

The Praying Army

Casting a vision for a collective of people who pray powerfully and constantly, and who coordinate their prayers to change the world

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Part 1: What kinds of people enlist in this Army?

Dear sister or brother,

I am really excited about the writing project I am undertaking this week.

I am going to cast a vision...

... for what a "Praying Army" might look like.

i.e. a collective of people who discipline themselves with an eye to learning constant, faith-filled, powerful prayer - and who coordinate their prayers to change the world visibly and in mighty ways, in cooperation with God.

The idea for this "army",

came from a conversation which Tessa and I had a few weeks ago.

Where we were discussing the situation with Russia & Ukraine.

And feeling sad about the fact that - at least to our knowledge - there are very few coordinated efforts to pray

STRATEGICALLY and POWERFULLY for situations like this of massive global consequence.

Yes there are many calls to "pray for Ukraine" etc.

But most of this prayer (again to my knowledge) is general, scattershot, and disorganized.

So together we imagined, briefly...

... how global circumstances might change, even events as vast as wars, if more coordinated prayer efforts DID exist.

And now,

I want to pick up that project.

And continue imagining the specifics, of what it might look like for such a "praying army" to come about. And what it might look like for such an "army" to discipline itself in the way of prayer. And coordinate its prayers to pull heaven down to earth.

When I imagine such an "army"...

... the first thing I notice, is the reason why people are enlisting in this army.

And here is the primary reason:

These women and men and youth, are convinced through and through, that *prayer makes a difference*.

And not just in a vague way.

Not in an intangible or invisible way.

No,

These people are convinced that MUCH depends on whether or not we pray.

"Perhaps even the timeline of heaven coming to earth... of Jesus returning and judging the world in justice and peace... depends on our prayers." That is what these people enlisting in the army are saying to themselves, as they wait in line to join.

Not all of them are SURE this is the case; but all of them have room in their imagination for this being true. For the timeline of the New Jerusalem descending to earth, being affected by our choice to pray or not. Because our prayers make THAT much of a difference in the grand scheme of things.

More:

The people enlisting in the praying army don't just think about the significance of prayer in this grand, cosmic way;

They also believe in the power of prayer at a much more granular level.

They believe that the choice to pray or not,

can make the difference between

- + someone's Alzheimer's getting healed or not
- + someone getting a job they want or not
- + a church splitting or staying together
- + a meth addict being freed from his addiction or staying trapped

And they are so convinced of this, the fact that prayer can make a practical difference in the outcome of any situation... that as soon as they hear of the existence of such a "praying army" that gathers together, and collectively disciplines

itself in the way of constant, powerful, joyous prayer... and coordinates its prayers for the good of the world... as soon as they hear of this army they say to themselves, "*I want to be a part of THAT community*".

And that is why they enlist.

Or at least, it is the most common reason why people enlist.

Now that being said...

... many people's reasons for joining are colored by selfish, arrogant, and vainglorious motivations.

Some people join because they want more power for themselves.

"*The ability to work miracles and move mountains? Give me some of THAT,*" they whisper to themselves excitedly. And so they enlist in hopes that they will someday gain the power to work miracles.

But then there are other people...

... who join the praying army because they feel overwhelmingly grateful to God. For the love and healing he has poured and poured into their lives. And so they want to see the world which he dreams of become a reality, out of gratitude and love for him.

Others join the army because they love their family members, and neighbors, and coworkers... and they want to see all these people be healed, come to know God, and step into a life of neverending joy.

Most people who join have a mix-match of the above mentioned motivations, and others.

So,

all sorts of reasons,

all sorts of motivations,

but again,

what all these people enlisting in the praying army have in common, is a conviction that prayer makes a concrete difference.

Now as an aside... the people who "last longest" in the army are those who are motivated by love. But it's also worth nothing that many of the people who were motivated by vainglory originally... have their motivations purified, the more time they spend in this army, doing its work, and disciplining themselves with the practices and workouts which are expected of members.

Ah yes, the "practices and workouts" expected of members...

What exactly ARE those?

And:

What does the praying army DO on a daily basis?

How do they spend their time?

How do they balance their responsibilities as members of this army... with the jobs they work, and the mouths they are responsible for feeding, etc.?

I'll pick up talking about all THAT tomorrow.

And one more thing before I sign off.

My hope is that all this "vision casting" becomes more than mere vision casting.

If you can't tell yet,

I want this praying army to exist.

I believe it should.

I believe it would punch some massive holes in the world's darkness.

So as you continue watching this "mental movie" which I am going to play for you in the coming days... please be thinking about to what extent YOU are interested in joining this praying army.

Ok, more soon.

Towards Him,
"Uncle Sam" Hayashida

Part 2: Where do new recruits in the Army Start?

Dear sister or brother,

Yesterday I began to imagine what a "praying army" - i.e. a collective of people who train to become more powerful in prayer, and who coordidnate their prayers for the good of the world - what such an "army" might look like. And how it might function.

Today, I am going to pick up where I left off and describe:

AFTER people enlist... how do they train to become more "powerful" in prayer?

What exercises do they use?

How do they spend their time on an average day?

To answer these questions, let's step inside a hypothetical "barracks" of the praying army.

An officer is giving a lecture to new recruits. Perfect. Let's listen to what he says...

"First thing you all need to understand, is that not all prayers are created equal. James writes that 'the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working' (James 5:16) And throughout scripture, and history, and our own experiments in prayer, we have found this to be true:

"that even if you don't understand WHY, or what factors are at play... some people's prayers get answered more often than other's. Some people's prayers consistently heal broken bones, sickness, and chronic illness... while other people's prayers seem to consistently be ineffective."

