



Intercessors for New Zealand

~ PRAY FOR THE NATION ~ *INOI MO TE MOTU* ~

PO Box 3399, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

FEBRUARY 2012

"I delight to do Your will, O my God!" – Psalm 40:8

Prayer & God's Will

At the beginning of World War II, in his 1939 Christmas Day message, King George VI quoted from Minnie Haskins' poem, called "God Knows":

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."
And he replied:
"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night ...

In 1854, William Holman Hunt painted a very famous picture called **Jesus, the Light of the World** where Jesus is standing outside a house at night, with a lamp in His hand, knocking at the door of a house which is in a very sad state and need of repair. This picture is based on what John wrote in Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with Me." The Greek word for "sup" means to eat, dine, fellowship, talk, discuss, converse. It is a picture of "spiritual communion between Christ and the faithful believer"; not just, "Hi, how are you?" – and then not waiting for an answer! Jesus wants to "sup" with us! Will we let Him?

Prayer is **seeking God's will** and **seeking God's help to do His will**. It is far more than just asking for what we want!

Notice how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what He was about to face; three times He prayed "Not My will, but Yours be done" (Matthew 26:36-44). Also, in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray: "May Your Kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10)

This implies that we should pray ...

- Not necessarily according to my will or desire
- Not necessarily what I think is best, with my limited human wisdom
- Not necessarily how I see things from my small, narrow, self-centred, human point of view (limited in time and place), **BUT ...**
- What God wants
- As He sees it from a divine, timeless, universal point of view (considering everyone concerned – not just "me and my little world, right now!")

Isaiah 55:8-9 May the Lord put *His* thoughts, words, will and ways into our heart and mind, spirit and soul, and on our lips, as we pray and serve Him!

- "Faith comes from hearing" the **word and will of God** (Rom. 10:17)
- To pray in faith is to pray, knowing God's will and according to God's will.
- **Then** we act and obey God's will! (Mental assent to God's will is not enough – we must act on it as God leads us)

The problem with Adam was that God told Adam His will and *Adam didn't do it!*

Compare this with Jesus, whose aim was not to change God's will, but to find it and do it! (John 4:34; 5:19-20, 30; 8:28)

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" and all will be well for us (Matthew 6:33)

Pray for ears that hear what God is saying; and a heart that is willing to obey Him.

Pray the prayer of young Samuel: "Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening!" – though he was reluctant to tell Eli what the Lord had told him! – and then pray for the ability to do all He asks (1 Samuel 3)

Finally, as God (through Paul) exhorts us ...

"Be led by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:25)

"Walk in the Spirit" (Romans 8:4)

God bless you as you walk with Him through this year – no matter what it might bring. He is with us; He will guide us and uphold us at all times.



James (Part 4)

How to be content in God

New Age teaching is full of ways to find inner peace, health, contentment, fulfilment, happiness, prosperity, security, etc – but it is devoid of the One True God Who can bring these things about in the right way!

James tells us how we can find true contentment and fulfilment in God! It is summed up in six words in James 4:7 “Submit to God ... resist the devil”. First the positive – “Submit to God”, then the negative – “resist the devil”.

If we would truly do this, we would find all the inner peace and joy the human heart could long for.

“I delight to do Your will, O my God ...”, the Psalmist said in Psalm 40:8.

“His commandments are not burdensome”, John echoes (1 John 5:3).

Submission (surrender) to the Lord and His will is the most sensible thing that anyone can do, because God knows best! He loves us and wants the best for us. He knows what is best, and has the power to bring it about!

The problem 4:1-10

Wrong desires, greed, covetousness, selfishness, wrong ambition, wrong motives, worldliness! If we want friendship with God, then we need to die to these things! Is it worth it? **YES!** “Godliness, with contentment, is great gain”, Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:6).

God longs to give us good things (Matt. 7:11; Luke 11:13, James 1:5). God’s desire is to fellowship with us. He wants to be our God and for us to be His people (v.5; 2 Cor. 6:14 to 7:1). God’s desire is to pour out His grace into our hearts (v.6). God’s desire is to draw near to us (v.8).

But before this can happen, we need to come to Him in true repentance. We need clean hands and a pure heart (v.8; Ps. 24:3-6). When we realise our own unrighteousness, when we weep and mourn over our sins, when we humble ourselves before God in true repentance, then forgiveness, cleansing and peace will come. God will exalt us - lifting us up out of our sin to sit with Him in heavenly places (v.9-10; 2 Cor. 7:8-11).

Judging one another 4:11-12 (cf. Matthew 7:1-5)

It is the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin (John 16:7-11). He does this primarily through the Word of God and through our conscience.

He may use us to show another Christian their error (James 5:19-20) but:

- (a) we must be sure that we are right with God before we try to correct someone else!
- (b) it must be done in the right spirit, with love, gentleness, humility, compassion and wisdom.

It is not our job to call down fire from Heaven (Luke 9:51-55).

If, and only if, we can help someone in the right spirit, then, as the Lord leads, we may do so. But remember that “man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Also, our knowledge is very partial and it is very easy to misjudge a person or situation (cf. marriage counselling – hearing only one side of the story, even if everything they say is true!)

The brevity of life 4:13-17

Life passes very quickly. Therefore: get to know God, learn His Word (memorise it, study it, live it). Find your calling and place in God's Kingdom. Love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Worship Him. Serve Him. Live every day for Him and His glory. Make every moment count for His Kingdom.

We should so live that if today was our last day on earth it would all have been worthwhile and we would have done all that God required of us.

