



What Makes Prayer EFFECTIVE

Defining A Breakthrough-Prayer

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Prayer as a Kingdom Mystery

Prayer is a mystery of the kingdom that the Lord is unveiling afresh to His ecclesia in our day, bringing deeper insight and understanding. Through prayer, our Lord Jesus Christ continues to reveal the Father's heart, enabling us to know Him more deeply and discern His prophetic intentions for the earth. This revelation gives us clearer access to the Father's heart, helps us understand His purposes, and equips us to establish His desire for creation, particularly in days when darkness is veiling human hearts.

For this reason, the ministry of prayer can never be reduced to a fixed body of knowledge or a single understanding. To know God and His ways is to become acquainted with the spirit of prayer and intercession. The Lord is revealing Himself to us in this season as never before, yet the pathway to that knowledge is found in a heart entwined with Him in the place of prayer.

The advancement of the church in the twenty-first century requires a different spiritual value system, carried by men and women who have been called into the reality of the ascended life in the place of prayer. To come to know God, His will and His ways is to know how to establish His purpose on earth. We are in a day that needs more than theological or doctrinal knowledge. We need an experience born from the dealings of God in the place of prayer, because that experience gives us the anchor, the ability and the boldness to stand with confidence as we establish the kingdom of God within a Babylonian system.

The experience we need is the kind revealed to John on the island of Patmos. John had been banished to Patmos, yet there he was called to behold the glory of God from a different dimension.

I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. (Revelation 1:9-10)

That encounter strengthened John to stand and continue in what he had been assigned, and it gave him the courage to face the trials, the persecution and the tribulation that came his way. Every believer needs this experience. Each of us must come to the place where we are caught up in the Spirit, and whatever we see or come to know there must agree and align with what is written. Revelation confirms experience, and experience confirms revelation. When we speak of experience, then, we mean nothing outside biblical truth; we mean an encounter confirmed by the reality and the revelation of Christ.

Exile confined John's body to an island, yet it could not confine what he saw in the Spirit. In the same way, the Lord is calling us into a different understanding of prayer, a higher understanding, a more ascended revelation and experience of its ministry, and this is what we define as breakthrough prayer. Breakthrough prayer takes us beyond our own needs, our selfish desires and our ambitions into the realm where we break through the limitations that hindered past generations from fulfilling God's prophetic intentions in the earth.

The Breakthrough We Are Seeking

Every limitation that has held a generation back takes root in the flesh, and so breakthrough begins there. As we break through the limitations of the flesh, we come into the place of eternity, where newness, wholeness, oneness and rest are found. Many of us have learned to measure breakthrough by what we receive: the door that opens, the provision that arrives, the problem that goes away. The breakthrough God has in view is His own presence, a place of satisfaction and fulfillment where our spirit and soul long for Him more than for our daily food.

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. (Psalm 42:1)

Jesus once faced a crowd that came back to Him because He had fed them the day before. He told them, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life," and then declared, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:27, 35). Much of our spirituality has drifted toward the same search for bread, until our walk with God has become a means of survival. Eternal does not describe a distance of time, as though the things of God belong only to a far future. It describes what lives forever, what is present and continuous and never fades. Eternity is now, which makes the call to seek what is eternal a call for today.

So, we have to ask ourselves what has been driving us of late. What have we been seeking? What has captured our minds, and what has been distracting us? People everywhere are searching for secrets, methods and mechanisms that will help them function better and live more effectively, turning again to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Without His presence those efforts are futile. Gifts, skill and knowledge are all good, yet without the presence of God we toil all night and watch what we have built collapse before our eyes, because the spirit of the age can pull down anything not built on Christ the rock. His presence gives us stability and hope, and the courage to keep advancing toward His intention.

Wisdom Is a Person

When God engages your life, what will you ask Him for? Solomon faced that question on the night God said to him, "Ask what I should give you" (1 Kings 3:5). He was about to take up the leadership of a nation, and the natural and religious mind in his place would have asked for victory over its enemies. Solomon asked for wisdom.

Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil. (1 Kings 3:9)

Solomon was asking for more than information or data, and more than the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. He was asking for the revelation of Christ in his life, in his dealings and in his leadership, because wisdom is a person. Paul tells us that Christ Jesus "became for us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30), so we cannot have the wisdom of God without the presence of God. We need that wisdom to know how to go out and come in, and to deal with the complexities of the twenty-first century. If we are to take the nations, we need the fullness of the sevenfold Spirit of God, growing from thirtyfold to sixtyfold and on into fullness.