He pauses.

Takes a sip of water.

Then continues:

"The second thing you need to understand is that you CAN become the sort of person whose prayers get answered frequently. There are things you can do, to grow in this respect. And that is half of what you will be devoted to as a new member of this army: training to become stronger in prayer. Any questions so far?"

Several hands shoot up from the audience...

"You, in the back! What's your question?"

A scruffy but handsome young lady stands up and asks:

"Sir. Isn't it dangerous to talk about becoming more 'powerful' in prayer? Doesn't that imply that when our prayers are answered, WE are the ones who are strong, and who are accomplishing the work... instead of God?"

The officer nods his head and replies,

"Yes, you raise a good question. And to clarify, all prayers get their power from God. That's where the power always comes from. It's not that a righteous man or woman exerts some authority OVER God and forces him to act. It's that, these men's and women's prayers are more effective channels through which God's power can move.

"And so to become more 'powerful' in prayer... is a matter of learning how to make yourself and your prayers wider channels through which God's healing and active power can flow more freely.

"Ok, now let's get practical. Let's talk about how to do this."

And at this point,

the officer begins to explain the activities and exercises which new recruits will be practicing.

Well, not quite.

He first takes GREAT pains to stress the fact that,

"none of these activities are themselves acts of holiness. You must be on guard against all forms of pride. Do NOT make the mistake of thinking you are a great and righteous person,

because you 'workout' your spiritual muscles three times as much as the average person. You will be tempted to think in this way. To quietly pat yourself on the back because of how much you exercise. To judge those who exercise less. But these judgments will poison your prayer - and your soul - and they are based on a lie. Be on the alert and guard against them at all times, asking God for help in this area constantly"

And AFTER he stresses this point...

... he begins to explain the practical means through which the praying army constantly strengthens itself.

He explains that,

Those in the praying army know that WHAT GOES INTO THEIR MIND - is the single-most important factor that determines their growth in prayer-strength or lack thereof.

And he explains that,

When Paul in his epistles speaks of the "renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2)... and says to "set your minds on the things that are above" (Colossians 3:2)... he is not making an abstract point that has no touch points with day-to-day life, but rather, he is making a very practical point.

Paul is telling these new believers to change their "mental diet."

To begin filling their mind with new images.

New stories.

New phrases and poems and prayers.

To fill their minds with constant thoughts of God's Kingdom.

To memorize Psalm 23.

And to walk through it - and other beautiful scripture passages - a thousand times.

Because Paul recognized,

that to "renew your mind" in this way... by filling your mind with Psalms, and hymns, and prayers, and prophetic imagery, and words of Jesus... this changes the "spiritual climate" of your life. You begin to feel different on a daily basis. There is something new in the air. Suddenly old desires and addictions weaken... and are more easily 'chiseled' off. New desires begin to spring up, like sprouts of green in the woods after winter. In this new spiritual climate, growth, spiritual cultivation, increase in the power of your prayer, all of this becomes more possible... almost inevitable... and that is what it means to "renew your mind."

And after the officer explains this point...

... he stops.

He looks up.

He stays there, eyes darting from person to person... his gaze is razor sharp, so sharp, that it feels to some in the audience that he can 'see' the full content of their souls... the new recruits shift in their seats uncomfortably... you could hear a pin drop...

Then the officer continues:

"The world is organized against you. Smartphones. News channels. Facebook. Instagram. The endless tunnels of information on the internet... the raging 'conversations' between opposing political parties, which rip families and nations in two..."

"But starting now, all this noise is going to fade into the background. And not just because it 'should', or because you are going to cut yourself off from the world in a solitary cell, or because you will 'force' yourself to stop engaging these streams of information from a sense of duty... no...

"... the changes that are about to take place in your life will come from a growing DESIRE inside you. You are going to start losing interest in your phones. Because you are going to wake up to something bigger. Something that is going to change the course of history. Something that is going to heal meth addicts... destroy corrupt institutions... restore sons to their fathers..."

There is a tear rolling down his cheek as he says "sons to their fathers" ...

You can tell... that as he is speaking... the officer sees something. Something that touches the depths of his longing. It's as if he is looking at an entirely new world, invisible to these new recruits, but one entirely visible to his shining eyes... beautiful, breathtaking, so much so, that he chokes up...

... his voice is shaky, but confident:

"Start with a Psalm. Psalm 23. Psalm 84. Psalm 19.

"Start there. Memorize this Psalm. Then set a timer on your phone... to go off every 45 minutes... and every 45 minutes, wander through that Psalm. Let the world it speaks of soak into your imagination. Let it change how you see THIS world.

"Start there. That's your first assignment. This will begin to renew your mind... change the spiritual climate of your life... and prepare you to pray with more power. And frequency."

And though it seemed rather abrupt to some of the recruits, the officer stopped there, and sent them back to their sleeping quarters.

And you, Dear reader?

If you have any desire to join the praying army, I'd take the officer's advice and start with memorizing a Psalm.

More on how the army grows strong in prayer tomorrow.

Towards Him,
-Sam Hayashida

Part 3: The Four Steps Longstanding Members of the Army use to Strengthen Their Faith

Dear sister or brother,

Let's head back to the Praying Army -

- back to the project of imagining how "ordinary" women and men like you and I might become mighty in prayer, and coordinate our prayers to change the course of history.

