

## ***Session 8 The Value of Using Biblical Prayers***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

*This is session eight on growing in prayer: the value of using biblical prayers. It seems so obvious that it is important to use biblical prayers, but it's not so obvious in the prayer movement. I remember going to many prayer meetings over the years where the Bible was not actually prayed. People prayed visions, they prayed dreams, they prayed what came to their mind, but they did not actually pray the Bible.*

*I started praying the Bible, not out of a deep devotion to the Bible, though I was devoted, but because I called prayer meetings. I remember it so well. I was twenty-three years old. I was pastoring. The Lord spoke to me clearly about being an intercessor. I had no idea of what an intercessor was. Honestly. I had never been to intercessory prayer meetings, praying for revival. I had never been to one that I could remember before that. I got up and declared to everyone, "I am an intercessor."*

*They went, "Wow, cool. What does that mean?"*

*I said, "Not exactly clear. It is prayer. I get that. I do not really know much about it." I remember I announced, "We are going to start prayer meetings." It was May 1979. I remember it very clearly. A long time ago. I said, "I am going to be doing these prayer meetings until I meet the Lord." By the grace of the Lord He has helped me stay with it since that day. My point is, I said, "We are going to have prayer meetings. We are going to start tomorrow, this week" or something like that.*

*A few guys came and said, "How do we do it?"*

*I said, "I don't know. I've never been to a prayer meeting for revival. I don't know what you do." I wrote down the prayers of the Bible because I did not know what else to do in the prayer meetings. I made a Xerox copy. We had Xerox back in those days, photocopy. I passed them out to a few guys. We read the prayers. It was a pretty boring prayer meeting, but we had something to say. I was kind of terrified that we would get in the meeting and nobody would know what to say. I kind of accidentally stumbled into this. As the years unfolded, I found out that was a total gift of God to stumble into that. I didn't do it out of some strategic plan. I did it out of desperation. We had prayer meetings every day, and I did not know what we were going to pray for in the prayer meetings.*

*There are about thirty prayers in the New Testament. We prayed them. We said them one by one. Said them again. Prayed them one by one. It was pretty flat, pretty boring. At least we had something to pray. Over the years I began to understand the value of biblical prayers. There are a lot of values. We are going to highlight three or four of them tonight. I became very accustomed to it and really comfortable with it. It became the language of my heart. The biblical prayers are the language of God's heart. As I said them over the months and years, they became the language of my heart. They changed how I thought, how I felt, and how I expressed myself, even before God. That was not my goal, but that was a fruit. That was kind of just a byproduct of it.*

*Over the years I would go to other prayer meetings and find out how little the Bible was prayed. It struck me, "This is not as common as I was hoping." I talked to them, "Why don't you pray the Bible?"*

*They said, "We don't want to be legalistic and pray the Bible."*

*I said, "I do not really think praying the Bible is legalistic."*

*I heard one prophetic man; the Lord gave him a word once. He said, “The chariot that the Holy Spirit rides best in is the Word of God.” I thought that was such a great word picture. The chariot the Holy Spirit rides best in is the Word of God.*

*I remember one time; this really marked me. This was about twenty years ago, somewhere in the early nineties. I went to a conference-type gathering, and it was all guys and gals who had full-time prophetic ministries. They mostly talked on prayer, prophetic prayer, that kind of thing. Most of them had written books on prayer. The leader of the meeting was hosting a discussion. I raised my hand, and I said, “I want to ask a question.” I was talking to the main leader, a household name in the body of Christ. I won’t mention his name. I said, “Where is the place of praying the prayers of the Bible?” I meant the apostolic prayers, the prayers of the apostles. The biblical prayers, there are more than the New Testament prayers from the apostles. I said, “Where is the place of praying what the apostles prayed?”*

*This man had written quite a few books on prayer and was hosting this several-day conference of leaders to talk, share, and connect. They were planning how to get prayer going across the nations, etc. This man said, “That is a really good question. I do not recall,”—this is the top guy—“I do not recall hearing a prayer from one of the apostles in any prayer meeting I have ever been in.” He said, “I can see as I say that, that is really not good. That is not a good thing.” They looked at each other in the room, these thirty or forty leaders. He said, “How many of you use the prayers of the apostles as one of your primary theologies and approaches of praying for revival?” Very few responded positively. This guy was really showing good leadership in my opinion. He said, “I think we need to commit ourselves to start praying the prayers of the apostles from the New Testament on a regular basis.”*

*The point I am making is that, though I stumbled into it purely accidentally, it was not some passionate “I love the Word” thing. I did love the Word. That is not what was happening. I called prayer meetings and didn’t know what to pray in the prayer meetings. I did it kind of out of desperation. I grew to love it later. The reason I am saying this is that many of you are young, you are beginning your early Christian life, and you are getting prepared for ministry. Do not take it for granted—this is my point—do not take it for granted that praying the prayers of the Bible is something that everybody thinks is normal and is a good idea. My point being is that as you go forth to other places, you might need to dust off some of these notes or make your own and approach the subject of why it is important to pray the prayers of the Bible. This is a topic that is not just for you. You may think it is normal because you have been here for a few months or a few years and that is what we do. I want you to feel the importance of being equipped to articulate this as you go forth in leadership in ministry so you can help other people see the benefit of this. It is not something that is obvious everywhere. I have never met anybody who is against it. It is just not something that is in place. It takes a little intentionality as you go forth in the days to come to establish this value and this reality where you go.*

- A. When I intercede, I almost always use the prayers of the Bible. The prayers that Jesus, Paul, and Peter prayed are recorded for our benefit. I refer to them as the **“apostolic prayers”** because they are the prayers that Jesus prayed as our chief apostle (Heb. 3:1) and that the Spirit gave to the apostles. Including doxologies, there are about thirty apostolic prayers (see a list of these on [mikebickle.org](http://mikebickle.org)).