The Lord is calling us to leave the shallow. In the middle of distraction, of attack and of the pressing needs of the day, we must go on to be with Him. Being with the Lord does not mean disengaging from the earth; to be with Him is to be able to rule effectively on the earth, because He has raised us up and "seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). From that place of advantage we begin to understand what prayer is.

What Prayer Is

Prayer Is Knowing the Mind of the Father

Prayer means to know the mind of the Father and the ways of the Lord. Before it is anything else, prayer is inquiry. We come asking what God has in mind for this day, for this situation, for the condition and circumstance we find ourselves in, instead of presenting what we think we need. Prayer means communing with God and consulting with the Spirit of the living God, sitting with Him as our counsellor before we move. The Spirit already holds what we need to know, for "God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). When you come to pray, then, the first question you bring is what the Father is saying about the day in front of you.

Prayer Is a Position of Advantage

Prayer positions us at a place of advantage, where we see what others do not see and hear what they are not hearing. In prayer we come to the Lord to know Him, hear Him and see Him, and to participate in the activity around the throne. When we pray, we begin to interact with a divine order of life that the earth realm cannot understand. John, still in exile on Patmos, received this invitation when a door stood open in heaven and a voice said to him, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this" (Revelation 4:1).

Prayer Is Rest, Trust and Surrender

Prayer has no room for anxiety. Paul writes, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). Prayer is coming to rest, coming to trust, coming to surrender and submit to the wisdom of God. It means allowing the cross to press upon us until the flesh is silenced and the voice of the Lord grows clearer. In prayer the will of God and the voice of the Lord are amplified to us, until every part of our spirit and every inner faculty is awakened to Him.

Prayer Is Divine Dialogue

Prayer is divine communication, the highest level of communication there is, because in it we speak with our heavenly Father. We talk to Him and He talks back to us. Prayer is a dialogue in which, as we speak, He answers expressly and shows us things.

Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. (Jeremiah 33:3)

Look at those who served God in Scripture and you will find that none of them did anything for Him until His character, His nature and His values had been built into them through the architecture of prayer.

Prayer Is Becoming Like the Father

Prayer reaches far beyond requesting material things, since it brings us into the ascended reality of the Father, out of the earth realm and into the throne realm, where we hear, where we see, and where we become heavenly. In prayer we leave the earthly order and become part of the heavenly order, so that we become the heavenly man. This describes a state of life rather than a gender. It reaches back to the moment God breathed the breath of life into humanity, having said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

Prayer draws us back to that place, where we become more like our heavenly Father. It is the point and the place where we become one with Christ and the two become one, for "anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Prayer Is Divine Agreement and Execution

Prayer is a place of divine agreement with heavenly things, and because of that agreement we can stand on earth to make decrees and execute His will and purpose. Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). The kingdom of God cannot be manifested in your earth until you have embraced the nature of the heavenly order, which comes primarily through prayer. When we pray, we hear and we see, and the words that come out of us have been refined by the fullness of the Spirit. What we articulate becomes what the Father desires, and whatever we ask according to His will becomes established, since "if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14). Prayer carries into the earthly realm what has been revealed from the heavenly dimension.

The apostles understood this when they said, "We, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word" (Acts 6:4). Prayer and the word belong together. We cannot pray with authority until He has given us the word to articulate: the word of life, the word of hope, the word that executes the intentions of the Father wherever His mind has been revealed.

Prayer Is a Means and a Source

Prayer is a means to an end, and the end is knowing Him, becoming like Him and carrying out His will on the earth. It is also the place where we source our wisdom and our knowledge. There is an intelligence we receive in prayer to fix things, create things, build things and engineer things in the earthly realm. Daniel knew where he sourced his answers to the complex challenges of Babylon, confessing that God "reveals deep and hidden things" (Daniel 2:22). Moses knew where he sourced his, and he built the tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain (Exodus 25:40).

Prayer That Heaven Backs

Recently I heard someone mock "all these Christians who say prayer solves everything." The criticism exposes something true, because much of what the church has proclaimed about prayer has been misrepresented, and we have entered a season in which the world is challenging those claims. Men of God, prophets and apostles are being challenged.

