Prayer Guide

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?
HE WANTED TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF SO HE ASKED JESUS, “WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?”

LUKE 10:29
Devotions

These devotions with prayer points are intended to assist believers as they seek Christ personally and corporately for revival and spiritual awakening. The biblical basis for the devotion is Luke 10:29, “Who is my neighbor?”

The story of King Jehoshaphat’s early days as king of Judah and institution of reforms in 2 Chronicles 17:1-12 provides the biblical backdrop for each of the devotional sections. Each section focuses on one principle related to God’s invitation to experience Him through revival and spiritual awakening as they relate to believers having gospel impact with one’s neighbors. As we unite in these devotions, may our prayer be, “Oh Lord, will You begin a work of revival and spiritual awakening in my heart, my family, my church, my state and my nation so that my neighbors may know and fear You!”
INTRODUCTION

The lawyer’s question in Luke 10:29 provides an excellent opportunity for Jesus to expound upon the lawyer’s previous reference to Deuteronomy 6:5 and teach His followers concerning His redemptive work through their lives as a neighbor.

Jesus accomplishes this through the use of the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 where He drives home one major truth: Christ-followers must be willing to love and be a neighbor to all people in their world regardless of any religious, human or natural differences. This means Christians must make disciples of all nations as they love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul, spirit and their neighbor as themselves (Matthew 28:18-20; 22:37-40). With 65-90 percent of evangelical churches in America declining or maintaining and gospel impact and engagement at a very low point, it is evident that believers and churches are struggling to obey Christ’s Great Commission and Great Commandment. Because of this reality, we are losing families, friends and neighbors to paganism right before our eyes. In the meantime, the church continues doing church as usual, depending on its own wisdom and ability, drowning in disunity and apathy, and blending with the culture in disobedience and unholy living. If change does not occur, more and more of our neighbors will certainly perish without Christ.

Therefore, there is no greater need than for God’s people to experience Him in heaven-sent revival and spiritual awakening. We are talking about revival, where believers and churches are genuinely renewed, restored, and refreshed in their love for God, His mission and all peoples. And we’re talking about a sweeping spiritual awakening, which results in multitudes of lost people being convicted of their sin and awakened to their desperate need for salvation in Jesus. What will you do about the need for revival and spiritual awakening in your life, church, community, state and nation? Will revival and spiritual awakening start with you, your church and in your neighborhood? It can, but will it? Your lost neighbors are waiting.
Section 1
Revival & Loving Your Neighbor
SECTION 1

“THEN JEHOSHAPHAT REIGNED...STRENGTHENED HIMSELF... AND SET GARRISONS IN THE LAND OF JUDAH AND IN THE CITIES OF EPHRAIM.” (2 CHRONICLES 17:1-2)

When Jehoshaphat’s father, King Asa, refused to repent and return to the Lord after many opportunities from God, the Lord drew the line in the sand and Asa’s 41-year reign and life came to an end. After such a long tenure by a king, you can imagine the restlessness and uncertainty that filled the land (2 Chronicles 15:19-16:14).

That season of spiritual, political and social upheaval could have been a disastrous time for Judah if the incoming king had not responded correctly. What Jehoshaphat did next shows the measure of his great love for the Lord and the people and land he ruled. Jehoshaphat understood that it was all-important for him to give attention to the spiritual famine that existed across Judah. In the same way, he also understood that in order for him to effectively deal with the spiritual famine he had to also give attention to the basic everyday needs of his people. He thus had to love and care for his people as he sought to lead them back to the Lord.

Today, there is no doubt that this culture is in desperate need of revival and spiritual awakening. The evidence abounds — the church suffers from spiritual lethargy, the culture is restless and in moral and spiritual decline, and lostness is increasing. Yet, revival and spiritual awakening will never come if the church does not recognize her need for God and her need to see, identify, embrace and love her neighbors. This section focuses on the relationship between revival, spiritual awakening and loving my neighbor.
Then Jehoshaphat... strengthened himself.

2 CHRONICLES 17:1-2

- Father, help me to wholeheartedly embrace Your assignment in my life.
- Father, teach me to “strengthen myself” that I might be Your instrument of revival in my church and neighborhood.
Despite King Asa’s failure to finish strong as a spiritual leader and king during the last six years of his reign, the Lord was faithful to give his son Jehoshaphat great wisdom and favor to know how to begin his reign in such a way to win the loyalty, confidence and respect of the people. Because of that, the national environment was ripe for Jehoshaphat to implement future reforms and begin leading the people back to the Lord spiritually.

What did Jehoshaphat do? He “strengthened himself” as king of Judah. This means that he gave immediate attention to preparing himself for his role as king, commander and spiritual leader. The term “strengthened” describes an action that is both active and passive. Jehoshaphat did not waste any time and seized the moment at hand. He took courage and made himself strong for battle as a warrior and as a commander of the armies. He also developed his own personal spiritual life with the Lord. As a result, he was in a position to offer strong leadership as a warrior and commander of the armies of Judah and faithfully serve Judah as a wise king and spiritual leader among the people.

Jehoshaphat’s actions reflect two major truths related to revival and loving our neighbors. First, we must surrender ourselves to the Lord’s purposes that are being worked out in and through our lives. Jehoshaphat was now king whether he wanted the responsibility or not; He embraced God’s assignment wholeheartedly and began preparing himself to be the best that he could be for the Lord and His assignment. Thus, our life is to be about God and His will being worked out through us as we embrace His assignment as His instrument in our neighborhoods and in our world.

Second, we are to take an active role and “strengthen” ourselves spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally before God so that we can be an instrument in His hand. Many believers pray, “God, send a revival” or “revive me,” but they are not willing to change anything in their lives to prepare or strengthen their walk with God so that He can revive their hearts and use them in their neighbor’s lives. How are you “making yourself strong” so that you can be used to love and reach your neighbors for Christ?

What changes or steps of obedience need to take place in your life so that you will be in a position to embrace God’s assignment? Is your spiritual life vital, ripe and ready for use in the Master’s hand? What about your physical, mental and emotional life? Revival does not need to start with someone else, it needs to start with me. Are you in a position for God to start revival with you?

PRAYER NOTES
Then Jehoshaphat placed troops... and set garrisons in the land

2 Chronicles 17:1-2

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, transform and burden my heart to genuinely love and care for the people who are my neighbors.
- Ask the Lord to show you and your church tangible ways you can love your neighbors.
DO YOU REALLY CARE?

During his tenure as professor at Halle University in Germany, August Hermann Francke realized that his efforts to take the gospel to the poverty-stricken children and orphans who begged on the streets in the slums near the university were being hindered by two contributing factors. Their physical and felt needs were not being met, and most of the children either lived on the streets or came from very difficult home environments.

