

The
**BATTLE
PLAN**
for
PRAYER



FROM BASIC TRAINING
TO TARGETED STRATEGIES

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for
PRAYER



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THE MEANING OF THE CROSSHAIRS SYMBOL

THE CROSS in the middle reminds us that successful prayer begins with a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and faith in His shed blood on the cross. (John 14:6, Eph. 3:12; Col. 1:15–20)

THE VERTICAL LINES in the cross, as well as above and below it, remind us to stay vertically aligned with God and His Word in prayer. (John 14:13; 15:7; 1 John 5:14)

THE HORIZONTAL LINES in the cross and on both sides remind us to stay right with others. This includes forgiving, apologizing, and also praying in agreement with others. (Matt. 5:23–24; 18:19–20; Mark 11:25)

THE INNER CIRCLE means to maintain a pure heart in prayer. When you pray, you should keep no unconfessed sin or bitterness in your heart and you should approach God humbly, repentantly, submissively, and in faith. (Ps. 66:18; Mark 11:24; James 4:7–10)

THE CROSSHAIRS remind us to aim our intercession and to pray specifically, strategically, and persistently. (Matt. 7:7–8; John 15:7; James 5:16)

INTRODUCTION



In April 1948, a farmer in a small rural town in south Georgia looked up to see a tornado approaching his property. As he ran for cover, his wife crowded their three young daughters under the dining room table and waited in fear.

When the devastating twister arrived at their house, the little girls watched their mother cry out to God at the top of her voice for protection. Moments later, the deafening, train-like sound of the winds faded into the distance, and then the family walked outside to see the aftermath of the storm.

The destruction was all around them. Their barn a few yards away was heavily damaged. Power lines were down on the ground. The giant oak trees in front of their house were uprooted, now lying on their side, and the church across the street had been rocked off its foundation. But their home and family were left completely untouched.

This farmer and his wife were our grandparents. And their six-year-old daughter, who was greatly impacted by this experience, grew up to become our mother. The three

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of us, her sons, and our nineteen children would not be here today if God had not protected their family during that storm.

There is power in prayer. We grew up in a praying home, we've attended praying churches, and we've seen God answer countless specific prayers over the years.

When we were in high school, for instance, our father and a few trusted friends believed God was leading them to launch a new Christian school in our area. To get started, of course, they needed desks, books, and the right location. But with little money, what they needed more than anything was faith. And prayer.

During those early days of the school, we watched how God rapidly guided and provided. A local church agreed to house the school and allow their facilities to be remodeled for the purpose. A local business donated free lumber. A volunteer ministry team from Tennessee showed up to help with construction. Within weeks, new classrooms and offices were completed. Another school called and offered books, desks, and chairs.

The timing was unbelievable. Soon we had students sitting in new classrooms, with books in their hands and teachers in front of them. Our father went on to serve as headmaster for two decades, watching the Lord continue to provide what was needed year after year. In the fall of 2014, the school celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, having impacted thousands of students and families for Christ through the years.

During the 1990s, when our father needed the funds to rent a modular unit for the school, he prayed that God would

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somehow provide the seven thousand dollars to set it up. A few days later, a married couple unexpectedly dropped by his office and asked if the school had any needs. Dad shared about the expansion opportunity and how he was praying specifically for the needed amount. Their mouths dropped as they looked at each other in amazement.

The husband said, “Well, we’re here because we believe God wanted us to bring this to you.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a check—already made out in the amount of seven thousand dollars!—and laid it on our father’s desk. It was to the *penny* what Dad had been praying God would send.

We witnessed answered prayers like these all the time.

In 2002, following in our father’s footsteps, we were privileged to launch a Christian movie ministry at our church with no money, no professional experience, and no film school training. But we knew God could provide what we needed. And with the support of our church, we laid every need before Him in prayer. We had to write the scripts, find the right actors, secure the right equipment, pull off the entire production, and then obtain distribution. God provided everything we needed at every level. Each of the five movies we’ve been part of producing has resulted from a long string of specifically answered prayers. We know we would have failed otherwise.

In our office we’ve created a “Wall of Remembrance.” Numerous framed pictures serve as visual reminders of God’s provision, each representing a clearly answered prayer. Among them is a picture of Alex as a young college student with a dream to make movies for the Lord. Another

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features a two-year-old orphan in Nanjing, China, that God guided Stephen and his wife to adopt. One shows a forklift on a train track that just happened to be nearby one of our movie sets, sitting idle behind a man's house, right when we needed it. One depicts a group of men in Malawi, Africa, holding up resolution commitments to lead their families, after a history in which they'd all but abandoned them. One other picture is of three brothers with their arms around each other, smiling, taken years after our father had prayed we would all be working together someday.

Each picture represents a story of God's faithfulness in our lives. It's overwhelming to see them all together. Incredible provision. Unbelievable direction. Impossible odds. The list goes on.

God has been so gracious and shown His kindness and power in countless ways over the years. Yes, He does it through His creation and His Word. Yes, He does it through changed lives. But one of the most impactful means of His blessing has been through *specifically* answered prayers.

