

## The Armour Series: Week 8 Devotions

In week 8 of the Armour Series we explored the Power of Prayer.

### **Day One**

#### Read:

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” Ephesians 6:18 NIV

#### Discussion:

So we’ve gone through all the aspects of the Armour of God of I’m sure you’ve come to understand a lot about spiritual battle and how we should best prepare... wear the belt of truth; place the breastplate of righteousness; fit the shoes of the gospel of peace; take up the shield of faith; take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit (the word of God). This has all been about how you “prepare” for battle but today we also learned about how we go to battle...by praying in the Spirit on all occasions because our battle is actually not against flesh and blood

One of the questions we discussed today was whether we had ever experienced the power of prayer. I was encouraged by the stories I heard in my group today and my prayer is that we all live to tell of a life and journey marked with many altars of the experience of the power of prayer.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray and what we know today as the Lord’s Prayer was the response Jesus gave. For most of us, it’s hopefully the first prayer we are taught to pray or sing as this was the formula left for us to learn how to pray, not because it’s all we should pray but because it encompasses the formula to praying - we’ll discuss this further in the coming days.

For tonight I leave you with this acronym as food for thought...

Prayer

Releases

All

Your

Eternal

Resources

Let’s think about that as we anticipate the rest of the devotions on prayer this week.

#### Prayer:

Father I pray that as we’ve put on the full armour, you’d teach us how to go to battle and strategies of not just going to war but winning it too.

## Day Two

### Read:

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18 NIV

### Discussion:

So we've gone through all the aspects of the Armour of God of I'm sure you've come to understand a lot about spiritual battle and how we should best prepare... wear the belt of truth; place the breastplate of righteousness; fit the shoes of the gospel of peace; take up the shield of faith; take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit (the word of God). This has all been about how you "prepare" for battle but today we also learned about how we go to battle...by praying in the Spirit on all occasions because our battle is actually not against flesh and blood

One of the questions we discussed today was whether we had ever experienced the power of prayer. I was encouraged by the stories I heard in my group today and my prayer is that we all live to tell of a life and journey marked with many altars of the experience of the power of prayer.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray and what we know today as the Lord's Prayer was the response Jesus gave. For most of us, it's hopefully the first prayer we are taught to pray or sing as this was the formula left for us to learn how to pray, not because it's all we should pray but because it encompasses the formula to praying - we'll discuss this further in the coming days.

For tonight I leave you with this acronym as food for thought...

Prayer

Releases

All

Your

Eternal

Resources

Let's think about that as we anticipate the rest of the devotions on prayer this week.

### Prayer:

Father I pray that as we've put on the full armour, you'd teach us how to go to battle and strategies of not just going to war but winning it too.

## Day Three

### Read:

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:5-6 NIV

"After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone..." Matthew 14:23 NIV

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Mark 1:35 NIV

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God." Luke 6:12 NIV

#### Discussion:

Today we focus on the second "W"... Where we pray... today's devotion may sound like I'm contradicting myself; I'm emphasising that it's important to pray in private but at the same time I'm saying there is no specific place to pray. I hope my attempt to unpack this paradox is effective.

In the passage in Matthew on prayer, Jesus warns against praying publicly for all to see, stating that those that do so have received their reward already. It is important not to misinterpret this scripture as Jesus is not saying we should NEVER pray in public but rather the scripture is actually addressing matters of the heart; is where we pray driven by us seeking to really connect with God or are there other hidden motives in our hearts?

1. I want people to know how elaborate I am in my prayers
2. I want people to see how consistent I am in praying
3. I want them to know how many scriptures I can quote as I pray
4. I want them to know how connected I am to my Father in Heaven

The essence of prayer is not public style but private communication with God. There is a time and a place for public / corporate prayer but to pray ONLY where others will notice indicates that God isn't really the audience.

The inverse of what Jesus is addressing in Matthew is what he set as example for prayer. There are many instances in Bible that refer to Jesus isolating himself with the intentionality to connect with his Father in Heaven. Often he did this up top on some mountain somewhere. Where is your own personal "prayer mountain" or "war room"?

1. On the bus as you travel to school
2. In the shower as you get ready in the mornings
3. On your bed-side as you reflect on the day that's gone past
4. On the road as you take a walk or run?

Mine personally is in the car after I get to work and park the car before I actually go into the office. I've found this to work very well for me and my daily routine but it's taken intentionally and consistency but I'll be the first to admit that I don't always get it right but the point is to keep at it and not give up. Find what works for you from an environment and timing perspective. Are you more of an early morning person or evening person? Test out your options until you find what works for you, personally. I used to lie to myself every morning telling myself I could pray from the comfort of my bed in the middle of winter... that would very often end up with me falling asleep before I was done and being late in the mornings - not a great start to your day. I've since found something that works though, which is great!