What Francke did next demonstrated his vital faith and genuine love for children. Francke began by providing living quarters for some of the children. These efforts were expanded each year until Francke’s faith-based ministry was able to build its first large building to house orphans called the “Orphan’s House.” The “Orphan’s House” became the first of many different types of ministries and institutions that soon followed including homes for unmarried women and widows. These acts of love paved the way for the gospel to run rapidly among the lost in Halle and beyond. Eventually, Lutheran pietism challenged the established church in the early 1700s to live out their faith in a way that showed a genuine love for the spiritual and practical needs of the lost.

In today’s text, Jehoshaphat demonstrated his love and care for Judah and his people by immediately placing troops in the cities and sending garrisons of soldiers throughout the land at the beginning of his reign. This sacrificial and swift action also sent a clear message of stability, readiness and strength to the surrounding enemies and nations — especially Israel.

When Jehoshaphat placed troops in the cities, he showed the people of Judah that law and order where they lived was important to him as their king. This produced rest in people’s hearts. The setting of garrisons throughout the land also demonstrated that he was serious about securing law and order in the entire land and among all the people, even the acquired cities and land in Ephraim. This not only produced rest but trust among the people.

Broken and hurting people are everywhere, and God wants His people to be His hands, feet and mouth to share the hope of Jesus with them. That means like Jehoshaphat and Francke, we must be willing to not only love people by telling them about Jesus, we must also love people by showing them Jesus. Genuine revival always produces believers who care about people. Do you really care about people? Do you need revival?

PRAYER NOTES
...all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another

John 13:35

Prayer Prompts

- Lord, renew my commitment to love fellow Christians with Your agape love.
- Ask the Lord to send a fresh spirit of oneness and agape love in the American church.
When revival broke out at the Ebenezer Church in Saskatoon, Canada in the fall of 1971, Pastor William McLeod was surprised by the large number of his leaders and altar counselors who were confessing sins against one another and the Lord. Pastor McLeod and others had been praying and seeking the Lord for a movement of God in revival for years. McLeod had also been diligent to raise up solid believers who were leaders in the church. When revival came, everything was laid bare before the convicting work of God’s Spirit as people confessed bitterness and hatred for one another within his own church.

McLeod would later bear witness that the chief characteristics of the revival were a deep conviction of sin and a genuine love for the brethren. God’s people who were at odds with each other were soon reconciled in Christ’s love and forgiveness as they confessed and repented together. This also took place among the laity and other ministers and churches throughout the whole area. The movement soon spread eastward and westward across Canada in churches, on college campuses and in many communities. The honesty and confession of sin which resulted in a renewed love for the brethren among believers, soon began to reap a great harvest among the lost as crusades and revival teams spread out across Canada and in parts of the United States.

In John 13:35, Jesus speaks to His disciples during His farewell discourse and gives them a new commandment which emphasized His expectation for them to genuinely express agape love for one another. This new commandment was only possible because of Jesus and His sacrificial death, victorious resurrection and glorious ascension to the Father’s right hand (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Thus, the new commandment is significant in that it paves the way for the church to exercise God’s sacrificial and outward flowing agape love toward the brethren and world.

The practice of Christ’s agape love sets the Christian community apart as Jesus’ disciples before “all” people. Therefore, “all” will “know” that they are distinctively Christ-followers by the way they exercise His agape love toward one another. To “know” is not simply to understand with the mind, but to know experientially. Thus, through obedience to this new commandment, Christ followers can demonstrate the fulfillment of the Old Testament commands to love God with all their heart and their neighbor as their self (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18).

This is something that is desperately needed if lostness is going to be impacted with the gospel. Do fellow believers experience God’s agape love through your life? If not, what will you do?
And now abide faith, hope, love... but the greatest of these is love.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive me for my lack of sacrificial love for my lost neighbors.
- Ask the Lord to raise up a generation of believers in your church who will love the lost into God’s kingdom.
I will never forget that day. It was a clear summer day in Boiling Springs, N.C., and I was a religious studies student struggling with first year Greek. Thankfully, the Lord had provided Mrs. Mary as a volunteer tutor to help me learn Greek. Mrs. Mary was a widow in her late 70s, had a vibrant witness for Christ and walked with Him in a very intimate relationship. She had volunteered to read Greek with me to help with my journey back to school to answer God’s call to preach and pastor. We met weekly on her porch to study the Greek Bible.

One day we were studying a biblical text related to the agape love of God. She was describing the root meaning of the word, explaining that it related to God’s love in Christ and is sacrificial and always flows outwardly toward others. Then she stopped and with tears running down her cheeks, she said to me, “Do not ever forget that the most effective way to lead people into God’s kingdom is to love them into the kingdom.” Then she told me about a student she had led to Christ while tutoring at the local high school. She described how that particular student was from a very dysfunctional family, was very poor and had very few clothes to wear to school. Then she said, “I used the Scriptures to teach him to read, I prayed for him daily and I bought and gave him some new pants and shirts to wear to school. It was not long until he wanted to know about Jesus.”

In today’s verse, Paul describes the basis for exercising the gifts of ministry that God gives and calls His people to utilize as His witnesses. Two truths are important to note in this verse. First, God’s agape love is not practiced in a vacuum. It is best experienced and shared out of a heart or context where both faith and hope are present and active. Thus he says these three “abide” or “remain” or are “present.” This means that faith, hope and love go hand in hand, compliment or support one another. Second, agape love is the greatest of the three. Why? Because agape love is God’s love in Christ. It is eternal, outward flowing, sacrificial love that originates and flows out of the heart of God. God is love, and His agape love is experienced and possessed by those He redeems in and through Jesus Christ. Thus, believers can love their neighbors in a sacrificial way, not because of their human or natural abilities or desires, but because God first loved them, and they now possess that same agape love in Jesus (1 John 4:7-11).

When God’s people experience genuine revival, believer’s hearts are renewed and filled up in a fresh way with God’s agape love for others. I believe Mrs. Mary was right. Shall we love people into God’s kingdom?
Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am ... that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

**Prayer Prompts**

- Pray for the Lord to spark a genuine revival of His love for the lost in your heart.
- Ask the Father to help your church be with Jesus where He is, loving your world.

**John 17:24, 26**
Genuine revival always produces a desire to be with Jesus and the lost. The great Moravian Revival that swept Herrnhut, Germany, in 1727 is one example. Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf led the religious refugees to come together in a feast of love, worship, the Lord’s Supper and prayer on Aug. 13, 1727. During the special service God came in revival, birthing the Moravian Church.