Yesterday we talked about how "new recruits" begin their journey within the army;

Today let's talk about the lives of longstanding members.

What exercises do they use to grow stronger in prayer?

What do their lives look like on a daily basis?

How do they coordinate their prayers?

The first thing I notice,

when I observe these longstanding members,

is the CONFIDENCE they are brimming with.

Some might call it "boldness";

Some would call it "faith";

Whatever you call it, they are glowing with the stuff. It lights up their faces, it makes their steps firm, and it creates a nearly impenetrable shield around them which casts away fear and worry and hurry.

They go through life, smiling, knowing that things will go well not just in the "afterlife" - but in the present.

How do they know this?

The short answer is,

They have fixed their eyes on Jesus.

They have known the Love of God - and have understood that this Love seeks not only their "spiritual" good but also their physical, mental, emotional good. God wants to straighten their path and part the sea and go before them not just in the "next age," but in *this* one.

They have read the scriptures;

They have understood that the saints mentioned therein (Moses, Elijah, Mary, Peter, Paul, etc.) did not timidly "hope" that God would step in and calm the storms, or heal the paralyzed, or raise the dead in front of them; no, they boldly

spoke and moved forward under the assumption God
would do these things. As indeed he did.

And so these senior soldiers have spent years cultivating
this same 'confidence' - i.e. faith - which adds power to
prayer, and life.

But HOW do they do this.

HOW do they 'exercise' their faith so that it increases on a
daily basis?

Senior soldiers in the Praying Army understand that the first
and most practical answer to this question - is that you
must deepen your understanding of God's will.

But they understand "God's will" in a different way than
most:

For them, "God's will" is the new world.

It is the "city which has foundations" spoken of in Hebrews;

It is the "holy city, coming down out of heaven" spoken of in
Revelation;

It is "the Kingdom of God" which Jesus talked about;

It is "the new heaven and new earth" which John talked
about.

That world

which the Law

and the prophets

and the voice of the Father

and the apostles

and the longing in our deepest parts

all point to...

... it exists. Now.

And to speak of "God's will", is just another way to speak of that other world. And vice versa: to speak of "God's kingdom" - or "the new heaven and new earth" - is just another (more visual) way to speak about God's will.

This is why in Matthew's gospel when Jesus teaches his disciples the Lord's prayer... he says "*thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*" - but when he teaches this same prayer in the gospel of Luke, he shortens it to simply "*thy kingdom come*", and gives no mention of "your will be done". Why is that? It's because these are two ways of stating the same request. The request for God's kingdom to come... is the request for God's will to be done on earth... is the request that God would breathe the "new world" we all long for in our heart of hearts, into existence, today. It's all the same request.

And so to deepen your understanding of God's will

is to gain a more vibrant, full, living, confident, clear, glorious vision of the "invisible world", which God is bringing into space and time.

And THAT is why:

- (a) Immersion in the gospels, and
- (b) Immersion in the Psalms

are the two most practical ways to deepen your understanding of God's will - and thereby your faith.

Senior members of the Praying Army have learned that,

When you read the gospels over and over again,

When you sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his "Sermon on the mount"

When you watch the 'mental movies' he gives us, in the parable of the sower, and the parable of the good Samaritan, and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and his teaching on the sheep and the goats,

over and over again,

and over and over again...

... A clear picture of the world God is bringing into space and time comes into your mind. You begin to 'see' it, through the eyes of faith. You begin to understand what this other world looks like, how to participate in it now, how to make it a visible reality with the choices you make on a daily basis.

For example:

Suppose you are reading through Matthew and you stumble across Jesus' teaching that you are to "*pray for those who persecute you.*" (Matthew 5:44) Oh, that's cool. Your picture of the "new earth" (i.e. God's will) just became a little clearer. Because now you see that the new earth is made of people who are SO determined to bless and do good to everyone around them... that they even want to bless the people who are trying to kill them. And so they quietly pray for these their enemies, confidently asking God to bless them, asking God to forgive them, asking God to soften their hearts and lead them into the loving arms of Jesus.

And the more you read the gospels... the more this sort of thing happens.

Jesus' words begin to paint a vibrant picture in your mind of the "new world" God is bringing into visibility. And the more clearly you "see" this new world, the more confident and effective your prayers become, because you BELIEVE this new world is real. And you BELIEVE this new world is exactly what God wants. So you pray, confidently, that God would bring this new world into space and time, in specific ways...

... asking that he would soften the heart of a bitter family member, heal your uncle who has alzheimer's, provide housing for Steve, etc... and through your confident prayers and daily decisions, God DOES bring his kingdom to earth. He heals, he softens hearts, he provides.

And remember,

practically speaking,

that entire chain of events started because you spent time reading the gospels.

And so?

Understanding this dynamic of

(1) Immersion in the words of Jesus specifically + scripture more broadly

leads to-->

(2) Clearer picture of the new world (i.e. clearer picture of God's will)

leads to-->

(3) Increased confidence that God will act with us as we pray and labor to make this new world a visible reality
(i.e. increased faith)

leads to-->

(4) Our prayers and lives become far more effective channels through which God DOES begin to work mightily, to heal, restore, change circumstances, etc.

... understanding this dynamic,

the senior soldiers in the Praying Army are constantly reading the gospels, constantly filling out their vision of the "new heaven and new earth" which Jesus describes, and which the Psalmist describes, and the prophets, and the apostles. They memorize Psalms. They constantly pray "the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"... and every time they pray this, they take a step deeper into the new world... where they lack nothing, and fear nothing.... and each step they take deeper into this new world, they gain even more confidence that God will heal and restore and save and transform, because through their steps they experience him doing it.

