

## LeaderLesson 16: A Prayer for the Church

Bob Lowman, Jr.

May 23, 2013

Teaching and encouraging the practice of prayer has become passion for me. We simply must pray in ways we have not before if we really want to see God do a new work in us and around us.

Most Christians agree that prayer is a priority for us. But what are we doing about it? We say we believe we are supposed to pray, but how much are we practicing? How much are we really depending on God, and listening for what He has to say to us? As any church faces the future, prayer should be the first discipline we pursue and practice as Christians.

But what are the prayer priorities you have as a church? How are you praying specifically in these days? What do you ask for when you talk with God? What does He want you to ask of Him?

We get a glimpse of the kind of praying we need to practice from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesian church. Here is what he said, and prayed, in Ephesians 1:15-23 -

*<sup>15</sup>This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup>I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup>I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. <sup>18</sup>I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength. <sup>20</sup>He demonstrated this power in the Messiah by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens — <sup>21</sup>far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And He put everything under His feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way. (HCSB)*

Paul was excited about the church at Ephesus. He saw with gratitude what God had started with the Ephesians. Paul gave thanks for the faith and love of the Christians at Ephesus. They had started right; now, Paul prays that they would continue on the right path.

Because of their faith and love, Paul gave thanks and prayed fervently. Note that he prayed and kept praying, he asked and kept asking that the church. This is on-going intercession on behalf of the church. He prayed that they would be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation for 4 specific reasons.

Paul prayed that the Christians would develop the relationships they needed with God so that they could see the wonderful possibilities before them and experience the power of the Holy Spirit at work while they learned to follow Jesus as Lord of all.

### **These are the four prayers for the church:**

- 1. To develop the relationship;**
- 2. To see the possibilities;**
- 3. To experience the power;**
- 4. To follow Jesus as Lord.**

Wherever people believe in Jesus and unite together as a body of believers, these are the prayer priorities that are needed. These are what Christians need to pray for one another. How are we doing in our praying, if these are the priorities we need?

### **★First Prayer for the Church: TO DEVELOP THE RELATIONSHIP.**

Paul prayed that the Christians would take the time needed to develop the relationships necessary to live a fruitful and blessed Christian life. In verse 17, Paul prayed that they would “know Him better” (NIV); that they would have a “deep and intimate knowledge of Him” (Amplified).

My relationship with God is what makes life possible for me. This is true for us as individuals and as a church. Therefore, developing our relationships with God through prayer is top priority, period.

The primary focus of the church, no matter what we've thought before, is not about religion. It's not about denomination. It's not about tradition. It's not about our preferences which drive how we do what we do. Church is about Jesus Christ. Church is all about our relationships with God in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. If anything else becomes primary focus for us, we are no longer living or serving as the church Jesus said He would build.

We don't have a church unless actual relationships with God in the name of His Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit form the core of who the church is. This is one reason why there are so many problems in the church in North America today - too many people who say they are part of the church do not have a personal relationship with God.

This is similar to marriage. Marriage is not about what's for supper, not about where we're going on vacation, not about what house we'll live in, not about how many children we'll have. It's about a relationship of love between a man and a woman. Everything else flows from that love relationship, till death alone parts us.

Do we ever struggle with knowing what God's will is in a particular situation? Think about it: the only way we can discern God's will for us is to have relationships with Him that makes such knowledge possible. So if I'm having a hard time figuring out what God wants me to do in a particular situation, I have to check to see how strong my relationship with Him is at that point in time.

Too many Christians neglect their relationships with God and act like nothing is wrong. Too many of us as church leaders neglect our relationships with God and act like nothing is wrong. Please pray that you and every person who comes to your church will develop a deep and growing relationship with God.

### **★Second Prayer for the Church: TO SEE THE POSSIBILITIES.**

To have a relationship with Almighty God opens the door to all of the blessings available to the believer. And, the possibilities are infinite!

Paul prayed that we would see the possibilities before us in Christ! In verse 18, Paul prayed that the Christians would "know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints."

Have you seen with the eyes of faith the riches of God's glorious inheritance for you? Peterson paraphrases that verse: "to grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life He has for Christians." Pause and let your imagination go as you realize this truth: What God can do is available to you! Tell a fellow Christian: What God can do is available to you. Say to your church family: What God can do is available to you.

But hear a warning: there are no possibilities if you do not have a relationship with God in Christ. Without the relationship, there are no possibilities. With the relationship, the possibilities are infinite!

Let this glorious truth build your faith! Trust in the God who has a glorious inheritance ready for you today.

### **★Third Prayer for the Church: TO EXPERIENCE THE POWER.**

Paul prayed that the church would see the possibilities and experience the power necessary to achieve those possibilities. In verse 19, he prayed that the church would "know the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe." The Amplified Bible says it is "the immeasurable, unlimited, surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe."

That, friends, is God-sized power! This power is the same as the power which raised Jesus from dead, according to verse 20, and it is available to us as individuals and as the church.

