

Theme Bible Study

Renewed Passion and Zeal: A Plea for Fervent and Prevailing Prayer

By Cynthia Hyle Bezek

I admit that when I read Bill Elliff's article I was convicted. I can't think about our degrading culture, ineffective churches, broken families, personal struggles, and everything else he wrote about without feeling a tsunami of guilt. I do not pray about all these things—let alone pray fervently about them! In fact, even thinking very long about so much pain and brokenness numbs me.

I *want* to be ignited to pray, but instead, I feel overwhelmed. Yet, it is my assignment to write a Bible study that encourages us all to become more fervent in our prayer.

Lord, what do You want to say to me? To us?

I sensed the Lord gently reminding me that we are a body. We're not all eyes or ankles. The spleen does one job; it does not do the functions the thyroid is responsible for.

And then I realized that, just like we need each other to do Kingdom work, we also need each other to do Kingdom intercession. No one person is called to intercede for all the pressing needs of the world. The Holy Spirit, who prays for us when we don't know how to pray (see Romans 8:26–27), can also give our prayer assignments.

How can you discover your prayer assignment? Most likely it's what you are already passionate about. What stirs your emotions? What keeps you awake at night? In what corner of God's Kingdom do you invest your time and treasure?

Author and philosopher Dallas Willard once said, "Many people have found prayer impossible because they thought they should only pray for wonderful but remote needs they actually had little or no interest in or even knowledge of. Prayer simply dies from efforts to pray about 'good things' that honestly do not matter to us. The way to get to meaningful prayer for those good things is to start by praying for what we are truly interested in."

When you look at the passionate intercessors of the Bible, you don't see them covering the waterfront in prayer. They generally are praying with singular focus. Elliff and Bowman both mentioned the example of Hannah. She's a great model of someone who prayed fervently—and with singular focus. Hannah longed for a child. We don't know if she also prayed for government, backsliding neighbors, or her dying aunt. But she did pray passionately for a child.

Discussion Questions

When you think about praying fervently, how do you feel? Circle all that apply.

Eager Overwhelmed Guilty Excited Encouraged Frustrated Defeated
Motivated Passionate Inadequate Unsure Hopeful Content Numb
Other _____

If you're meeting in a group, share what you circled with your group, being careful not to compare or give advice. Then pray for one another. If you are doing this study alone, pray for yourself.

Now, read the accounts of some fervent pray-ers. Note who prayed, what their prayer focus was, and what you observe about their fervency.

2 Chronicles 20:1–12

Nehemiah 1:1–11

Psalms 59

Psalms 80

Isaiah 38:1–20

Daniel 9:1–17

Which prayer focus from the ones you just read do you most resonate with? Why?

Is there a focus not covered by these Bible passages that you are already praying fervently about or that you would like to pray more fervently about? Describe, and say why this person or subject is important to you.

Are there “good things” you feel like you *should* pray about, but you can’t muster up passion about them? What difference might it make if you knew that God spreads the burden for intercession around His body, His Church?

Action Steps

What do you sense God inviting you, maybe even *assigning* you, to pray fervently about? Read Romans 8:26–27, then ask God for the help you will need to carry out your assignment.

Finally, decide how you will intentionally follow through on this assignment. Will you pray about it during a time of regular morning or evening prayer? Might you set an alarm to remind you to pray at different times throughout the day? Could you find a prayer prompt that reminds you to pray—such as when you go up or down stairs or get a glass of water or hear someone’s phone ping? Write your intention here, and then get started!

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