

A Testimony of Prayer Altars

(Implemented in a single congregation / Timeframe: Approx. 6 months – 1 year)

○ **Marriages Restored**

Marriages brought back from the brink of divorce. Couples testify that there is a depth of spiritual union that never existed prior to the development of a family prayer altar. One couple in England that started a prayer altar in their home (admittedly nominal in their faith at that time) has been so transformed in their individual and family life that doors have now opened for them to share their testimony in cities across the nation. Many are hungry to experience what God has accomplished in them.

○ **Children/Youth Encountering God**

- Small children passionately worshipping God without being prompted by an adult
- Teenagers/young adults spontaneously having times of seeking God's Presence (outside of the official "altar time") One testifies, "I was so angry at my dad. I walked in and my siblings were praying and I just couldn't hold onto the hurt. I had to forgive."
- Those who have begun family altars testify there is now less need for discipline in the home as God's Spirit begins to convict and instruct their children. One woman testifies that her teenage daughter recently came in and asked if she could throw out the videos that God was convicting her about.
- A young child was physically healed of an illness as she cried out to God in prayer. Prior to this healing she was about to be taken to the emergency room.
- In a home where they were having just one night of family altar a week – Their 18 year old son said, "Can we have two or three family altars a week, because I think we're just scratching the surface of what God can do here."
- Several young children (ages 5-7) have approached their parents asking – at times even begging – to have the Bible read to them
- Approx. 30-40% of the youth group in the church is now considering or has already begun the process of entering into full-time ministry. Seeing their parents seeking God in the home. Modeling a lifestyle that is lived solely for the purposes of God – is having an impact on the long-term dreams of their children. "I want to be a missionary" is increasingly becoming the refrain of many.

○ **Doors open to the unchurched**

Example: 9 year old reading his Bible caused his unchurched 9 year friend to start reading his Bible. The confused family is eventually admonished by their 9 year old "we need to go to church."

Doors open to establish prayer altars in workplaces, among the homeless, among university students etc... - where the church previously had no ministry presence.

Conclusion:

If this is what God is doing through a single congregation seeking to implement prayer altars – How much more could be done if this was done across a neighborhood, city or a nation?



Vision for Strategic Intercession

- Are you tired of laboring much in the work of ministry and reaping comparatively little fruit?
- Are you looking for a way to make prayer more strategic and effective?
- Do your efforts to reach the lost need spiritual power that has been lacking?

Through **united, consistent, strategic, and effective prayer** – we can begin to see the Kingdom of God established in ways we had never thought possible!

Developing a Missionary Mindset

“You Are Now Entering the Mission Field”

This sign is placed prominently at the exit of many church parking lots. There is a great deal of truth to this sign that we often miss. We are all called to be missionaries or “intercessors” on behalf of the souls of those God has placed around us. Too often though we can find ourselves falling into the rut of just going through the motions at home, at work, and in our communities – and we lose sight of our real mission and purpose.

This document is meant to cast a vision that we hope will rekindle your longing to join the purposes of God in this generation. It is not a formula or a boxed in strategy but a focus that provides practical tools to begin making a tangible difference right where you are - Whether that be a minister of evangelism, a CEO of a corporation, or a housewife with toddlers. Right where you are God has called you to be a missionary – an intercessor for the eternal souls of mankind. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Intercession Defined

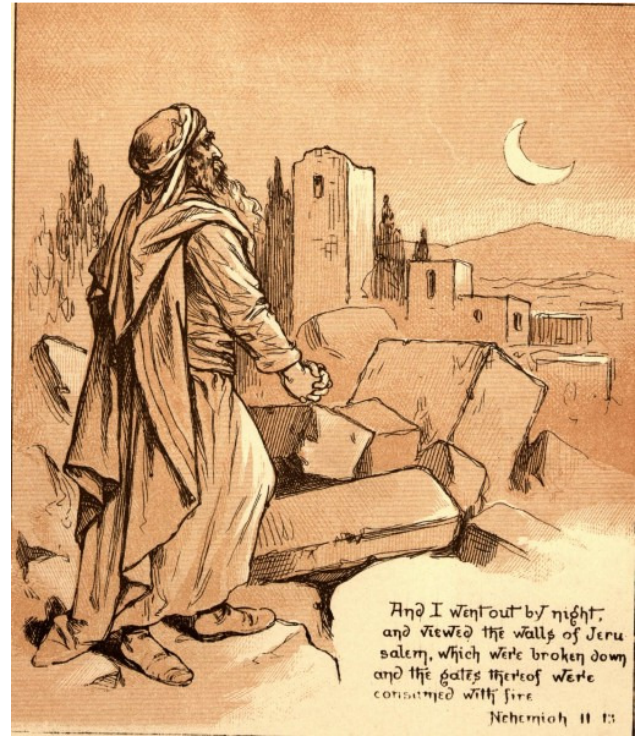
Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.
Hebrews 7:24,25

