

# **A Call to Prayer: God will Respond**

## *Aspects of Prayer/How to Build a Prayer Team*

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### **Video 1- Intro**

Freedom in Christ materials have shown themselves to be very helpful in the process of empowering people to seek God for change. The obvious reason for this is that they are biblically based. But perhaps there is another element in play. FIC has committed themselves to be a ministry founded on and supported by prayer. This element is what we will investigate here.

If we review the battles fought by Moses and Joshua, it is evident that the battles were won or lost by God and not by clever plans or large prepared armies. Nothing shows this is clearer than the contrast between Jericho where God brought down the walls and Ai where Joshua neglected to seek God in prayer (Joshua 6-8) and God is not with them. Paul alludes to this prayer strategy when he finishes off the classic armor of God section in Ephesians by saying "... pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints." Ephesians 6:18. The battle is real. The enemy is seasoned and crafty. He is knowledgeable and patient. He is deceptive and well-armed. But God, truth, victory, and authority are on our side. And we have the six aspects of God's spiritual armor to put as we stand in battle. But, again, the summary of this "armor of God" section focuses on prayer.

We need to pray. It is God's design. It is our connection to the work of God around us. It is our means of accessing God's desires, strategies, and strength in our own sphere of influence. It is partnering with God in His work. It is our foundation in this ministry. God has called us to be - workers with Himself. This is strikingly evident in the disciples commissioning found in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus says that He has all authority, but tells His disciples to do the work. There is no other explanation than that they are to be co-workers with Him. As it turns out, much of this work is actually prayer.

We will cover three prayer spheres: personal prayer, corporate prayer, and prayer points to consider. Following this there will be a brief discussion of prayer team formation.

### **Pause for Thought:**

Take a moment to honestly write down the current state of your prayer life. When do you pray? How often? What for? Alone or with others? Do you use a journal or other prayer helps? These notes will help you as you process through this module.

### **Personal Prayer**

As Jesus points out in John 4:24, those who worship God (prayer is worship) must do so in spirit and in truth. The goal, then, is to connect our spirit with the Spirit of God and to understand and embrace the truth. As you may know, we can have a lot of spiritual interference. Prior to my involvement in Freedom in Christ, the only way I could have a decent time of prayer was to take a blank page of paper and write down everything that came to mind. Once it was on the page, I could let my mind rest on that issue. But soon the next issue would crop up. Many times, I would write out two pages before my mind was quiet enough to pray. But even so, my prayers were

scattered. After having several Freedom Appointments, my mind has been much quieter. I still find writing things down to be a useful technique when things are not working. Neil Anderson used such a method when he was in college. He found that there were two categories: the things he needed to do, and the things God wanted to say to him. So, Neil used two separate notebooks to log these. Oh yes, and when God brought up something that needed confession and repentance, Neil was quick to address it.

### Neil Anderson: [Liberating Prayer](#)

Meditation on the Psalms is another effective entry into an attitude of prayer. This is a helpful transition into thinking God's thoughts because Scripture is the very thoughts of God expressed through human authors.

Since Scripture is actually God's thoughts expressed in words, it has God's authority behind it. As such, speaking out Scripture is a powerful means to pray. It is especially helpful when we feel under attack, powerless, or just in distress. Praying Scripture is always appropriate both when we rejoice and when in despair.

There are many forms of prayer. Each type may be important to use in the various aspects of life. In fact, we need not think a singular method must always be used. The rich variety of prayer types mirrors the rich variety of life experiences. The Psalms are often prayers. They have various topics, concerns, and structures. Richard Foster summarizes twenty-one types of prayer. He groups these into the three categories: personal transformation, intimacy with God, and prayer for ministry. For a deeper dive find the reference below.

Reference: [Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home](#), by Richard Foster  
See also [Moving Mountains](#)

Initial attempts in prayer are often mechanical and self-focused. This is not wrong. It is simply a statement of where we are at that point in our life. It can be thought of as a healthy beginning. We will grow into deeper prayer as we continue on. The experience of prayer and meeting God in prayer is a learned behavior. It needs to be practiced to be appreciated.

