

Prevailing Prayers of Jesus

With Fervent Cries

By Donna Gaines

As I look back at almost 40 years in ministry, I remember times that God allowed me to experience His presence in tangible ways. Each time, it was when I was calling out to Him in fervent prayer. The best way I can describe those moments is that God pierced the temporal with the eternal. I knew without a doubt that I was in His Presence.

One of our earliest experiences was when our son Grant began bruising excessively when he was only 22 months old. His pediatrician said he had a dangerously low platelet count and made an appointment for tests at the Children's Hospital. One of the possible diagnoses was leukemia.

The deacons of our church came to our home, anointed Grant with oil, and fervently cried out to the Lord in prayer on his behalf. One of our deacon's wives stayed up all night praying for him.

Before sunrise the next morning, my husband, unable to sleep, opened his Bible where he had been reading the day before. The words of Exodus 14:13–14 seemed to jump off the page:

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

He wrote the verses on a blank business card and took it with us to the hospital the next day. The Lord answered our prayers. Our son did not have leukemia. He was diagnosed with

a blood disorder that he eventually outgrew. God spoke when we cried out to Him in prayer.

Years later when my husband was 42 years old, he was diagnosed with Myasthenia Gravis, an auto-immune disease that causes extreme weakness and can attack various systems in the body. He experienced severe fatigue and double vision. During testing they discovered he had a tumor on his thymus gland just below his sternum that had to be removed. He was facing surgery the next day.

That night, I knelt by the chair where I routinely met with the Lord and cried out to Him as tears coursed down my cheeks, "Lord, I need my husband. Our four children need their father."

At that moment, I became tangibly aware of His presence. He impressed these words upon my heart: "I Am. I Am your husband and your children's father."

The Lord did not promise to heal my husband, but He did promise that He was enough for whatever I faced. I would not have experienced that intimate moment with My Father if I had not turned to Him in fervent prayer.

Passionate Intensity

What does it mean to pray *fervently*?

Strong's Concordance defines *fervent* as "tense, resolute, and eager." *Merriam-Webster* defines it as "having or displaying a passionate intensity—very hot, glowing."

In the New Testament the word *fervent* is found only four times. It is used twice in relation to prayer. Luke described Jesus' fervent prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "And being in agony, He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44, nasb).

Luke also described the fervency of the prayers of the Christians in Jerusalem when Peter was miraculously released from prison: "So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God" (Acts 12:5, nasb 1995).

Both examples speak of intense, passionate, white-hot prayer!

Warfare Reality

Prayer is communing and communicating with God. It is also spiritual warfare. When we pray, we engage in a spiritual battle. Indeed, our prayers make a difference in the unseen spirit realm. Things happen when we pray that would not have happened if we had not prayed.

If we could embrace and comprehend the reality of the spirit realm and all that is at stake, we would pray more fervently and battle more intensely on behalf of people who are lost, hurting and in spiritual bondage.

Jesus is our prayer example. I encourage you to write the letter "P" in the margin of your Bible each time you read that Jesus prayed. You will be surprised and greatly encouraged and instructed by our Lord's prayer life.

Interestingly, the only thing Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them was to pray (cf. Luke 11:1). His personal prayer life was so vital and powerful that the disciples wanted to pray as He did. His example included:

- Jesus often slipped away into the wilderness to pray (Luke 5:16).
- He prayed all night before He chose His disciples (Luke 6:12).
- Jesus discerned God's will through prayer. After a long day of ministering to people, Jesus woke early to go away by Himself to pray (Mark 1:35). When His disciples

came looking for Him, they were ready to go back into the village where they had been so well received. But Jesus said, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for" (Mark 1:38). Jesus was not moved by the acceptance of man, but by the will of His Father.

- Jesus' fervent prayer life is also vividly described in Hebrews 5:7:

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death and He was heard because of His piety (nasb).

Jesus saw and understood the spirit realm. He also comprehended the goodness and power of God the Father. Consequently, Jesus prayed with fervency and tears. How much more should we?

Our spiritual enemy Satan is very real. We will not be victorious against him without prevailing prayer, which requires fervency and discipline. God has given every Christian spiritual armor for the battle (Eph. 6:10–18). We appropriate the whole armor of God for prayer: "With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (vs. 18, nasb).

God's Ways and Timing

Fervency does not mean that your prayers will always be answered according to your will. Quite often, fervent prayer is what prepares us for God's will. My husband and I have cried out to the Lord with tears and loud cries over a rebellious child, a difficult ministry transition, and other seemingly hopeless circumstances. In all these situations, the Lord met us through His Word and His Spirit in His timing.

God often uses times of fervent prayer to call us to a new area of ministry. After tutoring students in the inner city of Memphis for four years, I began crying out to the Lord on behalf of the children of our city. Memphis has one of the highest child poverty rates in the nation. As I prayed over our city, the Lord strongly imprinted on my heart: "This is your city, these are your children. What are you doing about it?"

I said out loud, "Lord, it feels absolutely overwhelming."

But I knew immediately that I was to recruit churches to adopt inner city schools and focus on literacy and the gospel to break the generational poverty cycle. Thus, the Lord birthed a non-profit—ARISE2Read.org—that seeks to help children read proficiently by the third grade while also putting an after-school Bible club on the campuses of the schools we adopt. This fall, we will be in more than 40 elementary schools in Shelby County. Our children have been averaging a three-grade-level sight word fluency increase each year!

I don't know what you are currently struggling with, but the Lord does. He knows every detail, and He has given us prayer as the primary means by which we enter the spirit realm to do battle. He welcomes us into His Presence and invites us to come and "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

White-Hot Prayer

What is your need? Ask the Lord to give you a word from His Word—and then believe and cling to it as you pray and stand on His promise. He is always at work. Our job is to believe, stand firm against the schemes of the devil, and pray fervently for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done. If we want the light of the gospel to penetrate the darkness and change our families, churches, cities, our nation, and world,

we must pray fervently.

Jesus modeled prayer for us. He has given us the vehicle of prayer through which His will is accomplished in our lives. Pray like you believe that God is not only listening but also desires to move on your behalf.

Fervency reveals our faith and dependency. It is time for us to leave apathy behind. Engage fervently in the battle with passionate, white-hot prayer—and see what God will do!

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