

Session 6

Spirit-Led Prayer

This session covers:

- The importance of Spirit-led prayer
- The dynamics of Spirit-led prayer
- Five keys to Spirit-led prayer

Understanding Spirit-Led Prayer

1. Spirit-led prayer is critical in the end-times.

- As the Lord's return draws near, the Body of Christ has many urgent prayer needs. There are wars, rumors of war, natural disasters, and political strife in many nations. In every local church, there are personal issues, ministry issues, and family issues that also require prayer. Most of us would agree—there is not enough time or energy to pray frequently and fervently for everything and everybody that needs prayer.
- So what should we pray for? How often should we pray for a particular issue? And when have we prayed sufficiently for a particular issue?
- In this session, we will answer these questions as we discuss Spirit-led prayer.

2. There are at least three reasons why we are motivated to pray for a certain issue.

- First, we pray because *the Bible tells us to pray*. Paul told Timothy,

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who de-

sires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

- As Paul wrote to his spiritual son Timothy, he urged him to make prayer a priority in his life—to *make prayer a routine discipline* in his life. Likewise, we should pray simply because the Bible tells us to pray.
- Second, we are motivated to pray for a certain issue when we see a need. Referring to Jesus, the Bible says, “*Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them*, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). Out of His compassion, Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38). Just as compassion motivated Jesus to minister, compassion motivates us to pray.
- Third, we are motivated to pray for a certain issue by the Holy Spirit. Paul said,

With all prayer and petition pray at all times *in the Spirit*, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:18-19).

- Notice that we are to pray “in the Spirit”—or said another way, *as the Holy Spirit leads*. This type of prayer is known as prophetic intercession or Spirit-led prayer. Whatever we call it, praying “in the Spirit” is *prayer that is initiated, directed, and empowered by the Holy Spirit*.
- Since the first two motivations for prayer are more familiar to most of us, we will devote this session to understanding Spirit-led prayer.
- Before we begin, one word of caution is necessary. Praying because the Bible says to pray or because we see a need are excellent reasons to pray. We don’t have to hear an audible word from God, see a dramatic vision, or have a dream about a crisis in order to pray. Some only pray if they sense the Holy Spirit leading them to pray. Others only pray because they know they should pray or because they see a need. However, we must be balanced and avoid the extremes. We should pray because the Bible says to pray, when we see a need, and when the Holy Spirit leads us.

3. Spirit-led prayer is praying what we hear God speak.

- The Scriptures tell us to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), to walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25), to be led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14), and to pray in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18; 1 Cor. 14:15). These verses show us that our lives should be totally controlled and directed by the Holy Spirit. This includes prayer.
- Looking again at Ephesians 6:18, Paul said, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”
- First, let’s examine the phrase *in the Spirit*. The Living Bible translates this phrase as “ask God for anything in line with the Holy Spirit’s wishes.” This phrase reveals that Spirit-led prayer focuses on the issues that are on God’s heart for that particular moment. Barbara Wentroble, in her book, *Prophetic Intercession*, writes,

In prophetic intercession, we come into the presence of the Lord and hear His mind and counsel. We are then able to pray things that are on His heart. Too often we pray the things that are on our hearts and fail to hear Him. It is through seeking, hearing and speaking forth His mind that we see powerful breakthroughs occur.¹