And as their confidence grows - in God's will to bring the new world into existence through their prayers and daily decisions - the new world becomes a visible reality through their lives.

More and more...

... Their prayers begin to heal broken bones, their commands cast out demons, their words cause peace to wash over those who hear them spoken. Because these women and men are beginning to live in and "from" the other world, through their faith, through their confidence in its reality and availability... and in God's desire to partner

with them in making it visible... and so the power and glory and peace and healing that exist in that other world, begin to break into THIS one.

What was invisible, starts to become visible through the prayers and choices and faces of these women and men.

The kingdom of heaven is here.

Shining forth from their lives.

Overcoming the darkness, healing the sickness, lifting up the depressed souls, to their left and to their right.

And again all this started,

Because these women and men who were enlisted in the Praying Army, went to great lengths to fill their minds with the gospels, with the Psalms, with the words of the prophets. Memorizing those passages which provide especially clear windows into God's kingdom (Romans 8, Hebrews 11-12, Psalm 23, Colossians 3, 1 Corinthians 13, etc.); and praying those passages over and over again, until their confidence in this other world began to grow and grow and grow.

Ok.

I talked a lot in this email about how the Praying Army grows day by day in its faith;

But how do they increase the FREQUENCY of their prayers?

How do they go from 'forgetting to pray most of the time' to 'praying without ceasing'?

How do they balance normal life responsibilities with their responsibility to the army?

More on that in tomorrow's email.

For today,

I leave you with this question:

What is something you can do, starting today, to enhance your vision of that 'other world' - i.e. God's will - i.e. the kingdom of God?

What passage will you memorize?

What gospel-reading regimen will you commit to?

What Psalm will you pray 20 times a day?

Towards Him,

-Sam Hayashida

P.S. My hope is that from reading this email, you will begin to see why the author of Hebrews describes faith as,

"the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)

Part 4: A Window Into The Daily Life of a Praying Soldier

Dear sister or brother,

Yesterday I raised but did not answer the following questions:

How do members of the praying army increase the FREQUENCY of their prayers?

How do they go from 'forgetting to pray most of the time' to 'praying without ceasing'?

And most importantly:

How do they balance normal life responsibilities with their responsibility to the army?

This is where the rubber meets the road.

Because I can paint the most beautiful mental picture in the world, of a life spent praying and growing stronger in prayer;

but if this picture is an impossibility, it is worthless.

It doesn't matter how inspiring it is.

What good will it do us

if it only ever stays stuck in our imaginations, and never touches our actual lives?

This is why the question of, "*what do members of the praying army do on a daily basis*" is a critical question.

So let's dive in.

The first thing I notice...

... is that most members work "normal" jobs.

And those who don't have "normal" life responsibilities; as caretakers, stay-at-home parents, etc.

In other words their commitment to the Praying Army does not require them to remove themselves from "real life"; but it *does* drastically shift their experience of "real life".

How so?

Well, let's take a closer look at the life of those who work a 9-5 job:

These members of the Praying Army have learned to pray for all who they come into contact with during their working hours. Those who work in retail are constantly praying blessing upon the customers they engage with. Those in corporate are constantly praying for their coworkers, and bosses, and vendors. Praying peace, efficiency, truth, joy, and life into their cubicles - and offices - and warehouses - and department stores.

As they wander to the restroom, they pray through Psalm 23.

As they wash their hands, they pray through the Lord's prayer.

As they walk back to their office, they whisper to themselves the words of Hebrews 12:

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..."

And as they whisper these words, they visualize the glorious host of invisible saints surrounding them on all sides, praying, watching, smiling... as indeed they are...

... and while they are on the way back to their desk they meet a coworker.

And because they have just been contemplating the "cloud of witnesses" surrounding them - *they* are glowing. Glowing with a joy, and a confidence, and a desire to richly bless the next person they meet. And so when they see this coworker, they smile, and warmly ask them how they are doing... and pour genuine love and affection for this co-worker into their simple question.

This warmth and genuine care is the natural "spillover" from all their prayer; it isn't forced, or contrived in the least. They aren't even aware of how much they are glowing, because they are too busy praying and caring for their coworkers and inviting God into their work. But they do glow, because their minds are fixed on Jesus, consciously, for so much of the day.

When they get back to their desk and open up their computer, they briefly ask God to manifest his Kingdom in the emails they are now going to write.

And as they pray this,

they visualize themselves communicating clearly, warmly, and efficiently, during the next 20 minutes.

And they say,

"Thank you God! For making this a reality now..."

And indeed as they write, the kingdom breaks into this small office on the 5th floor of a nondescript but very tall building, in little bits and flashes, through the tap-tap-tap of their fingers on the keyboard. They finish writing the necessary emails quite quickly - and yet also manage to communicate warmth in what they wrote.

On the drive back home they sit in quiet joy, recognizing that even here, Jesus is present to them. The traffic is bad on the way home - and so the ride is 55 minutes rather than 30 - but they don't mind at all, and in fact relish each of those 55 minutes, because each of them is full of the light of Jesus' glory. Because they have fixed their eyes on Jesus.

Now they are home.

But instead of "unwinding" by turning on the TV...