An intercessor is one who stands in the gap on behalf of others. Through prayers, words, and actions, an intercessor seeks to establish the Kingdom of God. A life of intercession is a life of self-sacrifice for the betterment of others. Jesus is the ultimate intercessor.

Often we have a very limited picture of an intercessor. The word may inspire images of someone praying in a closet. Real intercession is never without prayer, but is almost always much more than prayer (Isaiah 53:12). Those who touch the heart of God in prayer are often called to be the tangible answer to the needs of others. The role of the intercessor is to stand in real dependency on the Spirit of Jesus Christ in order to allow His manifest Presence to change what no man can change. One moment the Spirit of Jesus may lead us to lay down our lives in physical service to the homeless, the next we may labor for hours in prayer, the next we may share the Gospel of Christ through our words – in all of this – the intercessor is the instrument God uses to manifest the Life of Jesus Christ to the world around them.

1. A Vision of Prayer Altars (Nehemiah)

In Nehemiah Chapters 2 & 3 we see Jerusalem - a city whose walls were broken down. Chapter 2 concludes as Nehemiah goes to inspect the walls and then challenges the people that given the ruined state of the city – everyone must pitch in to help rebuild. What follows is an inspiring list of names, some were priests, others were nobles, others common men, others were merchants, and still others did not even live in the city but traveled to come and help rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 3:27). We see numerous accounts of families who risked their lives to rebuild the section of the wall that was by their own home. As these 40 or so named individuals, and countless unnamed families, diligently worked together, the wall around the city was completed in a remarkable 52 days! The wall that had remained in ruins for nearly 150 years was completed in less than two months because each concerned individual did their part. Could we not believe God for something similar in our day? Surely we can. Just as they were not without opposition we will face our share of opposition, but if we persevere we can believe that our city and our nation will rise to be a testimony to the Living God.



**“You see the trouble we are in...Come, let us rebuild the wall ...”
They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.
Nehemiah 2:17,18**

○ Practical Elements of a “Prayer Altar”

What do you mean by the term “prayer altar”?

A prayer altar is a focused time for believers in virtually any setting to seek the face of God. You may establish a prayer altar in your home, in your school, in your workplace or beyond – the possibilities are endless.

Here are a few components to an effective prayer altar:

- Set a specific time and place
- Read the Word of God (Saturating in the Word of God should be our lifestyle – so that when we come together we are coming filled with His Word)
- Fellowship around the Word of God (Share what God’s Spirit has been speaking to you through the Word)
- Season of Praise and Worship (Spend time focusing on who God is through thanksgiving and worship)
- United, Consistent, Strategic, and Effective Prayer (Bring targeted prayer requests to God. In time, as you enter deeper into the Presence of God, these prayers will flow more and more from the heart of God and have even greater impact. As these focused prayers are answered faith will be built to believe God for even greater things!)

○ Types of Prayer Altars

Individual Altars:

Vision: Every Christian a vessel of continuous intercession

The Spirit of God can train us to not merely touch His Presence during a particular time of devotion. We are to be trained to be a continuous “altar of prayer” through a lifestyle of dependency on the Spirit of God. Every moment of every day we are to be on mission with the Spirit of God to redeem a lost and dying world.



Family Altars:

Vision: Every Christian Family to become a Prayer Altar

Imagine focused prayer regularly going up to God from every Christian residence in a city. Prayer targeting everything these Christians are experiencing in their homes. Prayer consuming the souls in their neighborhood, and those they are connected with across the city. Take a moment and think about what impact this could make:

Healing of broken relationships - Restoration of marriages - Teenagers and children with a hunger and passion for the Life of God – a broken and watching world drawn to Christ as Jesus Himself is loosed to heal the wounds of the homes in our city.



Community Prayer Altars:

Vision: Prayer Altars in Every Sphere of Society

(Location – Workplace, school, neighborhood etc...)