Put the second priority and the third priority together: as we know God's possibilities and experience His power, we take part in God's redemptive plan for the world, starting in our own neighborhood. This is so much bigger than us. It's not just about us and our church - this is part of God's redemption of all who believe.

Paul prayed that we would know this power. Question is, do we? Do you know the power of God at work in your life? He has made it available to those who have relationships with Him.

Here's another warning: this power is available only to those who know and hope toward God's possibilities for us, not our own. It's easy to crave God's power to do what we want to do. It's more of a challenge to desire His power so that He can accomplish His plans through us. That leads us to the fourth priority in prayer.

#### ★**Fourth Prayer for Church: TO FOLLOW JESUS AS LORD.**

Paul's prayer changes tone in verse 22. He moves from asking God to help the church to telling the church through prayer the truth about Jesus. In verses 22-23, Paul says that God put everything under Jesus' feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church, which is His body.

Jesus is our Head. Jesus is in charge. Pray that we will show we know this truth by following Him as Lord. One of the quotations that comes to my mind often is this: Jesus is Lord of all. If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all. If He is Lord of us, we see what He sees, we go where He leads, we think what He thinks, we do as He commands.

Yes, this is difficult for people like us who want to do what we want to do. Not only difficult, it's impossible apart from God's power at work in us. We want our way. We crave our things. Only God's redeeming power at work within can cause us to follow Jesus as we ought.

Please pray that we will submit to the Lord Christ and follow Him faithfully. Pray this for yourself, pray this for your church family.

Yes, Paul prayed as we need to pray. We need to pray that we as Christians will develop the relationships we need with God so that we can see the wonderful possibilities before us and experience the power of the Holy Spirit at work while we learn to follow Jesus as Lord of all.

You've probably caught on by now that all of these prayer priorities are interconnected. They are linked with one another.

Without the relationships we need, we can't see the possibilities with God.

Without the possibilities, there is no reason for the power of God.

Without the power of God at work, we cannot follow Jesus as Lord.

So, church, it's time to pray. Pray that you will rise to be the church God made you to be:  
developing the relationships you need with God,  
so that you can see the supernatural possibilities before you, and  
experience the amazing, resurrection power of God at work  
while you follow Jesus Christ as the sovereign Lord of all.

Remember what God can do. Miracles are possible when we take Him at His Word and ask Him to work.

## Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Your life so that we could know life abundant and eternal. Help us as Your people to grow in our relationships with You. Through those relationships, allow us to see the possibilities of what You want to do in and through us, both as individuals and as a church. Make us bold and loving with Your power so that we can be witnesses in word and action to those around us, following You and Your example day by day. May we bring You glory and our community good because we have decided to follow Jesus. In Your name and for Your fame we pray. Amen.*

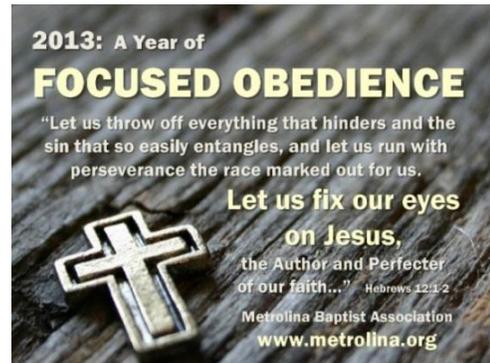
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### **Metrolina Baptist Association**

328 West Carson Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28203

[www.metrolina.org](http://www.metrolina.org) / 704.375.1197

Dr. Bob Lowman, Jr., Executive Director



# A W : A K E N

## **A DAY OF UNITED PRAYER:**

**Thursday, May 30, 2013**

with Chris Schofield & John Franklin

### ➤ **Pastors' & Leaders' Prayer Retreat**

**9:30 am-12:30 pm** (with lunch following)

**Metrolina Baptist Building**

328 West Carson Blvd, Charlotte

**For all pastors and ministry staff –**

*Please call 704.375.1197 or email [pray@metrolina.org](mailto:pray@metrolina.org) to sign up.*

### ➤ **Awaken Prayer Rally**

**7:00 - 8:30 pm**

**Mulberry Baptist Church**

6450 Tuckaseegee Road, Charlotte

**For churches in Metrolina & Greater Gaston Associations, and all who will join with us in prayer for revival and awakening...for such a time as this.**

**The retreat and the rally will be facilitated by two outstanding leaders in prayer:**

**Chris Schofield, Director, Office of Prayer, Baptist State Convention of NC**

**John Franklin, John Franklin Ministries, Kentucky**

Co-sponsored by Metrolina Baptist Association and the Office of Prayer, Baptist State Convention of NC, in partnership with the Greater Gaston Baptist Association. For more information or to sign up for the Pastors' & Leaders' Prayer Retreat, call 704.375.1197 or email [pray@metrolina.org](mailto:pray@metrolina.org).

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