... they have trained themselves to "fall back on" other ways of unwinding. Quieter ways. Prettier ways. A meditative shower. An evening walk. Picking up a good book and reading it on a comfy chair.

They have trained themselves to seek out ways of resting which are *truly* restful:

Activities which calm the mind and uplift the soul.

Activities which fill them up rather than deplete them.

They are careful about what media they consume;

They always have in mind the words of Paul:

"whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things" (Philippians 4:8)

They are not legalistic about this, by any stretch of the imagination, but they simply *want* to follow Paul's advice; to fill their minds with words and images and ideas from the NEW world which will last forever - rather than from the old world, which is passing away.

And they recognize that most media today is saturated with images and ideas from the passing world.

And yet... they are not "removed" or "isolated" from what is happening in the here and now; far from it. In fact, they are more present, more active, more full of concrete love towards their local, national, and global neighbors... than their friends who spend 3 hours immersed in the news every day. *Far* more loving.

But they have found ways to "brief" themselves on what is happening in their neighborhoods and around the world... in ways that don't include hours and hours of sitting in front of a TV or scrolling on social media.

And the "briefing" which they do is all with an eye towards active love.

They do not brief themselves on what is happening around the world just so they can "know what's going on", or complain, or feel despairing and anxious about it all.

They brief themselves so they can *pray*.

So they can partner with God in bringing the kingdom to earth.

In unleashing the infinite provision and healing within God's realm... into real human lives.

This email is getting very long.

More on the daily life of a Praying Army member tomorrow.

Towards Him,

-Sam Hayashida

Part 5: What do Praying Soldiers do while they are at Home?

Dear sister or brother,

Last Thursday I opened a window into the daily life of a member of the Praying Army.

I showed how they might pray during a 9-5 job.

And I said that their home life looks "different" from your typical life.

But how different does it look?

I said they do not watch TV for hours every day, or scroll on their phones whenever they have a spare minute, like most people do - so what do they do instead?

What happens between the time they are sleeping and working?

Before I answer these questions -

Let me remind you of what I said on Friday:

This picture I am painting of a senior member's daily life, is not a life I have achieved, yet - but one I aspire to.

Also:

The different scenes and objects in this picture are not "rules which everyone must follow" - but rather, they point to tendencies and principles which *usually* guide these soldiers' lives. Certainly there are days and moments when soldiers break the pattern they generally follow, for good

reasons. They are always prepared to break patterns if doing so means they can better love their neighbor, or serve their King.

The point of these pictures is not to lengthen your list of 'things you must do' and 'rules you must follow' - but rather, it is to add to your imagination of "what life could look like, and how joyous it could be" if you prayed more.

Ok with all that said, back to the question:

What happens between the time senior members of the Praying Army are sleeping and working?

Two things happen.

Or at least, two things relevant to our imaginative project here:

- (1) they perform exercises which increase their faith
- (2) they pray in coordination with the army, to change history

Now I'll describe each activity in turn.

Starting with, the exercises.

These soldiers are not content with how much faith they currently have.

They want more.

So they have found ways to move deeper every day into new depths of faith - and the primary way in which they do this is by doing something I have already described at length:

They immerse themselves in the stories and Psalms and prophecies of scripture.

But what does this look like concretely in their day-to-day lives?

Senior members in the army spend an hour on most days immersed in scripture. Memorizing, studying, wandering through the gospels, over and over again.

How do they find the time for this?

They prioritize this work over almost everything else.

And they get creative.

They purchase audiobook versions of the Bible and listen to it while doing the dishes or cooking dinner or driving.

They wake up early and read for half an hour - and they "wind down" before bed by reading for another half an hour.

Remember, they have a burning desire to do this. They do not take great pains to "exercise their faith" because they are obligated to... but because by immersing themselves in scripture they are literally stepping into a new world.

They are expanding their vision of God's kingdom - and are positioning themselves to, for the other 23 hours in the day, partner with God in making this kingdom a visible reality. And what joyous work THAT is.

The members of the army realize that,

what stands before them is a cosmic mission.

An eternal adventure.

A story as old as the world and older.

And through their Bible-immersion, they are training themselves to become the sorts of people who can play an effective and substantial role inside the grand story.

That is why they spend at least an hour every day immersed in their Bibles.

It is not out of some legalistic sense of duty.

But out of a desire to change the world - to become changed - to touch an infinite joy - to find the Kingdom.

And now we are getting to the second point which I will now address:

Their "army" responsibilities.

Part of what keeps them accountable

and faithful

and with a burning desire

to diligently immerse themselves in scripture, memorize it, go through the gospels over and over again... is their role within the Praying Army. They understand that all these decisions to read - to memorize - to study - have a direct affect on their effectiveness as praying soldiers. Every day they have responsibilities within the army, to intercede for others, and attack spiritual strongholds... and these daily responsibilities shed perspective on the rest of their lives. Reminding them every day that there is so much more going on than most people realize.

So what are their army responsibilities?

What does it look like for them to coordinate their prayers for the good of the world?

How much are they expected to intercede for others?

What does that look like?

How does they strategically plan and communicate and listen and pray - together - in a way that makes the army as a whole a mighty force for good?

I'll get to these questions tomorrow.

Til then,

Reach for the kingdom,

Ask God to open your eyes,

Believe that God wants his kingdom to come here and NOW,

and pray, pray, pray.

Towards Him,
-Sam Hayashida

Part 6: How the Praying Army Coordinates Its Prayers

Dear sister or brother,

Now things are going to get fun.

And practical.