*When I pray, when I intercede in a prayer meeting, I almost always, if not always, use the prayers of the Bible. That is **not** the same thing as using a Bible verse. Some people use a Bible verse. That is not exactly what I mean. They will say, “The Sermon on the Mount, blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.” They close their eyes, and they give an exhortation in the prayer room on purity. “Well, Lord, You said the pure in heart. They are not becoming pure. You know they are going to get in a mess.” They preach for a while. They are praying from a Bible verse, but they are actually preaching with their eyes closed.*

*Over the years, I have said, “The best way to kill a prayer meeting is to have preaching prayers in the prayer meeting, where people are giving exhortations to people with their eyes closed.” I said, “It is better in a prayer room to talk to God about people, and then in ministry we talk to people about God.” Of course we can mix those two together, but what you do not want to do is have an exhortation to righteousness in the form of a prayer. I have been to a lot of prayer meetings over forty years. That is one of the clearest ways to make a prayer room really boring. One by one people get up and give an exhortations with their eyes closed. I encourage them to pray the prayers of the Bible using the vocabulary of the Bible, not just base their prayer on a verse. That steers them away from preaching prayers. They are actually talking to God. People in the room are far more likely to talk to God as well if the intercessor is talking to God, as opposed to just listening to the exhortation. It is far more edifying. When I talk about the prayers of the apostolic prayers, I am talking about the prayers that the Holy Spirit gave the apostles. The chief apostle is Jesus. He is called the chief apostle. Even His prayer I consider as an apostolic prayer.*

- B. The apostolic prayers are a valuable gift to the church being the prayers that burned in God’s heart and give us the language of His heart. He never changes, so be assured they still burn in His heart.

*These prayers are a valuable gift. There are about thirty of them. We have a two-page document on the website called, “Key Apostolic Prayers and Prophetic Promises.” It is a summary of the apostolic prayers. Then there is an expanded nine-page version called, “Apostolic Prayers (9-page expanded version).” It has applications of how to pray, language to pray. I give you a lot of beginner’s guides if this is new to you. Like, “how do you pray it this way? How do you pray that verse? What is that verse about?” I have a whole lot of examples of how to do this.*

*The apostolic prayers are a valuable gift. These are the prayers that burned in God’s heart. These were burning in His heart, and He gave them to the Holy Spirit to give to the church. Because God never changes, they are still burning in His heart. I assure you that when He inspired Paul to pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that request is still burning in His heart right now. We can know 100 percent God will answer that prayer. It is exactly what He wants to be prayed in the church. It is the language of His heart. Over time it becomes the language of our hearts.*

- C. These prayers are guaranteed! They are like checks already signed in heaven and waiting only for a co-signer on the earth to be cashed. They are as relevant today as they were in the early church.

*These prayers are guaranteed to be answered. It is like a check that needs a cosigner. Prayers are like a check that needs a cosigner. We need a cosigner in heaven and one on the earth. Beloved, every one of the prayers in the New Testament have been signed in heaven and is waiting for you to sign it on the earth, using that analogy. Those prayers are as relevant today as they were 2000 years ago because God never changes. This is what is in His heart. This is the will of God for the church. This is what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing—what is in those prayers.*

*Again, they steer us away from a context where preaching prayers dominate. That is one thing I am really blessed about. I rarely hear preaching prayers in the prayer room. That is because people are praying biblical prayers. It is hard to preach those. It is a lot easier to pray them to God than it is to preach them to people. That is just a real blessing. The room can be in unity and identify far more when the prayers are God-ward because they are biblical prayers instead of man-ward as preaching exhortations.*

## II. APOSTOLIC PRAYERS ARE GOD-CENTERED

- A. All the prayers in the New Testament are God-centered prayers; each one is addressed to God. Not one apostolic prayer is addressed to the devil. God-centered prayer, including spiritual warfare prayer, is the model set forth in the New Testament. It is the model the early church used in resisting and dislodging demonic forces and cultural strongholds (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 10:3-5).

*The prayers of the apostles, number one, are God-centered. Every one of the prayers of the New Testament is actually to God. Meaning, they are not to the devil. For a lot of folks, their primary focus of prayer is directed toward the devil. I believe there is a place to take authority over the devil in a person's life, but the primary focus of all the prayers in the New Testament is directed to God. That is not an accident. That is something we need to pay attention to.*

*If our prayers are mostly to the devil, talking to him, that is a problem. I think there is a time to do that, but particularly in the New Testament Jesus spoke to a spirit only when a spirit was related to a person. Meaning when a spirit was dwelling in a person or a spirit had an individual captive, He rebuked that spirit, and that individual was set free. We do not find any examples in the New Testament where Jesus or the apostles talked to the demons in the sky, disembodied demonic powers, meaning principalities and powers. You never find any of the apostles addressing a demon spirit that is not directly related to an individual. I am not saying that you cannot do that. I have done that a time or two here or there, but it is not the model of the New Testament. I think it is something that can be done and should be done in unique situations. I do not want to go into that right now.*