Imagine regular strategic prayer piercing the darkness at the local bank, restaurant, engineering firm, college campus, fire department, elementary school, police station...the possibilities are endless.

It is said that we pray so little because we lack faith in the One we are praying to. Were believers to realize the power of an effective intercessory lifestyle – they would begin to lay hold of God in prayer and not let go until a total transformation had taken place in their sphere of society. They would look for and link up with other Jesus-followers to help build a strong altar of prayer in their workplace and in their community that regularly experiences the Kingdom of God breaking forth. Stop and think about what impact this could have:

Co-workers coming to Christ - Teachers and students seeing the power of the Living God - Open doors to share the Gospel where there had been only hardness - A spiritual climate shift in the workplace - **“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” Isaiah 61:1**

Congregational Prayer Altars:

Vision: A Corporate Prayer Altar in Every Congregation

Imagine churches setting aside a regular time of corporate prayer to seek the face of God in which every member is encouraged to attend. What if the prayer focus was not merely for what the individual congregation is facing, but primarily to pray for the specific needs of other congregations and believers in the area. Imagine if God started to build the lifestyle of an intercessor into each member of that congregation so they could come and pray with real authority. What could the impact be?

A congregation on mission with God every day and not just on Sunday's – Many souls coming to know the Savior – A testimony to every other church in the region of the need to focus on building God's Kingdom and not our own "kingdom's" – Families transformed and redeemed from darkness – Children set free to believe God for great things.

Regional Prayer Altars:

Vision: A Corporate Prayer Altar With Many Participating Congregations

Imagine 50-100 congregations from a regional area who are united to pray regularly. Imagine if the lifestyle of an intercessor began to be formed in the individuals involved in these regional meetings. Imagine if each participating congregation encouraged all their membership to establish altars of prayer in every home, workplace, and sphere of influence. Whole communities could be transformed in less than a year. Whole cities could be overtaken by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Marriages restored across a whole society. Not just an individual but a whole school or a whole community of youths rescued from destructive lifestyles and given a new purpose in life. The collective spiritual power of such a contingency of believers – living out a lifestyle of intercession – could literally transform a nation! This is not an exaggeration.

○ **The Challenge to Begin Building**

I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.

Exodus 23:29,30

"What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

Mark 4:30-32

It may not appear significant at first but God will use the steps of obedience we take to begin to build His Kingdom right before our eyes. Will we step out and help to build Christ's Kingdom through a lifestyle of intercession? If so, let us begin to build now, while there is still time.

Strategic Steps to become a True Intercessor



○ **Establish Prayer Where You Are**

A first step to making a difference for Christ no matter where we may be is to establish prayer. This much forgotten first step has caused countless souls to run around seeking to make a difference for Christ with very little long-term fruit to show for all their efforts. Instead, we must shift our mindset if we wish to make a real sustained difference for the Kingdom of God. When God moves on behalf of our prayers, more can be accomplished in one minute than could have been done in hundred's of years of human effort. (Acts 1:14, 2:41)

○ **Effective Prayer is a Lifestyle**

It takes more than saying words on behalf of others in order to become an effective intercessor. If we are going to stand with real authority in prayer then our lives must be free of the darkness we are praying against. Our own lives must be filled with the Light that we are asking God to manifest to others. Our own lives must be purified and overflowing with the faith, the hope, and the love of Christ. Only then can we expect our prayers to transform those around us. This is not to say we must reach perfection in order to have a prayer answered – but a pure heart is a vital aspect to effective prayer.

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.
James 5:16-18

If we are praying to the God who spoke and created the heavens and the earth, it should be reasonable to expect that faith-filled prayers, in line with His will, should be answered miraculously. Why is it that prayer groups can exist for years, even decades, and yet fail to see a tangible impact? Could it be that we have settled for meeting and praying without focusing on the importance of the **lifestyle** required for effective intercession? Even if we have had some focus on this, if we are failing to experience regular breakthroughs in prayer, we should humbly consider what more may be done in this regard.

○ **Foundation & Essentials in the Lifestyle of an Intercessor**

Foundation Stones: These three “foundation stones” are the heart beat of every true disciple of Jesus Christ. They are the essence of what it means to be an effective intercessor.