Martin Luther used the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as a framework. Apparently, he could spend three hours daily simply using this structure alone. The first phase of the Lord's prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" establishes both intimacy and awe. Taking these two together really helps us gain perspective on our lives, our situations, our difficulties and our joys. It is so helpful to know we are not on our own and have God as our help in time of need. It is very important to gain this perspective as it puts ourselves and our souls in alignment with reality. A lot of time can be spent in this silent worshipful place. It is very healthy to just come there and rest in God's presence, gain perspective, and receive renewal of strength for our souls. It may be helpful to read many different sections of scripture at the same time to bring balance into our worship. Alternatively, we might just really focus and meditate on a single passage. When it seems like we know all about a passage, we are actually at the threshold of deeper

learning. Patience is our friend. God can speak through most any passage. These are his words after all.

Moving to the second phrase. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" broadens the perspective and calls on God's help to be brought forth into the areas we live, work or minister. It may be appropriate to pray in an expanding circle starting from intimate relationships outward to church, community, and to larger concerns, even missions.

After this, we call on God to bring forth his power and understanding into our personal needs. "Give us this day our daily bread..." (Matthew 6:11) means we need not be shy with God. God tells us to ask. Of course, he has intimate knowledge of our situations. Next phrase (... and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors...." Matthew 6:12) states the expectation that we have made things right with others. It is really not optional since a breach in a relationship is a breach with God as well. It is important for us to realize that broken relationships are a weight we carry around. They hold us down and keep us from running the race well, Hebrews 12:1. God desires unity. The final phrase of the Lord's Prayer, "...and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..." (Matthew 6:13), is a call for God's protection in the spiritual realm. For many cultures this is very obvious. It has characteristically been less obvious for those in western cultures. But that is rapidly changing.

As we move into deeper prayer, we probably will move through the three different aspects that Richard Foster has given in his three categories. We will start with prayer mainly focused upon ourselves and our personal needs for wholeness. As we mature, we will move toward intimacy with God on a new level. Finally, we will start to see how and where God is at work in the world around us and a whole new level of compassion will arise. This is, perhaps, due to a melding of our hearts with the compassionate heart of God. Dallas Willard describes this growth process as moving from communication, to communion, to union, as we move further and further toward the heart of God.

### Dallas Willard: [Hearing God](#)

It is important to guard our time of personal prayer. So, it is vital that we guard time with God and renew our relationship with him daily. It is our fountain from which others can drink. Additional time can be used for the myriad of requests that come our way. Some people pray for these requests throughout their day. Others use a focused time to do so.

Pause for Thought:

1. What impacted you the most from this module?
2. Have you ever sat in silence with God for any length of time? What was that like?
3. What do you think about the 3 levels of prayer referred to as "personal transformation, intimacy with God, and prayer for ministry" or "moving from communication, to communion, to union"?

### Corporate Prayer

Corporate prayer is personal prayer in a group. As a leader of group prayer, it is generally necessary to follow a pattern. In that light, we will need to tell people what to expect at the beginning of the prayer time. During the prayer time simply announce the new prayer topic as

you move through them. As with personal prayer, it is helpful to use a Psalm to let the group move into an attitude of prayer.

There are many helpful patterns to use, but two common patterns are the ACTS model, and the Lord's Prayer. ACTS stands for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. As mentioned, it is helpful to use a Psalm as a springboard into aspects of adoration. During confession it is good to allow both verbal and quiet confession. It would be inappropriate to force people to confess openly if they are not ready to do that. Yet, in practice it is common for many to confess openly. It appears that people often come to prayer with a desire to speak out their confessional concerns. To focus on thanksgiving, it is helpful to simply ask people to identify what God has been doing recently and thank Him for it. Supplication comes next. There is a level of sensitivity required here. People need to be heard and prayed over. Sometimes this is a vast need which may appropriately take over the whole meeting time. Other times it is best to have people pray for their own needs because they know them most intimately and because it encourages them to meet with God directly and engage in the process of prayer. In either case, it is never wrong to have several others support the need. By doing so, people feel heard and supported in their requests and concerns. In this way all can be involved and the person who brought the need can experience the power of prayer support in a body. It is appropriate to ask for prayer requests in advance and bring them to the group. But, in my experience, it is best to hear the hearts and voices of those in the room first and only afterward move on to submitted prayer requests. Supplication prayer may be done with the concentric circles model, as previously discussed in the personal prayer section. That means that prayer would move from the concerns of the people themselves, to their spheres of influence, to their communities, their state or nation. Missionaries or other outreaches can be included at any point. If the prayer team is focused on the Community Freedom Ministry and not churchwide needs, then it is best to spend the bulk of the time focused on the CFM. It is always good to close the prayer time with a blessing. By using a blessing people have the chance to learn what blessings are, receive a blessing, and understand that the prayer time has now come to a close. Blessings can be passages of scripture, written blessings, or simply a set of statements in line with scriptural truths.

