

WHEN YOU PRAY...

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. 32 And the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. And not one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own. But they had all things common. 33 And the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power. And great grace was on them all.

Matthew 6:5 And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites...6 But you, when you pray, enter into your room. And shutting your door, pray to your Father in secret...7 But when you pray, do not babble vain words, as the nations...9 Therefore pray in this way:

This morning, I want to talk to you on the subject matter **WHEN YOU PRAY...** Yes, it is clear from the scriptures that there is a natural expectation for every believer to pray.

In other words, it is unnatural for a disciple of Jesus not to pray – let me make a bold, controversial and yet true statement: Anyone who despises and refuses to pray is yet to encounter the Jesus of the Bible.

Prayer is simply a two-way communication between you and Jesus. You cannot be someone's student if you do not communicate with your teacher.

Prayer changes everything – you can call it the game changer. When you pray something happens and when you don't pray nothing happens.

The early church got it when they devoted themselves to pray. Something happened to them. When you pray, something happens in you, to you and through you.

We will be praying and fasting for the coming 5 days and I am here to spur you on, to challenge you and to inspire you through the scriptures to become a prayerful person. Why should you pray?

1. When you pray, heaven invades earth

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken.

- There are very few things that attract God like prayer does. Prayer is simply having conversation with God.
- In the same way that relationships in the natural are built one conversation at a time, your intimacy with God is also built one prayer at a time.
- Prayer opens up for the invasion of heaven on earth – it creates a converging point where the two intersect (Moses prayed and heaven came down, Solomon prayed and the place was

WHEN YOU PRAY...

filled by God's glory, Peter was praying and heaven opened above him, the church prayed and Peter was rescued from prison).

- Everytime a place is saturated with prayer; heavenly activities are observed – the absence of prayer results in the absence of heavenly manifestations.

Matthew 6:9 Therefore pray in this way: Our Father, who is in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

- Prayer is a choice you make – that is why you have so many people in trouble who do not pray; it's a matter of choice. But when you choose to pray, heaven response.

Jeremiah 29:12-14 The Message (MSG)

12 "When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen. "When you come looking for me, you'll find me. "Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, I'll make sure you won't be disappointed."

- The more you talk to your friend, sharing your deepest desires the deeper the relationship becomes.

2. When you pray, you receive great empowerment

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness..

- It sounds like a cliché but in the absence of prayer, a believer is weak and frail.
- When they had prayed, the Holy Spirit came down in power and gave them boldness. You need to know the context in order to appreciate the importance of this occasion.
- They had just come from being persecute and threatened by the religious leaders – they needed some empowerment in order to go forward.
- Everyone needs empowerment, courage and strength when going through a difficult time. When you pray, you receive strength to overcome your challenges.
- The act of prayer transmits God's strength into your weakness. There is a transference of strength into you.
- Prayer is likened to waiting on God - *Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*
- Jesus told the disciples to pray so as not to enter into temptation - *Luke 22:46 ..."pray, lest you enter into temptation.*
- Time spent in prayer makes you alert; makes your spiritual senses more alert and sensitive – when you are prayed up, you are able to withstand temptation when it comes your way.

WHEN YOU PRAY...

1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

- According to Jude, praying builds you up, or edifies you. Prayer is a spiritual exercise; the more you do it the stronger you get spiritually.

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

- Your battles are predominantly spiritual and as such you need to be strong in the spirit in order to win them.
- Prayer is one of your spiritual weapons that the enemy is afraid of – that is why he has caused the church to slip up regarding prayer (people attend braais in their numbers, baby showers in their numbers, social gatherings in their numbers, but no one pitches up for prayer)

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world's rulers, of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Therefore take to yourselves the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Therefore stand, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness 15 and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. 16 Above all, take the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching to this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

3. When you pray, your heart is aligned with God's purposes

Acts 4: 32 And the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. And not one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own. But they had all things common.

- Naturally, the heart of a man is selfish and self-seeking and in that regard in its unregenerated form, it is hostile towards God.
- When you pray, your heart is transformed – you die to self and become alive to the heart bit of God.
- Prayer is like an altar of sacrifice where you lay down your life as a sacrifice unto God.

WHEN YOU PRAY...

- When the early church prayed, they took on the heart of God for each other – *they became of one heart and soul. And not one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own*
- A praying church is selfless and united in heart and soul.
- Prayer does not change the mind of God, but it changes you by aligning you with His will.
- We usually like to say prayer changes things, but the most important aspect of prayer is the way it changes you.
- When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, a portion of His prayer was *Yet not My will, but Yours be done*
- This process of realignment results in a lot of breaking, a lot of bruised egos, a lot of tears being shed.
- A story in the bible that brings this to light is the story of Jacob when he was about to meet his brother Esau in Genesis 32.

Genesis 32:24 And Jacob was left alone. And a Man wrestled there with him until the breaking of the day. 25 And when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh. And the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with Him. 26 And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go except You bless me. 27 And He said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. 28 And He said, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for like a prince you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed.

- The angel broke Jacob's pelvis – it changed his walk forever. The pelvis is one of the most important joints for lifting weights. It was his place of natural strength that was broken by the Lord.
- When God was done with Jacob, he approached the impending danger with total trust in God – his flesh was completely incapacitated.

Genesis 32:31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he limped upon his thigh.

- There is a contestation in our bodies between the life of the flesh and the life of the spirit – whoever wins that battle will ultimately control your life.
- Prayer allows us to crucify the flesh – it is in the time of prayer that our fleshly tendencies are exposed.
- When we co-operate with the Lord in our time of prayer, the flesh is crucified in the process.