As the people in Herrnhut experienced genuine revival, their hearts became burdened for and committed to three biblical and foundational faith essentials. One, they became deeply committed to preserving a spirit of unity and oneness among Christ-followers as they practiced love for one another and others. Two, they made sincere, diligent and devoted prayer for one another and the lost world a priority. They started a 24-hour prayer watch, and 48 individuals committed to cover each day with prayer. This prayer meeting continued for 100 years and produced a hotbed of coals for world mission endeavors. Third, they became fully devoted to world evangelization and mission efforts among the lost.

Within six decades the Moravian Church had sent some 300 missionaries around the world. In some cases, the Moravian missionaries were so committed to reaching the lost that they were willing to be sold into slavery, so they could live among the slaves and reach them for Christ. Although this was not allowed, it was a sign of their burning desire to be with and love the lost into God’s kingdom.

In today’s text, Jesus’ prayer for His followers to be with Him represents His earnest desire for their presence and nearness in three ways. First, He desired for them to be secure in their salvation and ultimately enjoy fellowship with Him in heaven throughout eternity. They were His sheep and no one could pluck them out of His hand. Second, He desired that they would be with Him daily in a living, vital faith relationship. He wanted their walk with Him to be alive, real, vibrant and full of oneness. Third, He desired that they would be with Him in their world, joining Him in His redemptive work and glory. This meant that He wanted them with Him as He manifested Himself through His Spirit among lost people, convicting them concerning sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). He therefore wanted them to be with Him in the Great Commission, loving the lost (John 17:26).

The result of being with Jesus in revival is being with, loving and sharing Him among the lost. Have you ever wondered where Jesus is in your world? Where are you? Are you with Jesus, loving your neighbors? If not, why do you think that is the case?
Section 2
Seeking & Delighting in the Lord Before My Neighbor
When Jehoshaphat became king of Judah, he not only gave attention to “strengthening himself” before the Lord and the people, he also was burdened for the lack of spiritual vitality in his life and in the nation. Thus, he began to seek after and obey the Lord instead of the Baal or pagan gods. Why was this such a priority? Because Jehoshaphat had learned a valuable lesson from his father’s mistakes and truly grasped the truth of 2 Chronicles 16:9, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.”

As Jehoshaphat and Judah began to seek and obey the Lord, God heard their cries, saw their obedience and poured out His nearness and favor upon Jehoshaphat and the kingdom. This produced a twofold response. Jehoshaphat delighted in the Lord’s activity, and the people responded by following and blessing Jehoshaphat for his leadership as king.

When we as believers begin to genuinely seek, obey and delight in the Lord and His presence in and with us, people around us will also want to seek, know and follow Him. The old saying is true, “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink. But if you can make him thirsty enough, he will drink.” This section focuses on seeking and delighting in the Lord in such a way that we make our neighbors thirsty for Jesus.
Now the Lord was with Jehoshaphat... he did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments.

2 CHRONICLES 17:3-4

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me and have mercy on me. May Your renewed presence flood my life.
- Ask God to show you if He is “with” you and your church. Pray and respond accordingly.
The description of Jehoshaphat’s early years as king in verse three begins with a very significant statement — “the Lord was with Jehoshaphat.” This meant that Jehoshaphat was the recipient of God’s grace, manifest presence, hand of favor and blessing. God was pleased with the new king and was on his side or “with” him and not against him. This was the key factor related to Jehoshaphat’s early success as king.

What determines whether or not God is “with” or for His people? Two factors surface in these verses. The first is the God factor. The sovereign God of the Bible and universe alone determines who He is “with” or for. This is ultimately determined by God in accordance with His sovereign and eternal purposes, His will and His character (Exodus 3: 13-14; 33:19; John 2:24-25; Romans 11:36; Acts 1:7; 17:24-28).

The second is the human factor. The human factor is always subservient to the God factor. The use of the causal conjunction “because” points to four reasons why, from Jehoshaphat’s perspective, he was in a position for God to be “with” him.

The first related to Jehoshaphat’s heart before the Lord. Like King David, his heart was set on pursuing the Lord (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). Second, Jehoshaphat did not seek the Baals. He was not trying to blend the worship of pagan gods with the worship of the Lord. Thus, his heart was pure in the fact that he was not looking to any of the pagan gods or idols to fulfill, satisfy or provide for him or Judah in any way.

Third, Jehoshaphat “sought” and “took delight” in the Lord. Jehoshaphat was diligent in seeking God. He treasured the Lord’s presence with him and Judah. Jehoshaphat did not seek the Lord’s blessings but he sought the Lord. Jehoshaphat desired and delighted in God’s presence more than God’s blessings.

Fourth, Jehoshaphat “walked” in God’s commandments. God’s commandments directed his life as he obeyed and followed them. Thus, in Jehoshaphat’s day, the Lord was “with” him and Judah “because” of God’s sovereign desire and because Jehoshaphat placed himself in a position for God to be “with” him by actively seeking, delighting in and obeying God.

Today, with the American church in decline and lostness rapidly increasing, maybe it’s time for believers and churches to ask a few tough questions. Is God with or for us? Are we in a position for God to manifest His presence, favor and blessings upon and through us? Why or why not? Is God judging us because of our sin? These are things to ponder, don’t you think?

PRAYER NOTES
you will seek Me & find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart

JEREMIAH 29:13

PRAYER PROMPTS

• Lord, teach me to seek after and search for You with my whole heart.
• Ask the Father to give His church in America the desire to join together in a whole-hearted search for the Lord and His renewed manifest presence.
WHOLE-HEARTED SEEKING?

Jeremiah’s words in today’s verse help clarify what whole-hearted seeking of the Lord in prayer really means. First, it involves seeking the Lord with one specific goal in mind — to “find” God. “Find” has the idea of reaching, obtaining and experiencing the thing that is sought after. Thus, God and His manifest holy presence within us becomes the treasure we seek, rather than His blessings or His help. Second, we must seek with our entire heart. “All” requires that we devote our whole heart to the task with no distractions or partial commitments. Third, the use of the term “search” describes a careful, intentional journey that is completed. Every avenue should be explored and all energy should be expended while on this journey because in the searching, we come to know and experience the Lord more fully. Thus, the Lord is found in the journey!

When the Lord poured out a season of revival and awakening upon the campus of Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, in 1905, E. Stanley Jones was completing his studies and looking forward to God’s next ministry assignment. There was only one thing that troubled him as he looked toward graduation — he did not have a clue what God wanted him to do next. That winter, Jones and other students began seeking the Lord through spontaneous prayer gatherings. While he and friends were praying one night, their ordinary intercession soon turned into a whole-hearted, desperate desire for God and His manifest presence. The result was that Jones and his friends were overcome with God’s nearness and work in their hearts in a way they had never experienced. They soon discovered that God was also moving mightily all over campus in revival. This movement eventually spread throughout the town and beyond.