- Prophetic intercession—or Spirit-led prayer—involves seeking God’s presence in order to fellowship with Him, hearing His voice on behalf of others, and then praying the mind and counsel of God.²
- Next, referring again to Ephesians 6:18, let’s look at the phrase *at all times*. At first glance, this verse appears daunting. How can anyone pray all the time? How do we sleep, eat, and earn a living and still obey this verse? Understanding the Greek word translated *times* will bring clarity. There are two Greek words for time—*chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* means time in a general sense, referring to a period or space of time.³ *Kairos*, on the other hand, means *an opportune, seasonable, or right time*.⁴ *Kairos* is the Greek word used in Ephesians 6:18. Therefore, Spirit-led prayer also involves praying the mind and counsel of God *at the right moment in time*.
- Now let’s examine the phrase *be on the alert with all perseverance*. Paul was telling the Ephesians to always be attentive and ready to pray when God gives the command—and to persevere with this attitude. This is how ancient watchmen used to function. They faithfully took their shift on the city walls looking for the enemy, for traveling parties, or for any dignitaries that might be coming to the city. As they watched and waited, they kept themselves alert and attentive. In a similar way, God wants us to be on the alert at *all times* so that we can pray at opportune times.
- We should always be alert and obedient to the Holy Spirit’s promptings so that praying God’s heart at the appropriate time and season becomes a habit in our lives. To pray in the Spirit, we must faithfully wait to hear God’s voice with an alert spirit. Then we can pray His heart, mind, and counsel into a given situation.
- Finally, Paul told the Ephesians to pray *with all prayer and petition*. In other words, he exhorted this church to pray with all of their heart. This means we should take prayer serious, and if called on to pray, do it with deep conviction. We are to pray with fervency and deep sincerity as the Holy Spirit leads.

4. Spirit-led prayer is important because God has chosen to work through man.

- Referring to the truths we discussed in Session 3, we know that prayer is not just a good thing; it is a necessary thing. God needs our prayers because He has chosen to work through man. It is our responsibility to take dominion over the earth and to help bring God’s kingdom from heaven to earth.
- We are responsible to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). The problem is that we do not always know God’s will. Nor do we know His timing, strategy, or method for accomplishing His will. That is why we must rely on the Holy Spirit to tell us what, when, and how to pray. This is the only way that we can effectively pray God’s will from heaven to earth. To pray this way, we must learn to hear God voice so that we know His will. Then, because God has chosen to work through man, we need to voice our prayers for God’s will to be done on the earth.

In summary, Spirit-led prayer involves:

1. Coming into God's presence on a regular basis;
2. Keeping our spirit alert and attentive to God's voice;
3. Relying on God's voice to direct our prayers;
4. Praying God's heart, mind, and counsel into a specific situation;
5. Praying this way at strategic or opportune times as orchestrated by the Holy Spirit.

The Dynamics of Spirit-led Prayer

1. Spirit-led prayer helps us know *what* to pray.

- Often, we do not know what to pray. We know we should pray that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. But we do not always know God's will for a particular situation. That is why we need revelation of God's prayer strategy so we know what to pray.
- The Holy Spirit, our Helper, will inform us what to pray. Paul wrote,

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:26-28).

- An illustration will help you understand how God shows us what to pray in a certain situation. From Session 5, recall the story of how our church prayed fervently for the opening in the United States Supreme Court. Initially, President Bush nominated his attorney, Harriet Miers, for the post. When she was nominated, many believers in America were stunned. Nobody knew her, but we did know that she was pro-life and pro-God. Many intercessors did not know whether to pray that the U.S. Senate would approve her or to pray that God would replace her with someone more experienced. As we prayed for this situation, the Holy Spirit led many intercessors to pray *Your will be done*. After a short time, Mrs. Miers withdrew her name from the post. The prayers of the saints had been effective. Following her withdrawal, President Bush nominated Samuel Alito for the vacant spot. This time the Holy Spirit spoke clearly that this was God's man. During the several month confirmation process, the Holy Spirit gave intercessors specific things to pray. As a result of these Spirit-led prayers, Samuel Alito was sworn in as the one-hundred and tenth Justice of the Supreme Court on February 1, 2006.
- As we learn to pray Spirit-led prayers, the Holy Spirit will tell us what to pray.

2. Spirit-led prayer helps us know *when* to pray.

- The Bible says that the sons of Issachar were "men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do" (1 Chron. 12:32). Because these men knew the times and seasons, they developed strategies and plans

that helped Israel take the appropriate action in each situation.