Up until now in my picture-painting of the Praying Army, I have mostly stayed within the realm of the individual; I have not talked about what the army looks like collectively, or

how individuals coordinate together to change the world with their prayers.

Starting now, that's my goal.

And also?

Sometime at the end of this week I'd like to invite 5 people to join me in an experiment of trying to live this stuff out; where we will begin sharing requests & praying for each other's lives in the way I am now going to outline.

Alright let's dive in.

Just be warned.

THIS email is going to be a big "mathematical" - you'll see what I mean - but in future emails I will take the math and paint a picture with it, so we can see what it looks like in real life.

The "Praying Army" as I see it is divided into cohorts.

Of maybe 5-10 people each.

The reason why the army has divided itself into these smaller groups, is so that they can ensure that every member of the army is "covered" in prayer - and I mean *covered*. But more on that in a sec.

There are 3 categories of 'requests' that each member prays for:

(1) Personal requests

(2) Cohort requests

(3) Army requests

And so you can see that

(3) gets the most prayer (*because everyone in the army is praying for these requests*)

(2) gets the second most prayer (*because everyone in a given cohort is praying for these requests*)

(1) gets the least prayer (*because this is a list of requests that each individual has compiled for their own prayers only*)

So let's look at an example.

Say that you and I are part of the army.

And we are in the same cohort - along with 3 other people.

Each of us has 10 personal requests we are praying daily for.

Let's say my list includes:

(+) that I get offered the job after my interview on Tuesday

(+) that God would uproot my anger and make me more patient

(+) that Aunt Sarah would completely heal from COVID

(+) that my hurting wrist would be fully healed

(+) 6 more requests

And let's say your list includes:

(+) that your daughter's small business would double its revenue

(+) that your grandson would desire to join Celebrate Recovery and begin healing from his alcoholism

(+) that God would breathe fresh life into your church

(+) that you would find a good opportunity to share the gospel with your neighbor Ellen

(+) 6 more requests

And the three other people in our cohort also have personal lists with 10 requests each.

Suppose we all agree to choose 2 requests from our 'personal list' - and add them to the wider cohort request list.

And say I choose:

+that my hurting wrist would be healed

+that my job interview would go well

And you choose:

+that your grandson would gain a desire to join Celebrate Recovery

+that God would breathe fresh life into your church

And each of the other three members in our cohort also chooses two requests and adds them to the cohort list. Altogether this makes 10 requests that the entire cohort is praying for daily.

And so?

Arguably the most powerful "effect" which the prayers of the army have... is seen *not* in wars and elections matters of

national and international significance (though I will talk about that in a moment)... but in the churches, offices, families, towns, and communities which soldiers in the Praying Army live in. Because again, cohorts are committed to praying multiple times a day for the other soldiers in their cohort.

Ok back to the math...

So far we have two lists of 10 requests (a personal list + a cohort list) that each person is praying for daily.

But then there is the third list.

A list that the entire army is praying for.

Every member of every cohort.

Every day.

So let's say we have 100 cohorts of 5 people each.

That means 500 people are praying daily for this list, which perhaps includes:

+that God would soften Putin's heart and cause him to end the war

+that God would raise up faithful communities of praying, serving, active disciples in Seattle (dunno why Seattle, random choice)

+that God would send his Spirit abundantly to persecuted believers in Pakistan (hopefully the army would do more research and find more specific/strategic prayer requests for the Pakistani church, but this is just an example)

These prayers

are for God's kingdom to come on a large scale.

For God to move in BIG ways.

So altogether each person has 3 lists of 10 requests. 30 requests total that they are praying round and round and round throughout the week.

And let's say they commit to praying through each list 3 times.

3 times X 3 lists = 9 times praying through a list.

I know, lots of math.

But hopefully you are beginning to see beyond the numbers... to the amazing community this could create.

And the amazing changes in the world.

I'll paint the picture of what this might look like tomorrow.

Towards Him,

-Sam Hayashida

P.S. As far as launching an experiment where we try this out... I still have to work out the details. But here's the rough idea I have so far:

(a) 5-7 of us get together

(b) we each make personal prayer lists... and choose 1-2 of our requests to add to a cohort list

(c) we create a Facebook group, or some other avenue for group communication

(d) we commit to praying through each of our lists (individual + cohort) 2-3 times daily

(e) we keep each other updated with regards to the 1-2 requests we chose to add to the 'cohort request list', through the FB group... and when our requests become answered / irrelevant, we swap in new requests

I am really excited about this because I am confident participation in this group will have a powerful effect on the lives of those who participate - and specifically on their faith and belief in the power of prayer. Because we will see God move in big ways.

I'll circle back in a future email with more details about this "experiment", but feel free to reach out now and let me know if you're interested in joining.

Part 7: A Vision of a Praying Cohort

Dear sister or brother,

Yesterday I said I would spend today's email painting a picture of how the praying army functions as a single unit - and how their prayers slowly but surely begin to change the world.

So close your eyes...

Actually, keep them open so you can read.

But imagine the following with me...

... I see hundreds of people, unified by an unshakable conviction in the power of prayer.

All members of the "Army".

They know their prayers change circumstances.

Upset evil power structures.

Restore addicts to wholeness.

And so as they wander through their days, they pray.

And pray.

And pray.

But their prayers are not aimless;

They are pointed, strategic, focused.

They spend a week locking arms (spiritually speaking) with the other members in their cohort - and praying round and round a single alcoholic - and after a week of this joint, focused prayer for this one grandson of one of the members of this cohort... incredible hope and light begin to shine into the darkness of this alcoholic's life.