During this season, Jones’ heart was filled with a sense of God’s nearness, peace and confidence about his spiritual life and future. Jones was soon asked to address a missionary meeting of students. The invitation made Jones nervous, and he began to pray diligently for the Lord’s help with what to say. Despite his anxiety, Jones sensed that God wanted to call someone to full-time missionary service as he spoke. When he gave the appeal, much to his own surprise, Jones was the one that God called into missionary service. He soon surrendered and became one of the best known, loved and faithful missionaries to India in the 1900s.

Today, dying churches and lost neighbors are waiting to find the Lord. When will we treasure the Lord’s manifest presence so much that we will get serious about the search? “You will seek Me and find me When you search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).
I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions & giving of thanks be made for all men

1 Timothy 2:1

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, stir me to faithfully pray “on behalf of” my lost neighbors and all peoples.
- Pray that the Lord would kindle a spirit of united intercessory prayer “on behalf of” lost people among believers and churches everywhere.
When R.A. Torrey and his evangelistic team began their crusades in Melbourne, Australia, in 1902, he found the soil ripe and ready for a great harvest of souls. This harvest came during the Worldwide Awakening of 1901-1910. As many as 12-13 years before God moved, He began preparing the soil for an awakening by stirring ministers and people to pray for a “big revival” to sweep Melbourne and Australia for God’s glory. Also, in the weeks leading up to Torrey’s evangelistic campaigns, God used a lay person to organize between 1,700 and 2,000 neighborhood prayer meetings with the specific assignment to persevere in prayer on behalf of the lost multitudes in Melbourne. At the close of the evangelistic meetings, some 8,000 to 9,000 people had come to faith in Christ in Melbourne alone.

Paul’s exhortation and admonishment to young Timothy in today’s text teaches us several things about seeking the Lord on behalf of our neighbors. First, seeking the Lord on behalf of our neighbors must be our first priority as Christ-followers. The term “first” refers to the priority, importance and purpose of prayer in our efforts to be, do and tell the gospel to the world. Thus, we are to precede and permeate all efforts to advance Christ’s kingdom as a community of faith through prayer.

Second, Paul uses four major New Testament words for prayer to describe what kind of praying needs to take place. “Supplications” refers to specific, need-based prayers that are focused on spiritual needs and Great Commission fulfillment. “Prayers” is the most common term used for prayer in the New Testament, and it refers to general prayer for people. “Intercessions” refers to prayers that are focused on mediation or “on behalf of” or “for” someone. Through intercession, the believer serves a priestly role as a mediator before the Lord for someone else, praying things for that individual that they will not or cannot pray for themselves, like their salvation. “Thanksgivings” are prayers of gratitude to God for the privilege to ask toward His activity, blessings and opportunities on behalf of others.

Third, the phrase “for all men” refers to the focus and scope of our praying. It is for “all men,” meaning all people. No one is to be excluded from our prayers. No race, color, creed, socio-economic status or nationality should be excluded, nor should the “kings and all who are in authority” over us (1 Timothy 2:2). Spiritual transformation of neighborhoods, municipalities and nations begins and ends with biblical, passionate, kingdom-advancing prayer on behalf of all people. When will this ever happen in our churches and neighborhoods across America? What are we waiting on?
Therefore I exhort first of all that ... prayers ... be made for all men

1 TIMOTHY 2:1

PRAYER PROMPTS

• Father, teach me to pray with my neighbor.
• Ask the Lord to give your church family a greater desire to pray for and with their neighbors.
A number of years ago, we lived across the street from a family that moved into our neighborhood who did not follow Christ. They were really great people, but they had very little background or interest in spiritual things. We began to pray for them and their salvation as a family. For months we interceded for God to open their hearts to Christ and for God to present opportunities to build genuine relationships with them.

Soon our kids connected and became the best of friends. My wife began to walk with the lady several days a week in the neighborhood, and I began to visit with the man as he gave me pointers on how to keep my lawn growing. As our relationships deepened, we were also able to pray with our neighbors. As my wife walked with her new friend, they shared their struggles in life. My wife would often pray with her friend as they walked. As I grew closer to my neighbor, he also began to open up and talk about struggles at work and with family. I too was able to pray with my neighbor about all sorts of issues related to life.

Soon our conversations began to turn toward spiritual issues. One day, our daughters spoke to their daughter about her need for salvation in our van as they came home from Vacation Bible School. My wife had many spiritual conversations about her friend’s need for Christ as they visited, walked and talked. Soon, the lady and her daughter started attending church, and they both made professions of faith. Then some months later, my friend called and asked if we could talk. I went over to see him and he said, “I have been wanting to talk to you for a long time about something. I want to learn how to talk to God.” I asked him if he knew God, and he said, “No.” Soon, he was on his knees repenting and trusting Christ as his Savior.

As we learned yesterday, Paul’s exhortation and admonishment to young Timothy included the use of the term “prayers.” This term is the most common term used in the New Testament for prayer and represents all kinds of prayers. Everyone has various needs — spiritual, emotional, physical and more. Prayer can be used by the Lord as a point of connectivity and contact to grow and develop relationships with people. When we pray with people, we demonstrate our love for God and our love for the person we are with firsthand. We help them see that our God is real and alive and that He really does care about them and their needs.

The next time you are with your neighbor and they give you a prayer request, take time at that moment to pray with them about that need. We not only need to seek the Lord on behalf of our neighbors, but we also need to pray with our neighbors. When is the last time you prayed with your neighbor?
And seek the peace of the city & where I have caused you to be carried away captive ... pray to the Lord for it

JEREMIAH 29:7

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray that your heart will be focused on seeking the Lord for the lost even in difficult times.
- Father, may we unite as believers and churches to pray to You for the cities and this nation.
Union Prayer Meetings were a primary component of the 1857-1859 Layman’s Prayer Revival that started in downtown Manhattan at the Dutch Reformed Church in the fall of 1857. Those prayer meetings demonstrated what God can do as His people unite and seek Him in one-accord prayer on behalf of the spiritual famine in their cities and nation.

What was the Union Prayer Meetings like? They started at noon and lasted one hour. The majority of the time was spent in intercessory prayer on behalf of requests shared by those attending. Most requests were focused on the spiritual needs of the lost and those who were not in close fellowship with Christ. The meetings were multidenominational and crossed social, economic and ethnic lines. The meetings were filled with a deep sense of awe and stillness, unity, God’s conviction concerning sin, and a deep love for Jesus and the lost. The meetings were often attended by lost people, and some trusted Christ during the services. Other gatherings spontaneously sprang up in cities across the nation.