Last point, something I started incorporating this year... There are times when you have to step away from your routine to really seek God beyond your comfort zone... this touches on fasting, all-night prayers, long periods of meditating on the Word, being still and just waiting on God and is often necessary when facing some challenges in life or when you just feel a distance from God. I would challenge us over and above the routine/ daily moments of prayer to every once in a while change things up a little and try something different. This is a great way to confuse the enemy and he will

look for you where he intends to find you only to be disappointed to discover that you've resolved to use a different tactic today.

Prayer:

Lord, today I pray that you help us preserve in finding our own personal "prayer mountains" or "war room" where we can really just silence all the distractions and focus on you...our eternal resource. I also pray that you challenge us to every now and again confuse the enemy by trying something different and uncomfortable in terms of prayer - fasting, all-night / half-night prayer, long periods of meditating on the Word, being still and just waiting on God. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ who loves us and strengthens us in all that we do. Amen!

## **Day Four**

Read:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." James 1:5 NIV

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3 NIV

Discussion:

Today we focus on why we should pray... well I think the real question should be why not pray? When there is so much to gain from talking to your Father in Heaven... why wouldn't you spend time communicating with him?

I've included for today 3 scriptures that give reason as to why we should pray and I'll focus on these today even though there are so many other reasons.

1. We pray to God as our comforter / our light in the darkness, trusting that he knows and understands our pain because he is not just any God. He was born in a manger, lived on earth for 33 years, died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead-who better to listen to our hearts and comfort us than Jesus Christ himself? It's seemingly easier though to find comfort in everything but God but you soon realise that nothing quite works like his love or presence. No amount of time spent laughing with friends, alcohol, drugs, music, video games, etc. has the power to comfort us as he does.
2. We pray to our Father in Heaven for wisdom and direction. He is the architect of our lives, the source of our strength, the reason for our existence - who better to ask for direction than the Creator himself? We can try and substitute him with Horoscopes, mediums, false prophets, peer pressure, etc. but you soon realise that all those are counterfeit gods whose direction is not trustworthy.
3. We call on God to get to know him better, that his will for our lives may be revealed through him. We pray because we want to understand God's heart for our lives. Communication is the key to making any relationship successful - think of your closest friend or even family member... you probably communicate with them very frequently, if not, every day. Why? Because that is the fundamental ingredient to making any relationship to work and that's why we get on our knees and pray.

### Prayer:

Lord I pray that as we spend more time in prayer, you'd remind us about of the reasons we pray. So much so that we'd ask ourselves "why not pray?" and not "why pray". Teach us to pray as if our lives depend on it, because our lives really do depend on our ability to cry out to God in every season. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

## **Day Five**

### Read:

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:1-4 NIV

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 NIV

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 NIV

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16 NIV

### Discussion:

So the question from Nathan last night was 'How does Jesus comfort us?'. That's a deep and great question to ask, that probably deserves its own devotion just to unpack it. But let me nonetheless try and give a fair response based on my own experience of God comforting me.

In fact, why should we stick to a script? I've been struggling all week to package my thoughts on the focus for our devotion today... "Who should pray?" So I'll still touch on that but the main focus for tonight's devotion will be a practical response to the following question: "How exactly does God comfort people?"

Unlike most methods that people seek for comfort, God's comforting is not always direct or tangible but he is there.

1. God comforts us by reminding us in his Word, which is the truth that we should believe and hold onto in times of need. Hannah, David, Job, Paul are just a handful of people that went through some serious stuff in their lives but were comforted in ways they could not have comprehended. Scripture reminds us that the hard times we go through, though important to God, are nothing new under the sun. That his grace helps sustain us even in situations that seem impossible. I sometimes think, if Job could live through so much pain, I got this too! The comfort in numbers, that you are not the first to go through this and that God has got your back! So I encourage you all to dig deep into the Word and see how God has done it for others. Life is not smooth but his grace is sufficient for us and all things work together for his good.

2. God comforts by virtue of the foundations of our faith. Our faith tells us that for those that believe in the risen one - Jesus Christ, there is life after death. That gives us comfort for the loved ones we've lost that believed in Christ and gives us hope for ourselves as well. That our lives aren't meant to be just about the lives we are living right now but the life after death that's been promised by our father in Heaven.

