayer for Health and Healing

It is often said that behind every test is a testimony. Sister Nanette Malone bears witness to the truth of this statement. For year's sister Malone battled a debilitating disease. Through her trial she learned to trust Jesus, put her faith in God and encourage herself. Below is her self-professed confession, declaration, and prayer. This prayer served as a daily affirmation for her. It was compiled by Nanette Malone and April C. Hughes. They used the following resources: the Holy Bible and "Three Keys of Positive Confession," by Reverend Fred Price, Faith Dome Ministries.

My Prayer for Healing

Christ has redeemed me from the curse of the law and I forbid any sickness or illness to come upon my body. Every disease or virus that touches my body dies instantly in the name of Jesus. Every muscle, tissue and organ in my body functions in the perfection in which God created it to function. Therefore, there is no malfunction in my body. I thank you God that I will not have any spasms or episodes today. I thank you God that my pain is subsiding. I thank you God that my strength is renewed like the eagles and I will walk and not faint in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gal. 3:13, Isaiah 40:31

Call to Action

Like our own Sister Malone, David found himself in a perilous predicament and decided the solution was to encourage himself in the Lord and to go to God in prayer (I Samuel 30:1-8). Think about the last time you were in trouble. How did you react? Develop your own prayer of affirmation for your particular situation.

January 28, 2017
A Pastoral Prayer

This is a prayer from Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the man of God who was about all people and freedom . For those of us who lived during his time and had the privilege of hearing him speak, we know how he could move a crowd. As you read through this prayer today, listen for his voice and revel in the changes he made while being in his ministry here on earth:

We thank thee, O God, for the spiritual nature of man. We are in nature but we live above nature. Help us never to let anybody or any condition pull us so low as to cause us to hate. Give us strength to love our enemies and to do good to those who despitefully use us and persecute us. We thank thee for our Church, founded upon thy Word, that challenges us to do more than sing and pray, but go out and work as though the very answer to our prayer is depended on us and not upon thee. Then, finally, help us to realize that man was created to shine like stars and live on through all eternity. Keep us, we pray, in perfect peace; help us to walk together, pray together, sing together, and live together until that day when all God's children, Black, White, Red, and Yellow will rejoice in one common bond of humanity in the kingdom of our Lord and of our God, we pray. Amen.

Standing In the Need of Prayer, A Celebration of Black Prayer, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library, 2003.

Insights

How does this relate to our church today?

Call to Action

Pray this prayer today for our church.

January 29, 2017
At the End of the Day

At the end of the day, most of us require some quiet time; a time to reconnect with ourselves and leave the cares of the day to today. Leave the worries of tomorrow to tomorrow. This is a prayer written by Paul Laurence Dunbar from the Book, *Standing In The Need of Prayer, A Celebration of Black Prayer*:

*O Lord, the hard-won miles
Have worn my stumbling feet:
Oh, soothe me with thy smiles
And make my life complete*

*The thorns were thick and keen
Where'er I trembling trod;
The way was long between
My wounded feet and God*

*Where healing waters flow
Do thou my footsteps lead.
My heart is aching so:
Thy gracious balm I need.*

Insights

Paul Laurence Dunbar was the first African-American poet to garner national critical acclaim. His work often addressed the difficulties encountered by members of his race and the efforts of African-Americans to achieve equality in America. We can all relate to this prayer as it captures our culture in a most graphic way.

Call to Action

Read the poem and think about the plight of our ancestors and what it is like today.

January 30, 2017
A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Life is great and you know the Lord is about to take you to the next level. You just want to thank Him for the moment:

*Lord, I am happy this morning.
Birds and angels sing and I am exultant
The universe and our hearts are open to your grace
I feel my body and give thanks
The sun burns my skin and I thank you
The breakers are rolling toward the seashore,
The sea foam splashes our house.
I give thanks*

*Lord, I rejoice in your creation,
And that you are behind it, and before,
And next to it, and above, and within us.*

“My Joys Mount as Do the Birds,” Ghana, Standing In the Need of Prayer, A Celebration of Black Prayer, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library, 2003.

Call to Action

Pray this prayer this morning and see how your day goes.

Insights

Is there a change in the way your day went versus yesterday?

January 31, 2017
A Prayer of Worldwide Fellowship

*Father, we thank Thee that
Thou are our Father,
We commit ourselves to Thee
May thy spirit of absolute purity,
Absolute honesty, absolute selfishness,
Absolute love permeate our lives. May we
Join our hands and our hearts with the peoples of
The work to build a fellowship
Of freedom,
Of peace,
Of love,
Of brotherhood everywhere.
Amen
-Mary McLeod Bethune
“My Prayer”*

Standing In the Need of Prayer, A Celebration of Black Prayer, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library, 2003.

Insights

Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial School for Negro Girls, now Bethune-Cookman College. Bethune was active in the fight against racism and served under several presidents as a member of the unofficial African American "brain trust." In 1936 she was appointed by President Roosevelt as the director of the National Youth Administration's Division of Negro Affairs. She also founded the National Council of Negro Women and was an active member of the National Association of Colored Women. Bethune died in May 1955.

Even in her struggles she was successful at providing education for many. As you can see from her prayer, she was about “our Father’s” business.

Call to Action

What is your prayer for the church? For the nation? For the world? Pray that prayer today.