We know prayer works. We can't deny it at this point. And we don't want to.

Answered prayers aren't merely highly unlikely coincidences. They are fingerprints of a living, loving God who invites all of us to draw close to Him, the One who made us and "is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:27–28 NKJV). So we echo the apostle John, when he stated, "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and

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with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:3–4 NKJV).

That is our hope for this book—that you not only experience the joys of answered prayer more fully, but that you’ll get to know God more deeply and fellowship with Him more personally as you travel these pages.

So we invite you to join us—and countless others—on a journey of learning how to pray more biblically and strategically. How to approach God’s throne of grace with great freedom and faith. How to more effectively fight the battles of your life in prayer first. How to cast your cares onto the shoulders of One who deeply cares for you.

Together, we’ll walk through some of the most important foundational passages and truths in the Bible regarding prayer, and also share many wonderful resources God gives all of us to help us pray with greater power and precision. We’ll discuss prayer’s benefits, purposes, and how God answers. Then we’ll venture through the importance of properly preparing our hearts so we can boldly approach Him in faith. Last, we’ll share specific prayer strategies you can use to help you pray more biblically and stand firm during moments of temptation and spiritual attack, ready to better intercede on behalf of others around you.

If you desire to draw closer to God and pray more effectively and strategically, it is no accident you’re reading this book. We believe the Lord is calling you into a deeper relationship with Him. And we are cheering you on, daring you to dive in to this journey.

Here at the outset, we challenge you to make a commitment to three things:

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First, *READ this book a chapter a day*. We suggest at least five days a week for the next seven weeks, but whatever works for your schedule. Each chapter should only take you around ten minutes to read.

Second, *READ the Bible each day*. Let the Word of God mold you into a person of prayer. We encourage you to read through the Gospel of Luke during these seven weeks and be studying it through the lens of what you can learn from Jesus about prayer. You are also encouraged to look up and study verses in each chapter that you are unfamiliar with that spark your interest.

Third, *PRAY every day*. Prayer should be both scheduled and spontaneous. Choose a place and time when you can pray alone each day, preferably in the morning (Ps. 5:3). Write down specific needs and personal requests you'll be targeting in prayer over the next few weeks, along with the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, I come to You in Jesus' name, asking that You draw me into a closer, more personal relationship with You. Cleanse me of my sins and prepare my heart to pray in a way that pleases You. Help me know You and love You more this week. Use all the circumstances of my life to make me more like Jesus, and teach me how to pray more strategically and effectively in Your name, according to Your will and Your Word. Use my faith, my obedience, and my prayers this week for the benefit of others, for my good, and for Your glory. Amen.

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May we each experience the amazing power of God in our generation as a testimony of His goodness for His glory!

MY SCHEDULED PRAYER TIME

___:___ a.m./p.m.

MY SCHEDULED PRAYER PLACE

MY PRAYER TARGETS

Develop a specific, personalized, ongoing prayer list using one or more of the following questions:

- What are your top three biggest needs right now?
- What are the top three things you are most stressed about?
- What are three issues in your life that would take a miracle of God to resolve?
- What is something good and honorable that, if God provided it, would greatly benefit you, your family, and others?
- What is something you believe God may be leading you to do, but you need His clarity and direction on it?
- What is a need from someone you love that you'd like to start praying about?

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2. _____

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1

THE LEGACY OF PRAYER

*○ You who hear prayer, to You all men come.
(Ps. 65:2)*



Prayer can accomplish what a willing God can accomplish. It is a beautiful, mysterious, and awe-inspiring gift. There is no greater privilege for anyone than being able to personally talk with and speak into the ears of Almighty God. There's not an issue we're facing that prayer cannot address because nothing is too difficult or impossible for God to handle. And there is no greater legacy we could embrace or leave behind us than one of faithfulness in prayer.

It should not surprise us, then, to discover that the greatest and most spiritually successful men and women in the Bible were always people of prayer. Abraham walked by faith but was guided by prayer, and the nations of the world have never been the same because of it. Isaac's intercession on behalf of his barren wife resulted in the birth of Jacob, who became the father of the nation of Israel (Gen. 25:21). Moses spoke with God "as a man speaks to his friend," receiving God's guidance and revelation for his leadership

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decisions (Exod. 33:11). The world still has the Torah and the Ten Commandments as fruit of it.

David talked to God “morning, noon, and night” (Ps 55:17 HCSB) and wrote the longest book in your Bible because of it. The Psalms are filled with a plethora of passionate prayers set to song. Nehemiah’s intercessions resulted in Israel miraculously rebuilding the city walls of Jerusalem in incredible time. You can visit this city, as we have, and see a portion of Nehemiah’s wall still standing today. Daniel so cherished talking with God that he prioritized it three times a day and was willing to give up his life rather than give up his prayer time.