- On the other hand, the Jews in Jesus' day did not know the times and seasons. Luke wrote,

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

- Because the Jews did not understand who Jesus was, they rejected His ministry. In doing so, they "did not recognize the time of [their] visitation." Had the Jews known the times and seasons—had they been like the sons of Issachar and known the prophetic moment that God had ordained for them—they would not have missed their day of visitation.
- We need to be like the sons of Issachar. We need to know the prophetic times and seasons so that we can pray more effectively.
- The Scriptures reveal three divisions of time that we need to understand in order to pray more effectively. These are times, seasons, and moments.
- *Times* are an extended period in God's timetable. The Book of Revelation defines a *time* as a yearlong period (Rev. 12:14). Jesus referred to "the time" as the three-and-a-half years of His earthly ministry (Luke 19:41-44). God's times are extended periods in which He is doing certain things. For example, we live in the times when God is restoring His Church. He is restoring passionate love for Jesus, the offices of prophet and apostle, and the ministries of worship and prayer. God is doing many great things in these *times*. As God's praying army, understanding the times will help us pray for the issues that are on God's heart.
- God also speaks to His people in terms of *seasons*, which are shorter than times. In many places of the world, a year consists of four distinct seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter. In other places, there is the rainy season and the dry season. In virtually every place, there are certain types of seasons. Whether there are two or four seasons where you live, each season has certain characteristics. When a season is over, a new season comes with unique traits. In the same way, God works in seasons with individuals, churches, and nations. There are seasons in which the Holy Spirit wants to accomplish certain things. For example, at the time of this writing, our church is in a season where God is developing us into a house of prayer. In this season, He is teaching us about the end-times, Israel's restoration, and the issues that we must pray for. We are in a season of going deeper in prayer. Whatever *season* you are in affects how you pray. That is why discerning your present season is so important.
- God also speaks to His people in terms of "moments." As we saw earlier, Paul told the Ephesians to pray at all times. After the last session, we know that Paul was telling them to pray fervently at God-ordained moments. The same is true today. There are moments of urgency when the Holy Spirit calls us to pray. These God-ordained moments are vital for our well-being and for God's purposes to be accomplished.

- After the twelve spies traveled through the Promised Land, they gave the people a bad report that filled them with doubt and unbelief. As a result, God pronounced judgment on them. After hearing this, the people changed their mind and rose up to possess the land (Num. 14:40). But it was too late; the moment had passed.
- In a similar way, there are times when the call to prayer is urgent. At that moment, we should devote ourselves to fervent prayer. Failure to recognize the moment and pray accordingly will result in delays, obstacles, or even destruction. On the other hand, Spirit-led prayers at these God-ordained moments lead to great victory.
- Discerning God's times, seasons, and moments, and praying accordingly, advances His kingdom in the earth. As we keep our spirit alert to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, He will always reveal the Father's times, seasons, and moments so that we will know when to pray.

3. Spirit-led prayer helps us know *how* to pray.

- Not only will the Holy Spirit show us what to pray and when to pray; He will also show us *how* to pray. He will direct us to use the right type of prayer for the right situation.
- As we saw in the previous two sessions, there are at least fifteen different types of prayer. How do we know what type of prayer to use in a given situation? Should we bind the enemy or loose God's power? Should we proclaim God's victory or pray a covenant promise? We don't want to bind the enemy if we should be praying the Word or making a prophetic declaration.
- As we rely on the Holy Spirit, He will show us what type of prayer to use. He will reveal *how* we should pray.

4. Spirit-led prayer helps us know *how much* to pray.

- Paul said, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *having done all, to stand*" (Eph. 6:13, NKJV). Notice that Paul said "having done all, to stand."
- After we have prayed all that we know to pray, there comes a time to stand in faith—knowing that God has heard our prayers and that He will answer them in His timing. This is when the Holy Spirit might lead us to worship, praise, or go our way in peace because we have "done all."
- Some people teach that if we pray something more than once, we are demonstrating a lack of faith. They teach that we should pray for an issue once and then believe. Though faith is important, the Scriptures also exhort us to persevere in prayer. Often, the enemy's strongholds are so entrenched that a one-time prayer is not sufficient. That is why we must diligently cry out for God to bring a breakthrough. Persistent prayer fills the heavenly incense bowls so that at the right moment the answer can be released.
- Although persistent prayer is vital, there comes a time when the Holy Spirit no longer prompts or anoints us to keep praying for an issue. Whether through a confirming Scripture or peace in our heart, the Holy Spirit will let us know when we have "done all." At that moment, it is time to stand in faith on the prayers we have already prayed.
- The Holy Spirit will let us know *how much* prayer is necessary in a situation. Just as He helps us know what to pray, when to pray, and how to pray, He

will also show us how much prayer is necessary to break through the enemy's opposition so that victory will come.