*I am saying the focus of Jesus and the apostles are prayers to God, not prayers to the devil telling him to do this or to do that. The main exception is when there is a demon spirit in an individual or entrapping and tormenting an individual. That demon was directly addressed when it was related to an individual, which is different than a demon principality. There are demonic principalities over cities and nations. We address the prayer to God as a rule. God shines the light of His countenance. He extends His hand, breaks in with power, and releases the wind of the Spirit. We talk to Him, and demonic powers are disrupted, dislodged, and disturbed by the wind and breakthrough in the light of God's countenance in answer to our prayers.*

- B. All the prayers of Jesus that are recorded in the Bible were directed to the Father (Jn. 14:16; 17:5, 11, 15, 25). Jesus taught His disciples to direct their prayers to the Father (Mt. 18:19; Lk. 11:2, 13). The apostles' prayers also teach us to address the Father when we pray. In the "warfare epistle" Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he addressed all his prayers to the Father (Eph. 1:16-17; 3:14, 16, 20).

*All the prayers of Jesus were directed to the Father. He taught the disciples to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven"—to pray their prayers to the Father. All the apostles directed their prayers to the Father, every single one of them. I think that is worthy to note. Even in the great warfare epistle, which is the epistle to the Ephesians, all those prayers are to the Father. Again, there are times—I think it is rare—there are times to address a power, a power and principality. It is not the routine everyday way that I believe the New Testament presents how prayer meetings should go forward.*

### III. APOSTOLIC PRAYERS ARE POSITIVE

- A. The apostolic prayers are positive prayers asking God for the *impartation of positive things* instead of the *removal of negative things*. For example, Paul prayed for love to abound instead of asking for the removal of hatred (Phil. 1:9). He prayed for the impartation of unity instead of praying against division (Rom. 15:5). He asked for peace to increase instead of fear to be removed (Rom. 15:13). He did not pray against sin but asked for an increase of holiness, purity, and love (1 Thes. 3:12-13). Even Paul's requests to be delivered from evil men are positive in focusing on the deliverance of God's people rather than on exposing or bringing down the evil men persecuting them (2 Thes. 3:2).

*The apostolic prayers—I am thinking of about thirty of them including the doxologies—are positive. This is not a small point. When you study or just observe these thirty prayers, this is how they are designed. They are for the impartation of something good, not the removal of something bad. It is really important. I want to say it again. The prayers of the New Testament are for the impartation of that which is good, not the removal of that which is bad, as a rule. For example, Paul prays for love to abound. He does not ever pray for the removal of hatred. You never see a biblical prayer, “Lord, I ask You to remove hatred out of the church.” You don’t ever find that. I think it is okay to pray that. I do not think the Lord looks at that and says, “That is non-biblical, forget it.” No, God is so gracious. He is so gracious. When we come before Him, we come before the throne of grace, not the throne of literary accuracy. It is not that we have to be accurate. He is so gracious and so tender. We want to be instructed by the Word, not as a negative instruction. More like, “Oh okay, Lord, there is a reason You laid it out the way You laid it out.”*

*Another example, Paul prayed for the impartation of unity. He never prayed against division, ever, in terms of what is recoded in the Bible. I am not against that. As a rule, that is why we pray for the impartation of unity. He prayed for peace to increase. You do not find any biblical prayers for fear to be removed. Because when peace increases, fear goes. When unity is imparted, division goes. When love is abounding, hatred goes. Even the area of sin, you do not find any New Testament prayers against sin. You find them for the impartation of holiness or purity or love. Paul prays, “Release holiness in the church at Thessalonica.” He could have said, “Lord, deal with the sin in the city of Thessalonica.” He did not. He prayed it positively.*

- B. I believe that one reason God established “positive prayers” as the norm in the New Testament is to enhance unity and love in the church. Some pray “negative prayers” that focus on sin in the church or its leadership; often such prayers feel judgmental and angry. Others in the prayer meeting do not agree with the view or tone that was expressed in the negative prayer, so the prayer results in creating an unnecessary division among some of the people at that prayer meeting.

*I believe there is a reason for positive prayers to be the norm, though God will answer the other ones. He is so kind. He is so generous. But if we understand the biblical pattern, then it is easier to cooperate with it. We might say, “I didn’t realize that. It is right there in the Bible.”—I believe that one reason that God established positive prayers as the norm is because it enhances love and unity in the church.*

*Negative prayers do not always have a negative impact. That would be an exaggerated statement. I have heard negative prayers over the years, plenty of times over the years. The guy gets up and he says, “Lord, the sin in the church, they are just so compromising. The leaders are just so controlling and so full of this and so full of that.” The guy goes on and on.*

*Folks in the prayer meeting think, “I don’t agree with him exactly. I think their sin is this and not that.” The guy’s tone gets intense, harsh and angry, and the more angry he is, the more he prays. He is railing. He is kind of like shaking them over hell on a rotten stick, kind of hoping, really going for it, you know. What happens is*

*that while the prayer is meant to build up the church, I have found this many times over the years, there is now division and annoyance, and the people in the room even get stirred up against the one praying, “Who is he to say that? How does he know? He is like that too.”*

*The Lord does not want any of that attitude in the prayer room. He would say, “Let Me just correct it. I am a Father. I know what I am doing. I would have you just pray for the impartation for purity instead of praying against sin; instead of praying against hatred, pray for love.”*

*At first I didn’t do that. I prayed whatever came. I prayed whatever I thought. I had those Bible verses. I found the positive Bible verses going against my grain. I wanted to vent and rail a little bit, you know. Kind of get it off my chest. I found out, because I did not know what to do in a prayer meeting, when I prayed these positive prayers in those early days 1979-1981, it was reforming my heart. It was annoying me because my propensity was the negative. I could not find any venting prayers anywhere in the New Testament, for those churches down the road who were doing this and that.*

- C. The Lord knew that praying for the impartation of positive virtues, instead of focusing on removing negative characteristics, would unify intercessors and heal some of the negative emotions against the church in the very people praying for the Church.