The Lord's Prayer can be used in a similar way similar to ACTS. To do this simply break it up by phrases using each phrase of the prayer as a topic. Of course, the two structures are not actually identical, but both can be helpful and good to use in groups.

When using a structure remember that the group will need to learn to use them. The group may have had very little experience using structures. So, don't get discouraged when people don't follow the pattern. Simply accept what is said and move forward in the pattern as discussed when appropriate. Over time, the prayer patterns will flow smoothly and seamlessly.

Silence may seem very foreboding when first teaching these methods, but it is a necessary part of prayer. It is often during silence that the Holy Spirit speaks most clearly to members of the group.

#### Pause For Thought

1. Have you had the opportunity to pray out loud in a group or congregation setting? If yes, how did it go?

2. Have you used any of the prayer models listed? What others do you know about and use?

### Prayer Points to Consider

How do we know we are hearing God's voice? God's voice is an expression of His mind, His being, and His character. We can expect Him to always act within these. We can "discover" what He says about Himself in Scripture.

"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." Exodus 34:6b-7

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." Isaiah 65:17

"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Luke 3:22b

When God speaks:

He is clear

He is specific

He is gentle

He brings peace

He is encouraging, not condemning.

Conviction is focused on a single event, not generalized.

There is a sense of wholeness, of goodness, but at the same time a seriousness.

### God's Voice Examples

Example 1: "You stole those shoes in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. You need to contact that person, explain what you did, ask forgiveness, and reconcile with him."

Example 2: "You need to forgive your mother for..."

Example 3: "I love you and always will."

Example 4: "You are my child and I am proud of you."

Example 5: "I need you to stay here another two years."

Example 6: "When you felt abandoned, I did not abandon you."

There will never be generalized condemnation or a spirit of depression. There will never be generalized guilt, fear or terror. There will be a calming presence, not a spirit of anxiety. When you need to make something right, you will know exactly what it is. It takes practice and care, but God is speaking today. We need to learn to hear Him.

Here are a few checks and balances to discern whether you are really hearing from God.

1. Use Scripture: God has already spoken. His words are recorded for us in Scripture. Since God does not change, the words which He spoke long ago (properly interpreted) are valid today. Check the Scriptures to see if what you heard from "God" is in line with them. God will not contradict His previous revelation.

2. Check with godly people who have heard the Word of God before. Experience is helpful. Do not neglect the work of God in others.
3. Wait to be sure it is God's voice. He will confirm it by his Spirit within you. On something big, it may be worth asking God to repeat himself or confirm in another way. Don't guess. Be sure.

God still speaks to us today and he speaks to us often. We may not hear him or realize it is him, but he speaks. God calls us into communication with him through many kinds of conversations we call prayers. God will embrace us in our attempts to commune with Him at any level. Romans 8:26

Written prayers may seem artificial and stilted, but that is not the case. Many godly people have put time and thought into organizing written prayers and they can be powerful and effective. For example, in the [Steps to Freedom](#) the inquirer uses written prayers. All who have gone through the Steps can testify that God answers written prayers. Of course, scripture itself offers prayers in both Old and New Testaments. There are many other sources of written prayers. See the prayer resources in the Freedom in Christ Bookstore for some of the many available options.

#### Building a Personal Prayer Team

It is critical to have prayer support in this ministry. Those on staff are required to build a support team. But all of us need to have prayer support. So, it is absolutely worth spending time building up a personal support structure. People you have ministered to often want to be a part of what you are doing and appreciate the ongoing relationship. So ask them. It is best to have the prayer go two ways. Pray for them and ask for prayer from them. Building a prayer team, of course, starts with personal prayer. If you have a spouse who is supportive of FIC, include him or her as well. God will build the team as we pray and are open to his call. Prayer teams often begin small with a few as 2-3 people. Be faithful and persevere. God works through small groups and large groups alike. This is God's work not ours. If he wants more people on your prayer team, He will raise them up in due time.

#### Pause For Thought

1. Share with the group a time when you were absolutely convinced you were hearing from God. What made it so convincing? Did any of the three safeguards (checks and balances) mentioned (Scripture, going to wise, godly people or waiting) help you gain assurance?
2. Was there anything about this module that surprised you?
3. How can you take the first steps to begin building your own prayer support team for your CFM Ministry?