Five Keys to Spirit-led Prayer

We will now look at five keys that will activate Spirit-led prayer. Although many other things could be listed, these keys, if faithfully practiced, will facilitate Spirit-led prayer.

1. Learning to hear God's voice activates Spirit-led prayer.

- In our Lifeschool class, *Learning to Hear God's Voice*, we list nine common ways that God speaks to us today. These are:
 1. An internal audible voice
 2. A phrase coming as a thought in our mind
 3. A single word coming as a thought
 4. A "rhema" Scripture verse that applies to our present circumstances
 5. Supernatural intuition
 6. Feelings in our body
 7. Sensing someone else's burden or bondage
 8. Dreams
 9. Visions
- Learning to hear God speak to us in these ways, along with the other ways He speaks, activates Spirit-led prayer.
- An illustration will help you understand how hearing God empowers Spirit-led prayer. Recently, the Lord called our church to twenty-one days of seeking God with prayer and fasting. The Holy Spirit led us into this season through a prophetic word that said God would bring breakthrough in several different areas if we prayed and fasted for twenty-one days. As we began seeking God for breakthrough, the Holy Spirit highlighted 2 Samuel 5 as a "rhema" word to us. This passage reveals God as the Lord of the breakthrough. This passage gave us a five-phased prayer strategy for our twenty-one days of prayer and fasting. The five phases included crying out to God for breakthrough, asking what we needed to do to experience breakthrough, thanking God for breakthrough, and declaring that God was releasing breakthrough. As we sought God over this twenty-one day period, He released some powerful breakthroughs in people's lives. God provided breakthrough because we prayed *as the Spirit led*.
- Barbara Wentroble writes about how dreams inspire prophetic intercession:

God communicates many times to intercessors through dreams. Author Jane Hamon says these dreams are sometimes used to communicate battle plans to the intercessors. It has been amazing to me as co-pastor of a prophetic Church when several people in the body, and at times even people who live in another place, have extremely similar troubling dreams. They have, at times, brought them to me because of their disturbing nature only to discover that several others have had similar dreams within a short period of time. Many times these dreams provide revelation concerning our heavenly battle.⁵

- Visions can also inspire fervent prayer. Writing about Peter's commission to eat with and minister to Gentiles (Acts 10:9-23), Dr. Peter Wagner writes,

God knew that ordinary communication processes would not be adequate to move Peter in the radical direction He wanted him to go. So God did an extraordinary thing and gave Peter the famous vision of the unclean food in the sheet. Peter's background had personally prepared him to receive visions. For one thing, it would fit his worldview. Unlike many today, Peter believed that one of God's normal ways of communicating from time to time was through visions and dreams. He was praying at the time, so his heart was open to God.⁶

- In whatever way we receive revelation, hearing God's voice is essential to Spirit-led prayer.

2. Entering God's presence positions us to hear His voice for prayer.

- There is a life-giving river that flows from the throne of God (Ezek. 47:1-12). As we enter God's presence and come boldly before His throne, a spiritual river, empowered by the Holy Spirit, flows into our life and church.
- As we press in to God's presence through praise and worship, we encounter the river of life that flows from God's throne. We connect with God and begin to discern His voice, mood, and will. Then we can pray according to God's will and desires.
- Entering God's presence positions us to hear His voice for prayer.

3. Praying with our mind is a catalyst for Spirit-led prayer.

- Paul said that he prayed with his mind (1 Cor. 14:15). In other words, Paul prayed what was on *his* heart and what was in *his* mind.
- As we pray what is on our heart and mind, we will often sense the Holy Spirit anointing our prayers. Our prayers, which began with our own mind, quickly become Spirit-led prayers.
- Do not underestimate the power of this simple point. This is a common method for initiating Spirit-led prayer. If we start praying what we think should be prayed, the Holy Spirit will empower and direct our prayers.
- Praying with our mind is a catalyst for Spirit-led prayer.