What did God do in response to these focused prayer gatherings? First, He revived His church. Involvement in the evangelistic mission skyrocketed as believers and churches began to obey God and emphasize outreach to the lost through door-to-door visitation, preaching services and the development of organizations devoted to world missions. Second, God sent spiritual awakening among the lost multitudes in cities across America as nearly 1 million people were converted among a population of 30 million people.

In today’s verse, Jeremiah challenges God’s people in Babylon to faithfully seek Him through prayer despite their difficult circumstances while in captivity. Thus, instead of using their energies and efforts to work against the Chaldeans, they were to “pray to the Lord for” and “seek” or work toward the peace and welfare of the people and the cities. This was difficult because it was a call to humbly pray to the Lord on behalf of their captors. This call to prayer on behalf of one’s enemies is unprecedented in the Old Testament, and it constitutes a challenge and clarion call to be involved with God in three ways: to intercede on behalf of the people of the land, to become agents of God’s peace and blessing among the people, and to make His redemptive work known among and to their captors.

Today, the church finds itself in an ever-increasing hostile place as paganism, evil and lostness marches forward. How will we respond? Will we embrace God’s call to united prayer on behalf of the spiritual famine in the cities and the nation? What will you and your church do?
Jehoshaphat... walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israael

2 CHRONICLES 17:4

PRAYER PROMPTS

• Oh Holy Father, teach me to wed together seeking and obeying You so that I may be an instrument of Your righteousness in my world.

• Ask the Lord to enlarge the heart of your church to be a catalyst of holiness and hope to your city.
SEEKING WHILE BEING DIFFERENT

Jehoshaphat was not only faithful in seeking the Lord, but he also “walked” in God’s commandments. This means that Jehoshaphat was careful about how he lived before others. The term “walked” refers to a consistent, steady life of obedience to the commandments of God. “His commandments” refers to God’s commandments and are God’s standards and laws related to His covenant relationship with His people.

These commandments were given, received and centered in a living faith relationship with God in whom the motivation, impetus and ability to accomplish the commands are found. Thus, unlike others (e.g., Israel), Jehoshaphat was enabled through his vital and real relationship with God to live a different, genuine and steady life of obedience and faith before others. Jehoshaphat was different because his loyalties, worship, service and obedience were not given to cultural or pagan deities but solely to God. Because of this, the implications for God’s blessings and favor were great, not only for Jehoshaphat and Judah but also for others as the surrounding nations would eventually begin to fear God (2 Chronicles 17:10).

What can we learn from this as followers of Christ? In essence, what Jehoshaphat demonstrates in this text is that we cannot separate our journey of faith in our world. Our “walking” needs to flow out of our “seeking.” The two go hand in hand. We should walk differently in our world before our neighbors because “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). We should also seek Him more diligently and intimately because we are walking in His commandments.

Psalm 119: 32 brings these truths together when it says, “I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart.”

Thus, as followers of Christ we are different from our lost neighbors not because we say we are Christians, belong to a church or aspire to certain moral standards. We are different because our faith is not cold, stagnant or mechanical. Rather, it is consistent, genuine, alive and increasing in its capacity to love God and others. When this happens, we become God’s instruments of righteousness in a fallen world. This is something that is desperately needed today, don’t you think? “For it is written, ‘Be holy, as I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:16). How are you doing?
My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness.

R O M A N S  1 0 : 1 - 2

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me when I pray and do not obey Your command to be a witness.
- Pray for the Lord to raise up a generation of disciples through Your church who will pray and obey to impact lostness.
OBEDIENT SEEKING

In today’s passage, Paul explains that the chief motivating factor behind His unwavering love for and passion to reach his lost Israelite neighbors and friends rested in his “heart’s desire.” Paul’s passion for the lost was not some fleeting emotion or some dutiful activity. It flowed out of his deepest spiritual longings that were rooted in his love for and vital life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14).

This deep love drove Paul to his knees in specific, need-based “prayer.” Paul knew that the only way that the hearts of his Israelite brethren could ever change was through the power of Christ. So he sought the Lord through specific prayer toward the salvation of Israel. Paul’s praying produced a heartfelt desire to also “bear them witness.” This means that he engaged and invested in his lost brethren through dialogue and verbal witness regarding their beliefs related to the Christ (Romans 10:2). Paul was therefore obedient to Christ’s command to be His witness in the world. In other words, Paul modeled a life of witness that included being, doing and telling the gospel.

Missionary John Hyde, who was used greatly by God during the 1901-1910 Worldwide Awakening in the Punjab region of India, also lived a life of faithful and obedient seeking before others. Hyde had an undying passion and love for Christ, which translated into an unwavering resolve to seek after the lost through unceasing intercession for and witness to the lost. His deep devotion to prayer earned him the nickname “Praying Hyde.” He would sometimes spend all night with the Lord in prayer on behalf of lost multitudes throughout India. Then, after praying all night, Hyde would be out witnessing and winning those same people to Christ. It was said of Hyde that he was a “Christ-intoxicated” witness. He lived in such close communion with the Lord that obedience to Christ’s commission to be a witness was a natural part of his everyday life.

Hyde’s example underscores a significant biblical prayer principle: Believers will passionately pursue the things they passionately pray toward. When our hearts are burning hot for Christ through prayer, they will also burn hot to obey His commands as His followers. With lostness increasing exponentially in our neighborhoods, we would all do well to see the importance of bringing together heartfelt praying and faithful obedience to God’s command to love and share Christ with our neighbors. Intimacy with Christ always produces an urgent seeking of Christ which always leads to a faithful pursuit of those without Christ. In light of this, maybe the real need is not merely more evangelistic activity, but intentional prayer and intimacy with Christ that produces more evangelism. What do you think?

PRAYER NOTES

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Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand, & all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, & he had riches & honor in abundance.

2 Chronicles 17:5

**PRAYER PROMPTS**

- Father, forgive me for the times I have desired and focused on Your blessings and gifts instead of You.
- Pray for the Lord to send a fresh move of His Spirit in your church as you delight in Him.
George Muller, founder of the New Orphanage Houses in Bristol, England, during the mid-1800s is well-known for his bold prayers of faith for God’s provision for the orphans. One day, during his early years, Muller learned a great lesson of prayer and faith that would deepen and prioritize his dependence upon the Lord for the rest of his life and ministry.