1. My Life Is Not My Own (Galatians 2:20)
2. I Live for One Reason – The Purposes of God (Matthew 7:21, 2 Cor. 6:3-10)
3. I Live by Christ's Law of Love (Matt. 22:36-40, Luke 6:27-45, 1 John 3:16-19)



Essentials: These are keys in the lifestyle of the intercessor that help them to remain anchored to the three Foundation Stones. Without these essentials in place, the spiritual battle that takes place in life and ministry is far too great. In time, if these are not established in our lives, we will often find ourselves knocked off of the foundation of our faith. (For some, this may not result in obvious outward rebellion, but our hearts may drift to thinking of our lives as our own, living for temporary things, and lacking the reality of Christ's love for others.)

- Saturation in the Word of God
- Praise and Worship that Encounters Christ
- Intercessory Prayer that flows from the heart of God
- Clear Direction from God regarding His character/His purposes/His ways
- Clear Direction from God regarding Satan's schemes
- Subdue the Flesh
- Spiritual Accountability
- Lifestyle of Witnessing
- Assign Purpose to Time

Prison Gates: These three aspects of our fallen world are the main hindrances to the advancement of the will of God on the earth. If we are to overcome them we must identify any way in which we are still in bondage to them, and begin to allow God's Spirit to set us free so that we may be effective in helping to set others free.

- The World
- The Flesh/Sin Nature
- The Enemy

Each of the "Essentials" are extensive. They will take time and practice to become part of our lifestyle. But until we allow God's Spirit to build these essentials into our lives, we will not be able to effectively resist the prison gates. Instead we may find ourselves falling victim to them. If we wish to become effective intercessors for others, we must overcome the prison gates and walk in the reality of the Christ-life. Only then can we call others to come out and be free.

"To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations..."
Revelation 2:26

(What resources are available to help walk more deeply in this lifestyle? Contact us if you are interested in more information on prayer altars @ www.simplyjesusonline.com or by e-mailing - admin@simplyjesusonline.com)

2. Every Soul a True Disciple of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15)

I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone...this is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:1,3,4



Every soul a true disciple of Jesus Christ. However humanly impossible this vision may appear to us, this is the clearly expressed intention of our Lord and Savior. He desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Now, if we were to allow our hearts to enter into His vision for humanity our every breath would take on renewed purpose. Every conversation with another soul – would become a conversation with a soul that God Himself has said, “I want this one as one of My true disciples.” Suddenly every interaction, every prayer, every act of service, is all flowing towards this tremendous vision of God – the discipleship of every soul.

Whether every soul is saved and comes to a knowledge of the truth is not up to us. Whatever our theological opinion of Sovereignty vs. Free Will does not shift the responsibility we have been entrusted with. Our role is to be 100% obedient to whatever the Holy Spirit of God asks of us. As we allow Him to witness through us to a lost and dying world He Himself will draw all men to Himself.

**“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”
John 12:32**

○ Walk Through Open Doors

Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations.

Isaiah 62:10

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

John 15:7,8



As we take the time to labor in a lifestyle of intercessory prayer, we can be fully confident that God will be faithful to His Word and that we will bear much fruit. Many struggle with the ineffectiveness of our common methods of evangelism. But, by establishing prayer first, instead of struggling so hard to plan and execute outreach strategy's that have been unable to truly transform our society – we find that effective intercessory prayer has softened the ground. This does not mean that there will be no battles, nor even that blood will not be spilled for Christ's Kingdom to advance. But we will find that in many instances, where the soil was hard, and our efforts defeated, suddenly new life abounds. Amazing opportunities to advance Christ's Kingdom are popping up everywhere without our having to try to make things happen. The results will even astound us as we will know and recognize – only God could have created such receptivity. Only God could have given this wisdom, or this power, or this effectiveness.

○ Allow the Holy Spirit to define the specifics

If we will take the time to establish effective intercessory prayer, we can be confident that the open doors that come in hands-on ministry to individuals, families and even to corporate entities will be so astounding as to give great Glory and Honor to the King of Kings. Rather than attempting to give the specifics of what burdens God will lay on individuals hearts and what giftings He will release, it is sufficient to say:

- If we will allow God's Spirit to build **a lifestyle of intercession** in our own lives.
- And if we will **establish united, consistent, strategic, and effective prayer** in our homes, our workplaces, our schools, and wherever else God may lead.
- God's Spirit will give us His heart, open doors, and empower us to go out and bear more fruit for Christ's Kingdom than we could ask or imagine (Eph.3:20).