4. Listening for the call to pray *and* listening as we pray helps us discern the Spirit's leading.

- Struggling at the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked some of His disciples to watch and pray. He said, "Keep *watching and praying* that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).
- In the same way, we are called to watch and pray. It is easy to be distracted by the cares and pleasures of the world. These distractions make us dull and keep us disconnected from God. That is why we must resist distractions and keep our spirit awake, alert, and watchful. We must train our spirit to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit so that we can discern God's call to prayer.
- We should also remain alert so that we can listen to the Holy Spirit *as we pray*. This is important in group prayer. We should always be listening to

God's voice so that we know what to pray next.

- Developing the discipline of listening for the call to prayer and listening as we pray helps us follow the Holy Spirit in prayer.

5. Asking God for the spirit of prayer and supplication activates Spirit-led prayer.

- Paul said, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil 4:6).
- Before you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to give you grace as you pray. This will empower your time of prayer, supplication, and intercession.
- It takes God to pray Spirit-empowered prayers. As we ask God for grace, He will come, take control, and empower our prayers by His Spirit.
- Again, do not underestimate this simple point. You will see a significant difference in the fervency, power, and anointing on your prayers when you ask God to empower them.
- When you ask God for the spirit of prayer and supplication He will help you pray Spirit-led prayers.

Spirit-led prayer is essential. We must know the times, seasons, and moments for prayer. We must know what, when, how, and how long to pray. As you yield to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to empower your prayer, your prayer life will never be the same.

Notes

1. Wentroble, *Prophetic Intercession*, p. 87.
2. Ibid., p. 86.
3. *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* (Ontario, Canada: Woodside 3 Bible Fellowship and the Institute for Creation Research, 1993), s.v. "chronos," referenced from PC Study Bible v3.2 (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft 2001).
4. *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* (Ontario, Canada: Woodside Bible Fellowship and the Institute for Creation Research, 1993), s.v. "kairos," referenced from PC Study Bible v3.2 (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft 2001).
5. Wentroble, *Prophetic Intercession*, p. 62.
6. C. Peter Wagner, *Lighting the World* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), p. 75-76, quoted in Wentroble, *Prophetic Intercession*, p. 63.

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. Praying in tongues is one form of Spirit-led prayer, but Spirit-led prayer involves much more than praying in tongues.
- _____ 2. Spirit-led prayer is one of three motivations for prayer discussed in this session.
- _____ 3. Spirit-led prayer helps intercessors know what to pray.
- _____ 4. Learning to hear God's voice activates Spirit-led prayer.
- _____ 5. Spirit-led prayer is important because God has chosen to work through man.
- _____ 6. Spirit-led prayer and prophetic intercession are basically two ways of saying the same thing.

Fill in the Blank

- 7. Spirit-led prayer helps us know _____, _____, _____, and _____ to pray.
- 8. To pray effectively, we need to know the prophetic _____ and _____ so that we can pray more effectively.
- 9. As we saw in the previous session, there are at least fifteen different types of prayer. _____ prayer will direct us to use the right type of prayer for the right situation.
- 10. Entering God's _____ positions us to hear His voice for prayer.
- 11. Praying with our _____ is a catalyst for Spirit-led prayer.
- 12. Listening as we pray helps us discern the Spirit's _____.
- 13. Spirit-led prayer allows us to know when to pray and when to _____.
- 14. Even in our sleep, we can be led by the Spirit through _____ to pray into a specific issue and in a specific way.

15. In whatever way we receive revelation, _____ God is essential to Spirit-led prayer.

Matching (Place the letter of the correct answer in the blank space)

- _____ 16. Involves seeking God's presence in order to fellowship with Him, hear His voice on behalf of others, and then praying the mind and counsel of God.
- _____ 17. Opportune times and seasons in God
- _____ 18. Asking God to empower Spirit-led prayers
- _____ 19. Spirit-led prayer tells us what, how, when, and how much to pray.
- _____ 20. Learning to hear God's voice

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. Spirit of prayer and supplication
- b. Chronos
- c. Urgency to pray
- d. Dynamics of Spirit-led prayer
- e. Prophetic intercession
- f. Key to Spirit-led prayer
- g. Kairos