Those raising the challenge are not right either, and the answer is not to pray less. Those of us who understand what prayer is will keep doing what needs to be done, because prayer remains the answer to every problem in the earthly realm in this sense: it is where the intelligence to solve those problems is received.

The difference lies in knowing the God we pray to. Many who claim to pray do not know Him, and so they cannot represent Him. Like the seven sons of Sceva, many will be exposed in these last days. When those men tried to cast out an evil spirit in the name of the Jesus whom Paul proclaimed, the spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" (Acts 19:15), and they fled from the house naked and wounded. In our day falsehood is being challenged by the church and by the world itself.

There is a prayer heaven backs, and there is a prayer heaven does not know because it flows only from the hearts of men. Where are you living your spirituality from? What confidence defines the things you say, and where does your boldness come from? You can shake yourself and stir yourself, yet if the Lord of heaven does not back you, the fire will not fall. We are being brought again to Mount Carmel, where Elijah declared that "the god who answers by fire is indeed God" (1 Kings 18:24), and God is separating the true prophet from the false. Those who know their God can speak as Elisha did when he announced that by the same time the next day the famine in Samaria would be broken, and the officer who scoffed at his word saw it fulfilled (2 Kings 7:1-2, 17).

But the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him. (Daniel 11:32, NLT)

Knowing God comes as He reveals Himself, and information cannot produce it. Artificial intelligence will not help you know God. It may give you insight, theory and theology, which have their place, yet knowing Him requires a divine intelligence and a path He opens for you to walk. That path is lonely, and it brings your flesh and your own agenda to an end. We cannot stumble into the things of the Spirit; we have to be deliberate, saying with Paul, "this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" (Philippians 3:13). There are things you will leave behind and things you will forget, truths you will have to buy, and a mindset you will have to cultivate along the way. To know Him you will have to surrender to the ways of His Spirit, which often look foolish to people.

There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death. (Proverbs 14:12)

Many are walking the road Babylon has built. It looks wide, well constructed and beautiful, and the natural mind assumes that whatever looks palatable must be the right path. Go and check the word of God. The path to Zion holds no appeal for the fallen, sensual mind, and whoever walks in the wisdom of God must be willing to look foolish.

The Valley of Weeping

As the road toward God narrows, our motives need constant probing. Jesus asked those who followed Him, "What are you looking for?" (John 1:38), and we have to ask ourselves the same. What is your ultimate goal? Why are you living? Why do you want to succeed, and why do you want to prosper? Honest questions allow us to shed whatever would hinder the climb, including things that look good, so that we can travel light and go further. The journey often begins on a plain before it becomes a climb, and nobody arrives at the mountain of God without determination.

Psalm 84 describes the heart of such a pilgrim.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. (Psalm 84:1-2)

When your soul begins to faint for the things of God, you have been awakened. The psalmist's heart and flesh cry out for the living God more than for another answered request, another healing or another measure of prosperity. Those things matter, yet they are not the ultimate. "Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise" (Psalm 84:4). The blessing rests on those who dwell and abide, while those who only come and go miss it.

The more we dwell in His house, the more we become like Him, see His ways, know Him and reflect Him. Those who dwell keep praising through trouble, persecution and famine, because their eyes are fixed on Him who sits on the throne, and the challenges lose their power over them. Your whole engagement with life shifts once your focus has been captured by Him.

The psalm continues: "Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs" (Psalm 84:5-6). Baca means weeping, a place of bitterness. We might expect people whose strength is in God and whose hearts are set on Zion to be spared that valley, and much of our theology in the body of Christ assumes exactly that, teaching that a heart set on the Lord is free from problems and challenges. Jesus said otherwise: "In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!" (John 16:33). As long as we live in this world we will pass through bitter places, and suffering itself becomes a ministry. John was caught up in the Spirit while he shared in the persecution and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, and his island of exile became the place where heaven opened.

With God in our lives we scale through. David could walk through the darkest valley and fear no evil because, as he said to the Lord, "you are with me" (Psalm 23:4). When He is with you, you can pass through high waters and come out on the other side, and this is what breakthrough means. Many want breakthrough while refusing the cross, refusing pain, rejection and every hardship, though there is no breakthrough without passing through the valley of weeping. Heaven is correcting our theology. Our doctrine must be sound, because doctrine is given to realign our thinking, our perspective and our understanding of the things of the Spirit.