After two weeks something in this alcoholic's spirit shifts; suddenly his despair begins to melt away like fog in the summer sun; a desire in him appears, and begins growing, to seek out help.

After three weeks he has decided to attend celebrate recovery.

After six weeks he is a committed member of CR, and is filled with hope, for the first time in ages.

After six months his life is on a totally new path - and I would say that it was a path that this alcoholic's grandmother "could barely have imagined" just a year

prior... but that wouldn't be true. Because during her time as a soldier in the praying army she has seen this happen over and over again, in the lives of all sorts of people in all sorts of dire circumstances.

And from all these past experiences...

... witnessing darkness melt away in the face of her prayers and those of her cohort...

... she has gained an unshakable confidence that God WILL continue to do this sort of thing, lifting up the beaten-down, parting the seas, healing broken bodies and souls, *every* time she and her fellow soldiers pray.

And she's not the only one who has gained this confidence;

The other veterans in her cohort also pray with immense confidence that God WILL act in response to their prayers.

Because in their 7 years of praying together, the six of them have seen the "impossible" happen time and time again.

More:

Through their years of praying together, this cohort has become much more than just a hub of spiritual labor.

They have become a family.

They have come to know each other's struggles; each other's fears and insecurities; each other's families, and concerns, and doubts, and joys, and triumphs, and tears.

It didn't start out this way.

For the first year or two, mostly what tied these six individuals together was their joint commitment to pray.

But over time, and from their prayers for each other...
friendships began to blossom.

The posting in their Facebook group became more
vulnerable over time. They began pouring more of
themselves - their hearts - their deep concerns - into their
communication with fellow cohort members. And this
growing vulnerability caused growing trust and intimacy.

They eventually exchanged phone numbers.

Began texting each other.

Began checking in to see how the others were doing
throughout the week.

Because when you pray for someone else every day, your
love for them cannot help but start to spill over into active,
tangible, audible concern for them.

And over time this mutual love which the members of this
little cohort had for each other, bred a hotter desire in each
of them to seriously intercede on behalf of the others - and
this desire bred more frequent and more powerful prayers -
and THIS in turn bred more substantial activity of God in
response to their prayers for each other. And now...

... their lives have been totally changed as a result of these
prayers.

They each FEEL as if they are a part of some unspeakably
important mission.

And they are.

And always have been.

But the important thing is,

they BELIEVE this now, they see it, they feel it in their bones, and from this deep feeling they ACT - they pray, and pray, and pray, in faith... towards the healing of their fellow cohort members. And each other's families. And communities.

And as a result of their prayers...

... light, and joy, and healing, and glory - have come raining, pouring, flooding, into every life that comes within a 10 foot radius of these women and men.

What started as a commitment to pray for each other's lives on a daily basis, grew into something eternal. Something of cosmic proportions. Something so beautiful that the moment it is truly seen for what it is, it makes you weep.

What started as healing and blessing and an increased level of "with-God-ness" in the lives of these six individuals... spilled over the rims of their lives, into the lives of those around them.

And still,

to this day,

these six individuals continue to collaborate together, in a similar fashion to how it worked when they began:

They still request prayer for highly specific areas of their lives via a shared Facebook group, or group text.

They still share praises when God answers their requests... and they still update their requests when said requests change or become irrelevant.

The focus of the cohort's prayers is constantly shifting - because God is constantly on the move. Answering, acting, speaking, healing.

And so their praying together,

and updating each other,

has come to take on a "life of its own."

It doesn't feel like a chore, or a checking off of tasks to be fulfilled; it feels like a dance. Like playing Jazz. Like creating something beautiful together.

And all of them,

through all their praying together -

- and this is the greatest thing of all that has come from their prayers -

- they have all come to know the Voice and the Heart and the Self of the One who leads them forward - the One who speaks - the One Who Is - as a friend.

The more their prayers stretch out across the face of the earth to heal and save and restore... the more they are drawn into that inner room, to that hearth, to that chair - and to the One who sits on it.

The more their prayers move mountains and cause the Kingdom to become visible and material and present, here and now - the deeper their love grows for the One who reigns over all, and who makes the "impossible" happen.

* * * * *

It's about time to wrap up this vision-casting project.

I'll send one final email on the Praying Army tomorrow.

And in other news...

Several people reached out after the email I sent yesterday and said they want to join my experiment, where we will essentially try living out what I have written about in the past two weeks. Committing to praying daily for each other, and keeping each other posted via a Facebook group I have created.

We already have enough people to start a cohort.

But if you want to join, and haven't let me know yet... please let me know ASAP. We can probably fit 1-2 more people - but after that I am going to 'shut the doors' for at least a few weeks, or maybe a few months... and then after that if the experiment is successful, and if there is more interest, I will help organize more cohorts.

Good things lie ahead.

Let's bring them into the present through our prayers.

Towards Him,

-Sam Hayashida

Part 8: The End of the Praying Army

Dear sister or brother,

We now come to the end of the Praying Army - and to the beginning.

The end because,

This will be my last email where I cast a vision for how a group of praying individuals might band together, and coordinate their prayers to change the course of history.

And also the end because,

in this email I am going to imagine the "end" or the future towards which the Praying Army prays.

But also?

This email marks the beginning.

Because a group of PrayMore members and I are going to embark on an experiment where we try putting these ideas into practice - and see where the Spirit leads us.