From Joseph to Jeremiah, Hannah to Hosea, the Scriptures are replete with people who discovered God really does listen and respond to those who approach Him in faith. Elijah was basically a walking example of answered prayer and became an inspiration for New Testament believers (James 5:16–18).

Yet Jesus Christ remains the ultimate model and Master of prayer. At His birth, Jesus and His family were greeted in the temple by Anna, a widow who served God in prayer day and night. At the start of His public ministry, He rose up out of the water at His baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended “while He was praying” (Luke 3:21–22).

Before choosing His disciples, Jesus spent all night in prayer to God. As they followed Him, they discovered His private habit was to rise early and pray before the sun rose (Mark 1:35). Even as His popularity was exploding, He

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would “often slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Luke 5:15–16).

His first fully recorded sermon in the Scriptures explains the fundamentals of how to pray (Matt. 5–7). He taught and challenged His followers to “watch and pray” (Mark 14:38 NKJV) and to pray instead of giving up (Luke 18:1). He angrily threw the money changers out of the temple, shouting, “My house shall be called a house of prayer” (Matt. 21:13).

He gifted the world with the greatest model prayer of all time (Matt 6:9–13) and later prayed the most powerful high priestly prayer of all time (John 17).

Before His betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus knelt alone in the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed so deeply and desperately that His sweat literally became drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Even while suffering in agony on the cross, He prayed out loud three times between His final breaths. Then after ascending into heaven, He sent His Spirit to fill believers and specifically call us to more effective prayer (Rom. 8:15–16). Now as our High Priest, Jesus stands at the right hand of the Father and ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:23–28).

Andrew Murray wrote, “Christ’s life and work, His suffering and death, were founded on prayer—total dependence upon God the Father, trust in God, receiving from God, and surrendering to God. Your redemption is brought into being by prayer and intercession. The life He lived *for* you and the life He lives *in* you is a life that delights to wait on God and receive from Him. To pray in His name is to pray as He prayed. Christ is our example because He is our Head, our Savior, and our Life. In virtue of His deity and

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of His Spirit, He can live in us. We can pray in His name because we abide in Him and He abides in us.”¹

The launch of the New Testament church and all of Christian history can only be understood through the lens of powerful prayer. Peter constantly relied on it, and Paul was practically addicted to it (Phil. 1:4–5; 1 Thess. 5:17).

The greatest Christian missionaries of all time were also men and women of prayer. Hudson Taylor had an unprecedented impact on China in the late 1800s, resulting from his establishment of the China Inland Mission. He started 125 schools and introduced untold thousands of people to faith in Christ. In a book written by his son and daughter-in-law, they reveal that *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* was that he obediently walked closely with God in prayer. Howard Taylor wrote of his father, “For forty years the sun never rose on China a single day that God didn’t find him on his knees.”²

In England, a humble man named George Müller led the Ashton Down Orphanage in Bristol and took care of more than ten thousand orphans throughout his life. He did so without ever asking anyone for money. He would pray in secret and then watch God provide in public. When he died, he’d recorded detailed accounts of more than fifty thousand documented answers to prayer in his journals. His example and teachings on prayer have blessed millions around the world.

One of them was England’s great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Thousands gathered each week to hear the powerful, expository messages of this “Prince of Preachers,” who taught and wrote extensively on the power

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of prayer. When visitors came through his New Park Street Church, he would often walk them to the basement prayer room where people were faithfully on their knees interceding to God for Spurgeon and their community. Spurgeon would declare, “Here is the powerhouse of this church.”

In the United States, John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards helped usher in the Great Awakenings in the 1700s that radically changed the culture of America from rampant wickedness to a contagious pursuit of God. Their strategy included preaching God’s Word while calling and uniting believers together in sincere, extraordinary prayer.

And these examples are only a drop in the ocean of people through the years who have found and experienced God on their knees.

We have each been given a rich legacy of the power and importance of prayer, both in Scripture and throughout Christian history. Every generation needs courageous believers who will trust God at His Word and pick up the baton of intercession, continuing the powerful legacy of faithfully standing in the gap and seeking His heart in prayer. Our hope is that every chapter of this book will enrich your relationship with the Lord and equip you to walk closer to Him while becoming a more committed and effective prayer warrior for His glory.

No church program, religious event, political effort, or humanitarian cause can trump the awesome power of what God can do in response to the prayers of His people. What would happen if believers and churches today followed the great people of the Bible and in Christian history and began to pray powerfully and effectively? What if we decided to

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get right with God and begin humbly seeking His face in faith for revival and spiritual awakening like they did during the first and second great awakenings? What might God do through us? Through you?

Are you ready to pray for it?

Father, I come before You and thank You for the great legacy of prayer that has come before us. I ask You to pour out Your Holy Spirit on me and Your church. Draw me into a daily, more intimate walk with You. May prayer become as natural to me as breathing, and may You work through my prayers to help bring about Your kingdom and Your will in my heart, my home, and my generation. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

Notes

1. Andrew Murray, *The Ministry of Intercessory Prayer* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1981), 106–107.
2. Howard and Geraldine Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009).