Let us live with eternity in our hearts and minds. Like Abraham, we “look forward to a city which has foundations (a permanent one!), whose Builder and Maker is God ... having seen and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that we are strangers and exiles on earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.” (Heb. 11:10, 13-16).

Always keep Heaven in your sights – it is your Home!

The danger of riches 5:1-6

It is not wrong to be wealthy. Abraham was wealthy; so were Job and Solomon. But it is how we handle those riches that is important, for we will all be judged according to how we live, and how we use the gifts and good things God has given us.

1. More is required of those to whom much is given.
2. People will be judged if they exploit others to get their wealth.
3. Do not set your heart on riches. Materialism can lead to idolatry. Rather, lay up treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6:19-34). Besides, materialism can be like chasing the elusive end of the rainbow – you can never quite reach it! You always want more, and it never really satisfies.
4. With the tremendous needs all around us in the world today, from those who are starving to death on the one hand, to the needs of the Church and Christian ministries for financial support on the other hand, how can we say we have faith and love if we do not give sacrificially to help others? Faith and works! Loving and giving! Giving and receiving!

Patience, endurance, steadfastness 5:7-12

If there is one word that people seem loathe to hear today, it is surely the word “patience” – we want everything instantly! And advertising and today’s gadgets certainly capitalize on the desire for this; we want everything at the flick of a switch or by pressing a button – “instant” this and “instant” that!

“Lord, give me patience; and give it to me quickly!”

Commitment, faithfulness, steadfastness are another three words that many people do not want to hear these days. They want to be free to do their own thing, to change their minds whenever they feel like it. But many things will get done only if people will faithfully commit themselves to them, and patiently work things through to the end.

God’s call is to patience, commitment and faithfulness, and these are certainly needed in the Church today!

Repentance and healing 5:13-20

Everybody wants a miracle of instant healing – it’s so easy! God does it all; it’s so quick and costs nothing!

But often sickness comes because of sin (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-32). James puts it very clearly:

- If you are suffering – pray.
- If you are cheerful and happy – praise the Lord!
- If you are sick – call for the elders of the Church
 - confess any unforgiven sins
 - let the elders anoint with oil and pray

Finally, the great and eternal value of restoring someone to the Lord is spelled out in James 5:19-20. Many people are anxious to see people saved, and that is good; restoring back-slidden Christians is just as important! This requires great wisdom, as well as grace, humility and love. Remember that “Mercy exalts over [legalistic] judgement” (James 2:13) and the aim is to restore the person back into a relationship with God. We have all sinned, and all need God’s grace and mercy, so we must extend grace and mercy to those we seek to restore. It needs humility, because we are no better than others who have also sinned. It needs Godly love and patience. Our aim is repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation (just as this is God’s aim for *us!*); not revenge, punishment and separation.

QUESTIONS

1. How can we find true contentment and fulfillment in God?
2. Who can “ascend the hill of the Lord”, which leads up to His Temple, and “stand in His Holy Place”? (Psalm 24:3-6)
3. What are some things we need to be careful about, if we feel we need to show another Christian their error?
4. What does it mean to “live with eternity in our hearts”?
5. In view of the brevity of life and the uncertainty of life, how should Christians live?
6. What are the dangers of riches, and how can Christians avoid or overcome these dangers?



Prayer Suggestions

PRAY, AS THE LORD LEADS YOU

Ask the Lord how you should pray according to His will, for the following, and for His wisdom and strength to do anything He asks you in these areas:

1. For yourself
2. For your family

3. For your neighbours
4. For your local community
5. For your workmates
6. For your church
7. For your gifts – how and where you should use them

This month (February 2012) God has given us 29 days to go through the above 6 prayer points, slowly, thoughtfully and listening to what God may say. Be ready to write down what the Lord says to you as you pray over these issues and listen to Him. He may speak through the Scriptures; He may bring revelation, wisdom and discernment; He may speak strongly into your heart and spirit as you wait on Him. Seek to listen. Then obey!

PRAYER UPDATES

Each week our *Prayer Updates* are emailed to well over 600 Christians in New Zealand and around the world. These can be forwarded or printed and distributed to other Christians who want them for personal use, prayer groups, home groups or churches. Usually they contain about four prayer suggestions, on a single A4 page. If you would like to receive these each week, please email your name and email address, with the Subject: Subscribe, to ifnz@xtra.co.nz. Please pray for *Intercessors for New Zealand*, for our monthly magazines, our weekly *Prayer Updates*, our website www.Prayer4theNation.org.nz and other ministries through our books, etc. (see page 8)

A PERSONAL NOTE

Last month I mentioned that it is now 40 years since *Pray for the Nation* (Intercessors for New Zealand) first started in January 1972. In those days I was New Zealand Director of Youth With A Mission, and later that year Brother Andrew asked me to also be the Asia/Pacific Director of Open Doors with Brother Andrew. A few years later I felt the Lord leading me back into the full-time employment which I had previously had at Wellington Polytechnic, teaching in the Sciences area. I have taught there since February 1965, apart from the four years I was with YWAM and Open Doors. Massey University took over Wellington Polytechnic in 1999 and I have continued on with Massey since then. On 3 February this year I am retiring at long last (I'll be 70 in March!!)

My wife Tricia and I would deeply appreciate your prayers for the coming days and years as we continue to serve the Lord in whatever ways He leads us. Please pray for this new venture! While retiring from Massey, I plan to continue the ministry of Intercessors for New Zealand and my (shared) leadership at our local church, Western Suburbs Christian Fellowship. Thank you for your prayers and support in every way. God bless you all!

– Brian Caughley

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Total enclosed: \$ _____

- Each chapter ends with questions, for further thought, study or discussion
- All prices include GST and postage within New Zealand

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