I feel confident that what will *actually* happen when we try this out... will look quite different from what I have imagined these past 2 weeks.

But I am also quite confident that what will actually happen, will be far more beautiful than what I have "imagined out loud" in my previous emails - since the very best of my picture-painting abilities, cannot compare to what God consistently breathes into life through the faith, prayer, and active love of his servants.

But more on this "experiment" soon.

I will keep you posted about it via future emails.

(Also FYI... if at any point you become interested in joining a "Prayer Cohort" yourself - just reach out to me via email and let me know. I'll add you to a wait list, and will let you know if/when we are ready to form a new cohort)

And now?

Let's imagine the future which the Praying Army prays and labors for.

First thing I see is...

... the multiplication of each cohort.

One of the central prayers that every cohort prays daily is some version of:

"Lord of the Harvest... call more of your servants into lives of constant, faith-filled prayer and active love!"

They know their own prayers are woefully insufficient for the healing of the world.

MORE praying workers are needed - MANY more -

and so every day, they ask God to call more people into lives overflowing with prayer.

And God responds.

People come crawling out of the woodwork.

Hungry for something more.

Hungry to actively participate in God's "cosmic operation" through which he is making all things new.

People witness what happens in these prayer cohorts, and they "want in", so they ask to join; eventually those cohorts grow too big; they split into two separate cohorts. Two turns to four, turns to eight, turns to a hundred, turns to a thousand... and still, more hungry laborers keep on coming...

... and so cohorts begin popping up all over the nation, and all over the world.

Small groups of men and women who faithfully pray each day for each other.

And whose prayers overflow into the neighborhoods and families and offices around them.

And since these communities are connected to each other via the wider network of "The Praying Army" - stories get shared between cohorts. The "prayer victories" of one become the prayer victories of all. When God does "the impossible" in response to one cohort's prayers, it builds the faith of the entire Army. And so the Army becomes a place of incredible confidence in God. Members begin to expect the "impossible" when they pray; because they are so convinced that God loves His children, that he WANTS to bring his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, and that *"if they abide in Jesus, and his words abide in them, they can ask whatever they wish - and it WILL be done for them"* (John 15:7, emphasis mine)

They are glowing with confidence in God -

- because again, they have watched God part the seas and multiply loaves and fish time and time again, in their own lives and in the lives others in the army.

But confidence in God is not the only thing that "spreads" throughout the Army like wildfire;

Sensitivity to the Spirit and Voice of God begins to grow in all members.

As does kindness and gentleness and all the fruit of the Spirit.

Because the more these cohorts "fix their eyes on Jesus" - the more they see the tenderness of God.

They see God's aching compassion towards all who suffer.

They see his desire that "not one should perish".

They see God answer persistent requests for healing and restoration, time and time again, and in seeing this they see God's Love in a visible and active form.

And in seeing all this...

... God's Love drip, drip, drips into their hearts.

It changes them to the core.

It heals them.

It opens up new channels of forgiveness in these praying soldiers.

It begins to make their cracked and broken hearts more whole.

It cleanses them of the hatred, the shame, the bitterness, the condemnation, the contempt, the lust, the greed, the anxiety, the fear, that swirled around and around in their depths for so much of their lives.

Not all at once.

But every drip of God's Love that soaks into the hearts of these Praying soldiers... and every drip which then flows out again through their prayers and into the world... carries with it a particle of shame, of contempt, of fear. It washes all these "particles" out of them. Forever. Never to be seen again.

And so day by day...

... the weight on their chest grows lighter.

The contempt and judgement and anger they felt towards political opponents - family members who wounded them - bosses, lawyers, "enemies" of all sorts - all these begin to disappear. And their place goodwill towards all these people appears; a desire for God to bless these people, to heal them, to forgive them, to restore them.

And as this "goodwill" towards ALL people grows in their depths, so does a wonderful sense of *freedom*.

They feel freer than they have ever been.

Freed from a poison they never knew was in them.

Freed from a need to "take matters into their own hands".

Freed to work side by side with God, in healing the world and establishing his everlasting, joyous reign...

... and in this spirit, the Praying Army continues to labor and dream with God.

Fixing their eyes on Jesus.

And through him - through the eyes of faith - they see the world that is to come.

They embody that world in their own daily choices.

And they continue relentlessly asking God to bring that world into visible, tangible existence NOW, in the spaces and bodies and neighborhoods and offices around them - refusing to stop praying until that other world, *that other Kingdom*, exists "on earth as it is in heaven," and the Great Prayer is finally met with a "YES" that resounds to the edges of eternity.

That is the future towards which the Praying Army prays.

And stepping outside of our "imagining" now...

... that is the future we are headed towards.

You and I and the whole world.

All shall be well.

And all manner of things shall be well.

And I leave you with a question:

What if the thing that stands between that moment in history when "all shall be well" is not a set amount of time... but is prayer?

Towards Him,
-Sam Hayashida

* * * * *

Postlude: after writing this series of emails, I began an experimental "prayer cohort" with 7 PrayMore subscribers and myself.

It has only been two weeks since we started, but absolutely amazing things have happened so far. God is showing up in big ways. And I strongly suspect we will be forming new cohorts soon.

If you want to join a cohort, read [this google doc](#) which I wrote after we began our experiment, where I cast a little more vision to what we are doing with these cohorts. If that is something you are on board with and want to join, email me at help@praymore.today and let me know you're interested in joining a cohort - and I'll add you to the waiting list.