*I find the Lord as a Father designed it this way because it actually healed my heart towards the church by praying positively for the church. I didn’t even mean for that to happen. I wasn’t even aiming for that. I was just trying to get through a prayer meeting. I just used the prayers that were there. It ended up changing the whole tone and tenor of my inner man over time. Positive prayers bring unity in the prayer room. Positive prayers bring healing to the negative emotions that people naturally have against parts of the church. If you have been in the church long enough, some part of the church has bruised you or offended you. Just hang in there for a while. Somebody in the church is going to do something that is going to really unsettle you. The Lord does not want us going there. He does not want us camping there. He wants us going in the opposite spirit of that.*

- D. I noticed change in my life in the early days as I prayed for the church using apostolic prayers with their positive language. Little by little I became more positive in my emotions and developed more mercy and kindness in my heart toward weaknesses in the church.

*I noticed in my own life that I developed mercy by praying positively for the church. The different parts of the church that were annoying me, I had to pray biblical prayers for them. It directed my heart into a tone of mercy and kindness. It actually changed my heart. At first, again, I thought, “Are there any venting prayers? Are there any prayers that get down to it and say it like it is? I just want to be honest, Lord.”*

*The Lord would say, “I am honest. I am the Lord God of truth, and I do not want those prayers in My Bible. I want the different prayers.” You see these positive prayers through the New Testament. In the Old Testament you see the prayers against the enemies of God’s people, the political enemies that were oppressing. That is a different subject for a different day. I am talking about the prayers in the New Testament for revival and the lost to come in., those kinds of things.*

- E. The positive focus that comes from using the apostolic prayers can also help us to operate in faith. The apostolic prayers provide us with good theology for a victorious church. A man once asked me, “Why do you believe the church will be victorious?” I told him to look at the prayers of Jesus and the apostles for the church. My theology on a victorious church and revival was formed partially by praying the New Testament prayers. These prayers were given by the Spirit, so we know they will be fully answered. The church will walk in great power, purity, and unity before Jesus returns.

*Another benefit of positive prayers is that they help you to operate in faith. Those prayers that I call the negative prayers, the venting prayers, the get-it-off-your-chest prayers, the let-them-have-it-like-they-deserve-it prayers, they do not build up your faith. They do not bring unity into the room. They create a negative attitude. Not every time, but they certainly do over time. If there are a whole lot of them, it is not good for the prayer room atmosphere. I have seen a lot of prayer rooms that tried to make it, but this was one of the main reasons they went into discouragement and despair; the whole atmosphere of the prayer room just was not in a biblical posture.*

*When I explained this to various prayer leaders, they replied, “Wow, that is interesting. I never thought of biblical prayers. That is an interesting idea.” I did not stumble into them out of some great insight. It was purely out of desperation. I did not know what to do. I called for daily prayer meetings before I had ever gone to one. That is not the best way to do it. It is kind of better to do something for a while before you announce it.*

*If you pray the positive prayers of the apostles, it actually creates faith for the intercessor and for the people who are agreeing with that prayer in the room. The apostolic prayers provide good theology for a victorious church. I have had people ask me over the years, “Why do you believe in a victorious church?”*

*I said, “Look at the prayers of Jesus and the apostles. They have to be answered. They were given by the Holy Spirit. The church is going to be full of glory. It has to be. That prayer burns in the Father’s heart. The Spirit put it in the Word. It has been prayed for 2000 years. I promise you that prayer is going to be answered. There is not one of those prayers that is going to fall to the ground, not one of those biblical New Testament prayers.” My theology on a victorious church and on revival is partially rooted in the prayers of the New Testament. The prayers themselves create some of the theology of revival and victory.*

*Before the church returns, the church will walk in power, love, and unity in a greater measure. The church is walking in some power right now. It is not a measure we are content with, but we are grateful for that measure, and we want a greater measure. There will be an increase of power, love and unity because it is in the biblical prayers.*

- F. Positive apostolic prayers facilitate unity, impact our emotions, and build our faith. The Father is the “Great Psychologist.” He designed these prayers to help human hearts flow well and work together in unity with a spirit of encouragement and faith.

*I’ll sum it up here. The apostolic prayers facilitate unity. They impact our emotions with love. They build our faith. Again, it becomes kind of an accidental hindrance against preaching prayers, where the guy closes his eyes and preaches his favorite exhortation for ten or twelve minutes.*

*The Father is the “great psychologist.” I mean that in the most positive sense. He understands the human makeup. He says, “I am going to put prayers in that help you guys like each other. I am going to give prayers that, when you pray them, after the meeting you actually have a good spirit towards each other instead of against each other.” God will answer those other ones. As a Father, He leads His family strategically this way. As young leaders and those who are going to be leaders, I encourage you to get familiar with these ideas and these verses and, wherever you go, to establish prayer rooms that are based on the New Testament model of prayer.*

#### **IV. APOSTOLIC PRAYERS ARE USUALLY FOR THE CHURCH**

- A. The vast majority of the apostolic prayers are focused on strengthening of the church, not on the lost or the transformation of society. This does not mean that God is ambivalent about the lost or society or that we are not to pray for these things. The only prayer in the New Testament that is focused on the salvation of the lost is Romans 10:1 where Paul prayed for Israel that they might be saved.