3. God also comforts us by using the people he has allowed to be a vessel of his love for us in our lives. God sometimes brings people that would do for you, what no ordinary person would do for you; people in your life that you would

liken to angels. We too can be that for others, so I challenge us all to be open to God using us in this regard. Let's make sure we listen when he speaks but we will only know his voice from reading more of his word and spending time with him. Hopefully through your own discipline and obedience, you can one day be a blessing to someone needing comforting.

Allow me then to divert to my original topic for tonight "who should pray"... the simple answer is that we should ALL pray....Every one of us!

1. Some churches believe that only men should pray
2. Some churches believe that only the Pastor/ Bishop/ Apostle of the church has true power to pray directly to God and be heard
3. Some of us, on this group even, believe that only those who are righteous, pure and holy can pray and hear from God

But all of these are false doctrine that try to take us away from meaningfully engaging with God in prayer. So let us all approach the throne of grace with confidence because we are ALL worthy of getting on our knees and crying out to our Father in Heaven.

#### Prayer:

Lord, tonight I pray that you would bring comfort to us in a very specific and customised way. I pray that we would experience your love for us in all seasons, especially when we are feeling particularly far from you. I pray that on our distance, you'd bring us closer to you and restore us back to you as we understand that NOTHING can separate us from you and spending time in your presence. I pray all of this in Jesus Mighty Name. Amen!

## **Day Six**

#### Explore:

So tonight I'm keeping it brief and straight to the point as we discuss "what we should pray about". The short answer is that we should pray about everything! Not too big or too small to be worthy of prayer.

1. Pray for your Enemies (Matthew 5:44-45) "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you will become children of your Father in heaven, because he makes his sun rise on both evil and good people, and he lets rain fall on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Probably one of the most difficult things to do, especially when your enemies are still persecuting you but we are encouraged to do it regardless because it keeps our hearts in check and far from bitterness and ill-feelings towards others.

2. Pray for the ministry, pastor, and more people to preach the Gospel (Matthew 9:36-38). "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

Let us pray for more righteous, devoted and genuine leaders to rise up and serve the Lord and also pray for those that are currently serving to not grow weary. Take time out even tonight to pray for our Every Nation leaders, your teen and adult leaders and everyone that dedicated their life or a portion of it to seeing you flourish.

3. Pray that you don't fall into temptation (Matthew 26:41). "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Let's pray that we train ourselves up to listen more to the spirit than we do our flesh which proves to us time and time again that it is weak and highly unreliable.

4. Pray to be worthy of your high calling (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Let's pray that we each discover our unique purpose in life and use it to our best ability to glorify our Father in Heaven.

5. Pray for the sick (James 5:13-16). "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Let us pray for those that are not well and see our faith raise up as their prayers are answered.

#### Prayer:

Lord, thank you that there are endless reasons to pray. Teach us the selfless act of praying for others more than we pray for ourselves. In Jesus Name, Amen!

## **Day Six**

#### Read:

"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:7-15 NKJV

Before we get into tonight's devotion I'd just like to thank you all for your commitment and engagement as I've tried to unpack the topic of prayer with you. As the year winds down to the end of the school year and plans are being made on how you will or will not spend your time this holiday remember that the timing of this series was not coincidental; it was strategic! As you all enter this "unstructured", "festive" and "rest and recuperation" part of your life, remember that the enemy never rests so there are some parts of your life that cannot and shouldn't go on a break... putting on your full armour and not take it off and praying for every aspect of your life and those around you. Be intentional this holiday to spend time in prayer connecting with your Father in Heaven as you reflect on the year that's now almost behind us and seek out his plan for your life in 2019. Use this time to be in tune with his beat and rhythm for your life.

Lastly, challenge yourself by joining the church in prayer and fasting in the new year if you've never done so, confuse the enemy a little by adjusting your prayer level or commitment.

That was the free part, I just really thought I should say that... now let's talk about the "how to" for prayer...

### 1. Praise

"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

We worship a living God so praise him every chance you get. There is so much he has done for me us and continues to do for us in the coming year.

### 2. Repent

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Be genuine with God and bring the darkest parts of your heart to him because he knows it all and is willing to forgive you, if you'll just ask.

### 3. Ask

"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Speak to God directly and ask him to sustain you all the days of your life by providing all you need, forgiveness of sins weighting you down and resistance of the enemy.

### 4. Yield

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Trust that you will yield all you've asked for in his name according to his timing because you have faith that you have a good / good father.

### Prayer:

Lord, thank you for all that you've taken us on, on this journey to discovering more regarding prayer. I pray that you make us diligent in praying and trusting that your will be done. In Jesus Name, Amen!