Going through a challenge is not the problem. The problem is the negativity we bring to it, and the conclusion that God has forsaken us because we are passing through famine, when He has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Some churches make the journey harder by attributing every difficulty to the devil and prescribing endless rounds of prayer and fasting, when the Lord may be using affliction to get our attention. Affliction, tribulation and suffering are tools in His hand. They do not determine our end, because He determines it; He is the end, the One we are becoming.

If you are weary, remember the angel who came to Elijah under the broom tree and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you" (1 Kings 19:7). This is no time to die, to give up or to relinquish your position. If you are tired, tell the Lord you are tired, sit down and let Him feed you and renew your strength. Those who pass through the valley of weeping make it a place of springs, and the pilgrim who keeps that attitude finds the bitter season turning into one of refreshing, renewal and blooming.

The Lesson at the Breakfast Table

God speaks to us through the ordinary things of daily life. We often expect His voice to come from a pulpit or from something spectacular, yet some of the most powerful revelations I have received came through serving people, cleaning, and doing what others would not do. The ways of God are hidden in the ordinary, domestic realities of our lives.

One morning I asked Zadok, my five-year-old, whether he wanted porridge, and he said yes. I made him cocoa oats and set them before him, and he refused them. I tried to persuade him to eat even a little, but he had made up his mind. I grew agitated, looking at this five-year-old and wondering whether he meant to exert his authority over his father, and I was about to make him eat. While I was thinking it, the Spirit of the Lord began to speak to me. I had two options. I could force it on him, and he would eat, though forcing him would not mean I had won him; leadership expressed by imposing yourself is control. Or I could allow the Lord to work.

So I prayed right there. "Lord, Zadok said he wanted this, and now he doesn't, and You know why. I hear what You are saying to me. I have the power and the authority to make him eat, but doing that will not help him, and it will not help me. So I surrender my will to You and I bring him before You." The moment had moved beyond porridge; the Lord was teaching me what leadership and fatherhood are. My son was born innocent and is now discovering that he has choices, and like every fallen human nature, his choices want to please him first. How often have we placed our own choice over the will of God? I prayed for him to understand and to learn, and I bound his mind and my own mind to the mind of the Lord. When a voice asked whether I was losing authority over my child and my home, the answer was clear. I was learning to surrender my authority to the Lord so that He could guide me in how to exercise it.

The Lord is revealing Himself as Father in this season, and His fatherhood carries no manipulation and no control. Control is witchcraft. How many things do we believe we received from the Father when in truth we forced His hand? Israel demanded of Samuel, "Appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). God's desire was to be their King and to make them a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, and He told Samuel, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). Their insecurity discarded what the Father wanted for them. The same insecurity surfaces whenever the size of a building becomes the measure of a church's relevance, though the early church met from house to house. The question to ask of every structure we build is whether the presence of God is in it.

Nothing you build with your own strength will last. Your business, your home and your marriage cannot be sustained by force of will, however strong you are, and in time what you hold together by force will collapse. So we lay our strength on the altar, the fat of our lives, our intelligence and everything we have gathered that we think can help us, and we offer them to the Lord as a burnt offering so that His strength, His wisdom and His intelligence can rest on us. This is how we break through. We yield to Him, surrender to Him, submit to Him, and ask Him to teach us to obey His voice. It is a difficult thing to learn, and once you take hold of it, it becomes the most beautiful thing.

The enemy will say, "Don't let your child ride over you. Force your way. Exert your strength." That is Babylon speaking. When it is time to exert strength, the Lord will tell you. The battle of the Lord cannot be won in Saul's armour, which stands in the story of David as a picture of the flesh and its resources. David put it on, tried to walk, and took it off again, saying, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them" (1 Samuel 17:39).

Waiting Patiently

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. (Psalm 40:1-3)

David waited patiently. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit and a mark of character, and it has become a luxury in a generation that wants everything quick and immediate. Many of us want to see reformation without having embodied the character of reformation, and the Lord is bringing us to the place of character formation, where patience is allowed to perfect its work in us.

This is the posture from which we pray. We wait patiently on Him, trust in Him and hope in Him, knowing that when we do, He turns to us, hears our cry, lifts us out of the slippery path and sets our feet on the rock. When the walls collapse around us, we will stand. When the wind blows, the flood rises and the rain falls, our house will stand, because it is built on Christ the solid rock.