Muller had become accustomed to asking God to provide for the daily provisions of the orphans. But, as the time drew near for applications to be received to fill the empty beds in the orphanage, no applications were submitted. Due to the poverty and plight in the city, Muller had always assumed that there would be plenty of needy orphans requiring assistance. Muller immediately went before the Lord to understand what God was teaching him. Soon it was clear and the lesson was twofold. First, Muller needed to depend on the Lord for all things related to the ministry because this was God’s ministry and not his ministry. Second, Muller needed to reshape his motives and priorities as he prayed for the ministry. He needed to pray toward God’s glory first, followed by the spiritual welfare of the children, and then the physical needs of the orphan children.

In today’s text, as Jehoshaphat sought after and walked in God’s commandments, he began to experience God’s favor and blessings in three ways. First, God “established” the kingdom under his reign. “Established” means that God set in place His line of Davidic kingship upon Jehoshaphat as He did with Solomon and would later do with Uzziah, Hezekiah and ultimately with the Christ. This represented God’s sovereign hand of favor and blessing which ensured an earthly dynasty through which God’s great redemptive purposes could flow.

Second, God granted Jehoshaphat favor with his people. The people brought him “presents,” which denotes their pledge of approval, allegiance and submission to him as king. This was essential if Jehoshaphat was to lead the people toward oneness and unity in the ways of God. Third, the Lord gave Jehoshaphat an abundance of “riches” and “honor.” Collectively, these three blessings refer to the anointing, wealth, resources and respect needed by Jehoshaphat to lead the people back to the Lord in relationship, reform and mission.

When God grants favor, answers prayers or gives fruit with abundance, it is often easy to delight or focus on the answered prayers, blessings, successes and even the tasks associated with sustaining the work. As Muller and Jehoshaphat both show, this cannot be the case if the Lord is going to continue to be glorified through His work. God wants us to delight in Him rather than his blessings and favor. How are you doing with that?
And his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord

2 Chronicles 17:6

PRAYER PROMPTS

• Pray that your heart will be renewed as you delight in God’s ways.
• Father, may Your church in America be filled with a renewed hope as it begins to delight in Your ways.
When God moves in genuine revival, His people are refreshed in their desire to make Him the delight of their heart and their “first love” (Revelation 2:4). Because of a renewed passion and love for God, His people are then in a position for God to use them to bless and impact others toward His kingdom. Take Asahel Nettleton, for example. Born in Connecticut, Nettleton was converted in 1801. He later attended Yale during the Second Great Awakening in America at a time when God was moving mightily on many college campuses.

While at Yale, Nettleton met Samuel J. Mills, one of the students impacted by the Haystack Revival at Williams College in 1806, and soon started preparing for missions. However, due to some health issues and because he began to experience God’s blessings on his evangelistic preaching ministry following graduation, Nettleton decided instead to devote himself to conducting evangelistic revival meetings throughout Connecticut and the northeast.

God truly blessed Nettleton’s ministry with bold, anointed and fruitful preaching in spiritually dead churches, many of which were located in small towns and rural communities. Wherever he went, God moved mightily, reviving the church and converting the lost, leaving a lasting impact of moral and spiritual transformation in most areas. It’s estimated that approximately 25,000-30,000 people were converted through Nettleton’s preaching. Despite contracting typhoid fever in 1822, Nettleton, continued preaching numerous revivals until his death in 1844.

Today’s verse states that Jehoshaphat’s “heart took delight” in the “ways” of God. “Ways” represented the nearness, favor and blessings of God that Jehoshaphat was experiencing as king. The term “took delight” literally means that his heart was “lifted up.” “Lifted up” is predominantly used in the Old Testament to describe a haughty or prideful spirit within man. This reference is one of the few instances where the phrase is used in a positive sense and describes God’s work of encouraging or spurring His servant forward to greater depths of spiritual growth and service. Thus, because of the Lord’s blessings and nearness, Jehoshaphat was “lifted up” or “encouraged” toward more extensive works of reform and revival as king of Judah.

Today, despite the fact that the church is in a season of decline, God is still moving mightily in many places around the world. Thus, we must take our eyes off ourselves and begin to delight and rejoice in the Lord and His work. It is so easy to become negative about the lack of God’s activity where we are, yet our hearts can be enlarged and “lifted up” to greater depths of fruitfulness if we will simply “delight in the ways of the Lord.” How are you doing with that?
Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart

Psalm 37:4

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, teach me to delight in You in such a way that my neighbors will become thirsty for You.
- Pray for God to do what it takes in your church so that your church will delight in the Lord for revival and spiritual awakening with one accord.
DELIGHTING WITH PLEASURE

God not only used George Muller to impact the lives of countless orphans, but also to fan the flames of revival during the 1901-1910 Worldwide Awakening that swept Australia. Muller spent almost two years in the late 1880s preaching across Australia, spurring believers and pastors toward greater intimacy and hope through intercession for God’s blessing through revival. Because of these meetings, a renewed desire for seeking and delighting in the Lord through intimacy was kindled among many leaders. As the spiritual tide among many leaders began to shift, God raised up other leaders to delight in the Lord toward revival.

One such leader was a pastor named John McNeil. After experiencing personal revival and brokenness over his need for a greater intimacy with Christ, McNeil organized a small band of ministers to seek and delight in the Lord on behalf of the spiritual drought in Australia. After a 12- to 13-year period of delighting in the Lord for revival, God poured out His blessings through revival and spiritual awakening in Australia.

In Psalm 37, David offers words of wisdom for God’s people as they seek to walk with Him and shine for Him during difficult days in a fallen world. First, David says, “delight yourself also in the Lord.” Collectively, this whole phrase refers to the idea of possessing such an extreme delight and pleasure in God that you become completely soft and pliable for shaping in His hand. Three truths stand out from this phrase. First, delighting is not an option, but a command that must be embraced and obeyed. Second, the delighting is not in the Lord’s justice, deliverance or blessings, but in the Lord Himself. Third, the goal of such delighting in God is a level of intimacy and pliability that consistently allows our desires to be shaped and conformed to God’s sovereign will.

What are the benefits of such delighting? David continues, “He shall give you the desires of your heart.” First, we become recipients of a greater sense of His intimacy, nearness and manifold grace through answered prayer. Second, our heart begins to desire what He desires. Then, we become His instruments of intercession and blessing as we begin to pray according to His will and not our will (Matthew 22:42). As as result, His kingdom purposes march forward as we pray.

In essence, today’s verse weds together the elements of seeking and delighting in the Lord before my neighbor. When a believer is diligently seeking and delighting in the Lord with a heart that is being shaped by God’s will and desire, that believer’s heart and life soon becomes a fountain of “living water” to the world in which they live. Is your heart a fountain of living water for others?