*The apostolic prayers are usually for the church. That is another thing that surprised me over the years as I recognized that. I prayed these prayers for a few years without even identifying these characteristics. I prayed them because they were the only prayers I found in the Bible. After a while I began to understand that almost every one of the prayers are for the church. They are not for the lost. The Lord does not mind you praying for the lost. I pray for the lost often. The prayers in the New Testament are not for the lost actually. They are not for the transformation of society, though God is committed to winning the lost and to releasing elements of transformation in this age and then fully when the Lord returns in the age to come. He is not against those kinds of prayers, and it is okay to pray them. To me, I think it is significant to note that the New Testament prayers are not focused in that direction.*

*The only prayer for the lost in the New Testament is in Romans 10:1 where Paul is praying for Israel to be saved. Again, as an intercessor I do pray regularly for the lost. It is biblical. One verse is enough. You do not find more than that out of the thirty—I am saying thirty because you can add up the doxologies in different ways—approximately thirty prayers of the New Testament. It is interesting that almost every one of them is for the church. I began to ask the question, “Why?”*

- B. Why are the vast majority of the apostolic prayers for the strengthening the church? Because God’s primary plan to reach the lost or to impact a city is by anointing His church with power and love. When we pray for the whole church in a city to be revived in love and power, the answer to these prayers will have an immense impact on the lost. Many unbelievers will inevitably come to Jesus and society will be changed as the church in that city walks in the power of the Spirit.

*Why are the vast majority of the prayers, like ninety-eight percent of them, whatever the number is, for the strengthening of the church? I believe the answer is that God’s primary strategy of winning the lost is through anointing the church. I am believing God for several hundred new converts in the Kansas City area. I have a word of the Lord about that. Over 300,000. I will not take one soul less than 300,000. I believe it will be more than that. I have a clear word from the Lord to believe God for 300,000. I mean people in sin right now coming to the Lord. The way the 300,000 are going to come to the Lord is through the church walking in the anointing. The key to the harvest is not just them getting saved in a vacuum. The key to the harvest is the church walking in the anointing of God, the church walking in power, the church being revived. When the church is revived, the lost get saved and society gets transformed in a measure. It will not be fully transformed until after the Lord gets here, but there is a lot of transformation yet to be experienced in various parts of the world. There will be some parts of the world where transformation will go far beyond other parts of the world, but we do not know which parts. We know there are a lot of great victories to be had, even in society. When the church is revived and walking in power, the lost will get saved for sure and they will come in in large numbers.*

- C. We see this principle at work in the city of Ephesus. The preaching of the Word of God was so powerfully anointed that its influence “grew mightily and prevailed” across Ephesus (Acts 19:20). God’s strategy was to raise up a large, anointed church with congregations across the whole city that would win a great harvest in all Asia. What happened in Ephesus was so powerful that everyone who lived in Asia “heard the word of the Lord” from Paul and others in this church.

***<sup>10</sup>...so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus...<sup>20</sup>So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. (Acts 19:10, 20)***

*We see this principle in Acts 19. The largest church in the New Testament time was the church at Ephesus, which is in modern-day Turkey today. The city Ephesus was the third largest city in the world at the time. It was kind of like the New York City of today. Ephesus is above Israel by the Mediterranean Sea, if you are not good with geography.*

*What happened there was the most powerful demonstration with the largest numbers of unbelievers coming in. There was a lot of power in Jerusalem, too. I am not comparing those two. In Ephesus, it was remarkable. Paul preached with such power. Look what it says, “All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of The Lord.” My goodness! The word of the Lord grew mighty. The word of the Lord prevailed. Can you imagine saying, “The word of God prevailed in New York City, the third largest city of the world?” Maybe it is not now. It used to be. Take a major city. The word of God prevailed in Ephesus. That is a huge statement.*

- D. Considering the limited communication and transportation systems of the day, it seems likely that for all in Asia to hear the Word, they had to hear it not only from Paul but also from many believers who were a part of the large church at Ephesus that was inspired by Paul’s anointed preaching.

*The way the word of God prevailed was by the church being anointed. Paul was anointed, but it was not just Paul. This was far beyond Paul. Paul was the principal preacher at the beginning of this revival, but for all of Asia to hear the word of God and for the word of God to prevail—I mean with the communication systems and transportation systems of that day, for all of Asia to hear the word of God—there were thousands of preachers going around, walking in the power of God. Paul did not get on the Internet and reach all of Asia or get on the train and get to the other side of that province from where Ephesus was. God’s strategy to win Asia, all of Asia, was for God’s servants to walk in the anointing, for the church to be revived in power. I do not know how many preachers there were, but there had to be multitudes. They did not have Internet, they did not have television, they did not have cars, and they did not have trains. For the Word to be that widespread to where the Holy Spirit says, “The word of God prevailed in Ephesus and then throughout Asia,” that is a remarkable description of revival.*

- E. When preachers are anointed and the church is revived, the saints will speak the Word and do the works of the kingdom with great consistency and a multitude of unbelievers will come to Jesus.