PRAYER NOTES

Day 15
Sin & My Neighbor
SECTION 3

“MOREOVER HE REMOVED THE HIGH PLACES AND WOODEN IMAGES FROM JUDAH.” (2 CHRONICLES 17:6)

Nothing will turn people and nations away from the Lord quicker than the presence of sin and hypocrisy among God’s people. That’s why Jehoshaphat gave immediate attention to the sin of Baal worship that was constantly a struggle for Judah. When there is unconfessed sin in the camp, the blessings of God will dry up.

Today, the church limps along and struggles to impact lostness largely because of unconfessed sin, hypocrisy, spiritual arrogance and rebellion. Also, lostness increases as the influence of believers wanes because there is little distinction in lifestyle and holy living. This must change if a genuine revival and spiritual awakening is ever going to sweep across our land. This section focuses on sin and the impact it has on my life, my church and my neighbor.
Moreover he removed the high places & wooden images from Judah

2 Chronicles 17:6

- Father, forgive me for holding onto the sins that so easily entangle me.
- Pray that God will expose any sin in your church that is keeping it from pleasing and obeying Christ.
DO YOU SEE THE SIN IN THE CAMP?

When Jehoshaphat “took delight” in the Lord’s ways and was encouraged toward greater reforms in Judah, the first thing he gave attention to was the sin that was present in the camp. He knew that the blessings and favor of God would not rest upon Judah if Baal worship continued to be tolerated and allowed. How did he do this?

First, he removed the “high places.” At the heart of the term “removed” is the idea of turning aside, taking away or departing from something. This first action was an intentional effort by Jehoshaphat to rid Judah of any locations that were set aside for worship of the pagan gods. The “high places” were usually located on hills or natural high areas and provided a location where the practice of pagan rituals associated with Baal worship could take place. These locations were also ideal places where the blending of pagan gods with worship of Yahweh could occur.

Second, Jehoshaphat also removed the “wooden images” which were man-made wooden images of Asherah, the female Canaanite goddess of fertility and life. By taking down the images, Jehoshaphat was seeking to remove any object of inspiration for God’s people to worship or look to for spiritual and physical provisions. If the idols were no longer visible, the people could move forward in their journey back to the Lord without being faced with daily reminders of Baal worship.

What can the American church learn from Jehoshaphat’s effort to deal with sin in Judah’s camp? First, we must intentionally and genuinely examine our spiritual condition before God. This means that we must set God and His standard of holiness as our standard, rather than the standard of culture or the world. This needs to take place both personally and corporately as God’s people encounter Him in conviction and repentance through His Word and Spirit. Second, we must take away the occasion and inspiration for our sin. This means the high places and pagan images that provide any competing allegiances with the Lord need to be removed from our lives, homes and churches. If we remove any opportunity and the things that easily tempt us, then we are less likely to be enticed by the evil one and stumble in the faith.

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What can the American church learn from Jehoshaphat’s effort to deal with sin in Judah’s camp? First, we must intentionally and genuinely examine our spiritual condition before God. As Joel 2:12 says, we must “rend your hearts” before God. This means that we must set God and His standard of holiness as our standard, rather than the standard of culture or the world. This needs to take place both personally and corporately as God’s people encounter Him in conviction and repentance through His Word and Spirit. Second, we must take away the occasion and inspiration for our sin. This means the high places and pagan images that provide any competing allegiances with the Lord need to be removed from our lives, homes and churches. If we remove any opportunity and the things that easily tempt us, then we are less likely to be enticed by the evil one and stumble in the faith.

Believers and churches all over America are struggling with apathy, complacency, self-centeredness and a lack of spiritual vitality. Could this be the result of sin in our camp? If so, we must remove that sin and any competing allegiances with Jesus through genuine biblical repentance. If we do not get serious about this, we will never be in a position to be God’s instruments of revival and awakening in our neighborhoods and communities. What will you do?
For there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked & open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:13

**PRAYER PROMPTS**

- Lord, help me to become transparent before You, confessing and repenting of my sin.
- Father, help my church become known as a community of faith that genuinely wants to please You.
MY SIN & MY NEIGHBOR

During the 1948 Wheaton College revival movement that swept the campus, God used a young British preacher and evangelist named Stephen Olford to challenge students, ministers and professors toward a deeper life of holiness and godliness. Sensing that a mighty work of God was needed, Olford spent the whole night prior to the services in prayer. The next day, as the services concluded, God’s conviction moved throughout the pews. One student stood and without hesitation stated that God was directing him to confess his sin publically. A pastor also stood and confessed specific sins of apathy toward the lost and a prideful heart of wanting to impress others with his preaching. The pastor’s wife stood and confessed her part in encouraging such an attitude with her husband. Over the next few days, as God’s convicting Spirit worked, many others confessed all kinds of sins during services that sometimes lasted past midnight.

Out of this movement of confession, repentance and honesty before the Lord and others, God began to call students out to greater surrender and service toward the advancement of the gospel in America and around the world. Among the many students who were impacted were five young men, including Nate Saint, who would later become martyrs in Ecuador during the mid-1950s.

In today’s verse, the writer of Hebrews reminds God’s people of two important truths related to obedience to Christ and His living Word (Hebrews 4:12-13). First, no one or no sin is “hidden” from God’s piercing eyes. “Hidden” refers to something that is not manifested or experienced. “Naked and open” means that there is no covering over or hiding of one’s sins or actions from God. This is because “all things,” that is all sinful motives, thoughts, attitudes, actions or desires, are laid open and exposed before God’s piercing truth. Second, God is ultimately whom man must “give account” to for all attitudes, actions and deeds. This means that man’s ultimate goal is not to please himself or another man, but God. Why? Because God is the only one who can accurately access the condition of a man’s heart. Jeremiah 7:10 says, “I the Lord search the heart, test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

During seasons of genuine revival, God always exposes the sins of His people. When we as believers humble ourselves before God in genuine repentance, He will use our forgiven and restored life to impact our lost neighbors. Sadly, many believers in America are caught up in a web of deception, thinking that their hidden sins are somehow escaping God’s eyes or are being ignored by God. Today’s verse shows us otherwise. What will you do?

PRAYER NOTES

Day 17

PRAY30DAYS TO 313131 FOR DAILY PRAYER PROMPTS IN OCTOBER
For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God... For the wages of sin is death

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive my lack of compassion for my lost neighbors.
- Pray for the Lord to rekindle a spirit of love for all lost people in your church.
George Whitefield loved Christ with all of his heart. This indelible love for Jesus produced an undying love for lost people. Whitefield, known for his open-air preaching and smooth booming voice, was a major instrument used by the Lord during the years of the First Great Awakening in America and England in the mid 1700s. Whitfield traversed the Atlantic Ocean some seven times on preaching missions in America. His open-air approach allowed him to reach down into segments of society that would never dream of attending a church.