*When the church is anointed, when the pulpits are anointed, I mean in a greater measure, when the worship teams are anointed, when the Word of God is going out of weak and broken people in a greater measure of power, the church gets revived. Leonard Ravenhill, who was one of the well-known prayer warriors of the twentieth century—he went to be with the Lord a few years ago—wrote quite a few books on prayer. One of his famous statements was, “Unction in the pulpits, action in the pews.” He said that many, many times.*

*I got to know Leonard Ravenhill at the end of his life some years ago. He was one of my heroes. Here is one of the great intercessors in our nation in this day, and he was so big on that, “You get the pulpits anointed, in the pews the people will shake off compromise and will walk in the power of God.” The problem is the unanointed preaching and singing of the Word. You get those two on fire, and the masses in the church will get on fire. Then the greater masses in society will come to the Lord. Focus on getting the Word of God going forth, whether they preach it or sing it, when it comes forth in greater power, everything else, the domino effect will come into place. History bears that up wherever God puts His anointing on the Word, whether it is spoken, whether it is sung, or today very powerfully would be drama and media, and all those avenues to where the Word of God is publically presented. The drama/media dimension is very, very significant as well.*

- F. We do well to labor in prayer for an increase of the measure of the Spirit’s anointing on the church, knowing that a harvest will surely result. No power can prevent the lost from coming to Jesus in great numbers when the church is revived and operating together in the anointing of the Spirit.
- G. We are to pray for the whole church in our area, not just for our ministry or congregation. Thus we ask the Lord to visit a thousand congregations with His power in the region of Kansas City.

*I want to encourage people—this is something I have really had energy about for thirty plus years, this point—**Pray for the whole city.** I have been praying for Kansas City in daily prayer meetings for the thirty-two years I have been in this city. I don’t think I have ever prayed for Kansas City without saying this phrase—maybe once or twice but probably not—I always say, “And Lord, the thousand congregations in Your church in this city.” Meaning, do not get locked into praying for your ministry and your church.*

*I have had people come and say, “Let’s pray for revival at IHOPKC.”*

*I say, “Okay, okay, but not really. Let’s pray for the revival in the family of God in our city. God will not forget IHOPKC. I promise you He will not forget IHOPKC. Let’s see a revival in our church. Let’s see a revival in our ministry. Let’s see a revival in our school. Let’s go better than that. Let’s see revival in the family of God in the area. I promise you God will not forget to touch us.”*

*The reason that is important is this: I have been with folks over the years. They get really locked into revival for their church and their ministry. They end up getting parochial. They end up getting into “us four and no more.” They get really excited if things get really lively in the room they are at, in the sanctuary they are at, though the body of Christ in their own city is not doing well. They are excited.*

*I ask, “How could we be excited if things are a little bit lively in one ‘room’—I am talking about a church sanctuary—when there are 1000 other ‘rooms’ in the city that are not being touched?” I want to encourage you when you pray the prayers of the Bible, pray for the city, the church, the body of Christ, in the city. The revival we are believing God for is not for the power of God to hit this congregation and everybody come to our congregation. That is not what we are looking for. We are looking for an awakening, like a third great awakening in America. As it sweeps across our city, it will be in hundreds of places: Baptist, Methodists, whoever calls on the name of the Lord. They will speak and sing the Word of God. The Word of God will go like an arrow, like fire, and it will go forth in the north, the south, the east, the west, the midtown, the intercity, the rural city. The city will be abuzz with the gospel. It will not be about people jamming in one building.*

*We can cram 2000 people in this building, and if we do it like twenty nights in a row, 2000 people, and then we get 3000, we think, “Man, revival hit!”*

*The Lord says, “Are you kidding? There are three million people in the whole area here. You have only 3000 in your building.”*

*I am saying, “Lord, do something in our city. All around. Do it in the cities of America. Do it in the cities of the earth.” It is good, I think to focus on a city, but do not focus in a parochial way on your little portion of the city. Pray for your city, pray for other cities. When I pray for Chicago, when I pray for Hong Kong, when I pray for Seoul, Korea, I am praying for the congregations of the Lord, the name of Jesus, the family of God, not just for one congregation. I believe that is the model of the New Testament.*

- H. The Lord loves the whole church—every denomination and congregation that proclaims Jesus. He wants His people to love the whole church and not to write off any ministry, but pray for them.

*The Lord loves the whole church. He loves every denomination, every congregation that names His name in the truth. Everybody has weakness. Everybody has seasons of struggle. He wants His people to love the whole church. I know that is a simple statement, but that is a very important statement. We want to see Him move in all the congregations in this city and region. We want to see Him do it in the cities of our nation and the cities of the world. I do not mean just our nation. We are not just into America. We are not just into Kansas City.*

*When you pray for your city, I urge you to get the big vision, the big picture. It is more than jamming this building out for twenty, thirty, sixty days in a row when most of the city does not even know we are meeting. We want to see hundreds of meetings jammed out. That is what happened in the first and second great awakening. Thousands of buildings were full and overflowing. Scores of preachers, unknown preachers, were everywhere because the Word of God was prevailing in that geographic area. That is the revival we are aiming for. I will take anything He will give less than that, but I am never going to be content. I will be grateful and say, “Thank You, Lord. I want more.” When I contend for revival, I am always praying for the family of God. We are all born-again believers in the same family. In the resurrection we will be best friends forever. All of us will know each other. Let’s contend for the purpose of God in our city.*

- I. We will love those for whom we pray consistently. God knows that we will love the church more as we pray for it regularly. His divine strategy is for the hearts of the intercessors to connect and grow in love towards the church in the city for which they consistently pray.
- J. It is easier to love the lost in a city or nation because we do not know most of them. But some are quick to become frustrated and impatient with the churches in their own city because they actually know the believers in them. Therefore the Lord calls us to pray for the church so that we will love it while we are working to bring the lost to Jesus and impact society. He doesn’t want us to despise the churches in our city because of their weakness; He wants us to love both the church and the lost.

*God’s divine strategy is for us to pray for the church because we will end up loving the church if we pray for the church. We **will** end up loving it. It is easy to love the lost in a city because you do not know them. You know a few of them. The lost is an unnamed mass. It is “the lost.” It is really easy to love them because they are not bugging you. I tell you they are not any nicer. We get this idea that we love the lost, but we are bored with the church. The Lord would say, “No, no. You are disconnecting from reality. Pray for the church because you will fall in love with the church that you know. You know their faces and their names, and they are easy to annoy you. You will love them. I will reach the lost through you guys walking in unity and love together.” The Lord is the great strategist. He leads our prayers right through the church so that, while we are laboring for the harvest, we love the church. The church is His family.*

- K. God is a brilliant strategist! He directs us to pray for the harvest by asking Him to visit the whole church—the local churches—in our area with His great power. It is no coincidence that most of the New Testament prayers are for the church!

*He is a brilliant strategist. We pray to God. We pray positive biblical prayers. We pray for the church. We are not limited to that, but that is the New Testament model.*

## V. THE FOCUS OF OUR INTERCESSION

- A. Two of the primary requests Jesus exhorted us to make of the Father when we intercede are for the release of a greater measure of the Holy Spirit and the release of a greater measure of justice.

<sup>13</sup>“...**how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!**”  
(Lk. 11:13)

<sup>7</sup>“...**will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night...?**”  
(Lk. 18:7 NAS)

*The focus of our intercession—and again I will just cover a little bit of this—the focus of our intercession: Jesus exhorted us to pray that God the Father would give us the Holy Spirit. This is a very important prayer, to give us the Holy Spirit.*

- B. As believers, we received the indwelling Spirit at our new birth (Jn. 3:3-5; Rom. 8:9-11). Thus we do not pray for the Lord to “give us” the Holy Spirit in the sense of the indwelling Spirit; rather, we ask Him to release a **greater measure** of the ministry of the Spirit in and through us.

*Every born-again believer has the Holy Spirit. I have had people say, “Lord, give us the Holy Spirit.” What that means in a New Testament context is give us a greater context of the Spirit that we already have. The reason this is important is because people who pray, “Lord, give us the Spirit,” are using Luke 11, the very words of Jesus. In the New Testament context, we already have the Spirit as born-again believers. We are asking for a greater measure. That is the key phrase: **a greater measure**.*

*If we are praying to have the Spirit in the absolute sense, it is as though we are standing before God as people who do not have the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit says, “Hey, what about Me and you? I am with you. That means nothing right now until you have a great revival?” We don’t want to minimize the presence of the Spirit. We want to engage with Him. We want to be grateful for His presence. We want to be active in our faith that He is with us now. We just want a greater measure.*

*When folks come and say, “Lord, rend the heavens and come down and send Your Spirit,” I will whisper to some of them and say, “No, thank Him for the measure we walk in and ask for a greater measure.”*

*They say, “It does not make much difference.”*

*I reply, “It really does. It will keep you in a posture of faith. It will keep you in faith that the Spirit is in our midst now. It will keep you in gratitude that the Spirit is moving and we are saying thank You. We just want a greater measure.”*

- C. Scripture refers to a greater measure of the Spirit on the church as a “greater measure of grace.” In Scripture this increase is referred to as “a greater grace” (Jas. 4:6); “great grace” (Acts 4:33); “grace . . . abundant” (1 Tim. 1:14); “full of grace” (Acts 6:8, NAS); “growing in grace” (2 Pet. 3:18); and “grace . . . multiplied” (2 Pet. 1:2).

<sup>6</sup>**But He gives a greater grace. (Jas. 4:6, NAS)**

<sup>33</sup>**...with great power the apostles gave witness...and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)**

*The Bible has many references to “greater grace.” We have grace and the fullness of grace is available to us through the blood of Jesus and the cross. I want to experience a greater measure of it. I want to experience more of that which is freely and fully available to me.*

- D. We pray for the release of a greater measure of justice. Justice can be defined as God making wrong things right. There are two sides to justice: salvation and judgment. We see the salvation side of justice when God's people are healed and delivered. We see the judgment side of justice when the wicked—those who rebel against God's righteous ways—are stopped, removed, and even punished.

## VI. THREE PRAYER THEMES

- A. I use three prayer themes, regardless of what type of prayer I am offering to God. The three general prayer themes are the *release of the gifts, fruit, and wisdom of the Holy Spirit*. The vast majority of the prayers and promises in the Bible fit into one of these three general prayer themes.

*This is so simple that I will just take a minute on this. Then we are going to take about five minutes in groups of five or six. We will put the timer on and go for five minutes. What is one point here that challenges or inspires you, or something you want to do about some verse or some principle that was presented here? Go around the group and take thirty or forty seconds each and say why it is and what it is. I want you to say it with your mouth because it does something in your heart if you say it with your mouth. I want others to hear you.*

*When I think of prayer, I have three prayer themes that I have used for thirty plus years. I use these three prayer themes to help focus my prayer time. They are all throughout the New Testament; they are everywhere. When I identified them, it helped me focus when I was praying for someone. All the biblical prayers are actually in line with one of these three basic prayer themes. All the promises are in line with these three: prayer for the **gifts of the Spirit**, the **fruit of the Spirit**, and the **wisdom of the Spirit**. Every promise you have and every prayer you will pray from the Bible expresses one of those three main categories of divine activities of gifts, fruit, and wisdom.*

*This helps me focus when I am praying for a friend or for my family, for ministries, and for locations. For example, when I pray for Allen Hood—he is someone on my prayer list, and I pray for him and his family—I pray for gifts, fruit, and wisdom for him and his family. I go down my list, and I speak it over him. A mandate we have as a spiritual family is to pray for the city of Cairo. The main ministry God has assigned us to IHOPKC to pray for is YWAM. As I pray of the leaders of YWAM, I pray for gifts, fruit and wisdom. When I pray for YWAM, when I pray for Cairo, when I pray for my sons, my grandchildren, my wife, anybody, it is for gifts, fruits and wisdom. If I use any of those thirty biblical prayers, it is praying for one of those three things. Knowing that helps me articulate and focus in a way that really gets my heart engaged in faith.*

- B. **The gifts of the Spirit:** Praying for a greater release of the gifts of the Spirit involves praying for the release of God's power, including His supernatural favor, provision, and protection. We ask for a greater measure of God's power to be manifest in our lives and in the people or places we pray for.

*<sup>7</sup>The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one ...<sup>8</sup>for to one is given the word of wisdom...,<sup>9</sup>to another gifts of healings...,<sup>10</sup>to another the working of miracles... (1 Cor. 12:7-10)*

*When we pray for the gifts of the Spirit, it is that supernatural power dimension whether it is favor, provision, or protection. That is the power realm breaking in. I associate that with the gifts of the Spirit. Whether it is favor or protection, it is the power realm of God setting things into motion.*

- C. **The fruit of the Spirit:** Praying for a greater release of the fruit of the Spirit refers to asking for God's character to be formed in the lives of others. We ask that the fullness of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 (God's love, joy, peace, patience, etc.) be established in those we pray for.

*When I pray for the fruit of the Spirit, what we are praying for is godly character in their life.*

- D. One of the ways I pray for a person to have more fruit in his character and to be more godly is to ask the Lord to release a *spirit of conviction* and a *spirit of wisdom and revelation of God* to him. Being convicted of sin and understanding the truth of who God is will result in an increase of the fear of the Lord and fascination with Jesus and thus the formation of godly character in that person.

<sup>8</sup> ... **He [the Spirit] will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (Jn. 16:8)**

<sup>17</sup> ...**may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. (Eph. 1:17)**

*The way I have found to pray for the fruit of the Spirit in someone's life, instead of saying, "Lord I ask You to fill them with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self control," instead of going down the nine fruit of the Spirit—which I think is okay to do for sure, but when I pray for the fruit of the Spirit in someone's life—I typically pray for the spirit of conviction to touch them.*

*In John 16:8, Jesus said, "When the Spirit comes, He will convict." If I pray, "Lord, I want you to touch Lauren Cunningham"—he and Darlene are the leaders of YWAM—I ask for the spirit of conviction and the spirit of revelation of God. "Lord, release a greater reality of the conviction of the Spirit and the revelation of the beauty of Jesus." That produces godly character in the heart. It produces humility, the fear of God. It produces all kinds of good character traits.*

*One reason you do that is you do not want to be in a prayer meeting praying for a family member or a friend, praying their negative character traits, "Lord, we take authority over lust and bitterness; they are so angry." Don't go there. Ask for the spirit of conviction or the spirit of the fear of the Lord, which is the same thing as the spirit of conviction. Conviction means the Word is powerfully touching their heart. When the spirit of conviction or the spirit of revelation touches their heart, they will walk in godliness. When I am praying publically, I pray those prayers. I am actually praying for godly character in the church. That is what I am praying for.*

- E. **The wisdom of the Spirit:** When we pray for a greater release of the wisdom of the Spirit, we are asking for an increase of understanding and insight into God's plans, will, and Word for others. Paul prayed much for spiritual wisdom and understanding for others (Col. 1:9-10). Praying for wisdom includes asking the Spirit for dreams and visions that give insight into His will for our lives as well as insight into His plans for a city, nation, business, church, etc. (Acts 2:17-19).

*The third theme is the wisdom of the Spirit. Insight into God's plan, His will, insight into the Word.*

- F. These three themes cover the vast majority of the biblical promises related to praying for people or places. Over years, I developed prayer lists by applying these three prayer themes to my prayer requests. In other words, I pray for a greater release of the gifts, fruit, and wisdom of the Spirit when I intercede for other people or places, when I offer up personal petitions for myself, and during devotional prayer when I ask the Holy Spirit to help me love, obey, and worship Jesus more.
- G. For years I have used these three themes as a "grid" to help me focus my prayers for myself and others. I found that nearly every prayer request can be classified under one of these three themes.

- H. I ask for the *fruit of the Spirit* or godly character to be established in people as the Spirit convicts them of sin and righteousness, reveals the knowledge of God, and releases more of the beauty, love and fear of the Lord to them. I ask for the *wisdom of God* to be given to them so they would walk in God's will and plan for their lives. And I ask for the *gifts of the Spirit*—the supernatural power, favor, and protection of God—to be released to and through their lives and ministry.

*I offer those three prayer themes as kind of a focus. When I am praying for an individual, a city, or a nation, I used those three prayer themes, and I pick one of those thirty prayers of the New Testament or several of them. I pray along those lines. Those are just some tracks to run on. Amen.*