Whitefield often wept while delivering his sermons. This genuine expression of love for the lost seemed to melt the hearts of even the most wicked of men. As Whitefield proclaimed and modeled Christ’s love before thousands of lost sinners, it was evident that he understood clearly that the fate of those without the Savior was eternal hell and damnation. This was also evident in his unwavering commitment to begin any gospel presentation with every sinner’s need for Christ’s forgiveness due to their rebellion against God and eternal condemnation because of sin. Whitefield would often expend himself, at times even until midnight, pleading for the souls of men to come to Christ.

Today’s verses vividly portray three truths related to what it means for our neighbors to be lost. First, “all have sinned.” Every human being is under the penalty and curse of sin. This is due to the rebellion and fall of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman (Genesis 3). No one is therefore exempt from sin. The universality of sin and lostness is explained by Paul in today’s text. Thus, both Jew and Greek are lost without Christ because of their sinfulness before God (Romans 3:9-26).

Second, the result of this sinful condition is that all humans “fall short” of God’s “glory.” “Fall short” means to miss God’s mark, to lag behind, to suffer want or be lacking in something. Thus, all people are lacking in the “glory” of God, which is His likeness, true character or presence. Third, the payment, reward or “wages” for sin is “death.” “Death” refers to physical and spiritual death, which is eternal and everlasting separation from God and His divine life, presence, blessing and protection. Death is eternally experienced by the lost in a place of outer darkness (Matthew 8:12) and in the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 20:10, 15; 21:8).

These sobering truths about our lost neighbors should, like Whitefield, stir us all toward a deeper love for Christ and the lost. It should rekindle within every believer a desire to passionately pray for and share with lost people their desperate condition before God and God’s wondrous gift of eternal life through Jesus. Do you really believe your lost neighbors are going to hell? If so, what will you do?
In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Ephesians 1:7

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, thank You for Jesus and the forgiveness I have in Him.
- Ask the Lord to rekindle your church’s desire to tell the world about Jesus.
JESUS CAN FORGIVE SIN

When Charles H. Spurgeon would preach, people from all backgrounds and walks of life would flock to his church to hear and respond to his sermons. For 30 years, the Metropolitan Tabernacle was filled on Sunday with people eager to hear God’s Word. Spurgeon was always careful to attribute this success to the Lord in answer to the prayers of God’s people.

One of Spurgeon’s favorite topics to preach about was the crucified Christ who died for the sins of man. Spurgeon would herald forth the message of redemption and atonement through the blood of Jesus to the masses who gathered each week in his church. He was so committed to Christ-centered preaching that he would often comment that that any preacher who left Christ out of a sermon needed to leave the pulpit with that sermon being the last one the preacher should preach. At the heart of Spurgeon’s commitment to preach Christ was his love for Jesus, God’s Word and the lost. This commitment to the centrality of the crucified Christ continued until his death. When he died, tens of thousands of people passed by his casket. In the casket, a Bible was opened to Isaiah 45:22 which says, “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”

In Matthew 9:6, Jesus makes a profound announcement concerning His role as Messiah. He alone has “power” to “forgive sins.” “Power” refers to His divine authority and ability as God to forgive the sins of the paralytic. This divine authority is also seen in His use of phrase “Son of Man.” This was His favorite self-designating term and generally focused on His divinity rather than His humanity. With this term, Jesus demonstrates His authority over the present world order as the eternal pre-existent Christ, who alone can heal and “forgive sins.” In Jesus, sinners can experience the cancellation of all their sins and guilt associated with those sins.

This is the same message that Paul proclaims in Ephesians 1:7. “Forgiveness” in this verse also means to send away, and it is closely tied to the previous word “redemption.” The term “redemption” pictures the slave market where someone purchases or pays the ransom for a slave’s freedom. Therefore, Jesus and His blood are God’s payment for freedom from sin. This freedom is God’s gift and flows out of the “riches” or unlimited abundance of His unmerited favor or “grace.” When a lost person comes to faith in Christ, they become recipients of the manifold grace and mercy of God. Paul further explains this truth in Colossians 1:13-14, which says “He (Christ) has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Jesus is the only hope for forgiveness from sin. Have your neighbors heard about this hope in Jesus?

PRAYER NOTES
You have removed the wooden images from the land... Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away.

2 CHRONICLES 19:3; 20:33

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, keep me on course, steady and firmly devoted to You and Your ways.
- Help my pastor and my church stand firm against sin in our world.
STAY THE COURSE

During World War II, the Allied forces planned to utilize amphibious tanks during D-Day to help clear the way on the Normandy beaches for the infantry to quickly establish a beachhead. The plan worked on every beach except Omaha Beach. The tanks, nicknamed “Donald Duck Tanks,” were equipped with canvas skirts and propellers and were best-suited for use in relatively calm seas without the presence of strong currents. Omaha Beach, because of its location, provided a less than ideal environment for the tanks to approach the beach. With high seas and unstable currents due to stormy weather, disaster would soon appear on the horizon.

Because of the strong currents, the landing craft that launched the tanks were thrown off course, which caused the tanks to be launched off course making them side on with the waves as they approached the beach. As a result, most of the tanks were swamped by the high waves and sunk shortly after being launched. Only two tanks made the trip to the beach. This unfortunate turn of events cost many American soldiers their lives on Omaha Beach.

Jehoshaphat’s initial plan toward reform included the removal of both the “high places” and the “wooden images” from the land (2 Chronicles 17:6). This would provide a ripe environment for a complete break to be made from the sin of Baal worship by the people. But later, as today’s verse points out, Jehoshaphat strayed from his course and only “removed the wooden images” as “the high places” were not removed from Judah (2 Chronicles 19:3; 20:33).

This is significant for two reasons. First, this marked a deviation from Jehoshaphat’s original commitment to a complete and thorough reform of the worship of the Lord in the land. Jehoshaphat did not stay the course as a strong and devoted leader to rid the land of the sin of Baal worship. That decision would later prove to be costly for both him and Judah (2 Chronicles 21:1-11). Second, the “high places” represented locations where the people could blend together the worship of the Lord with pagan rituals and practices. This produced a casual and even “cultural” form of Yahweh worship that was an affront to God. Thus, the people’s faith was not pure and undefiled before the Lord. As a leader, Jehoshaphat failed to stand against the cultural pressures and norms of the day and did not remove the opportunity and occasion for sin from among the people.

Today, the American church is in trouble and in great decline morally and spiritually. Because of this fact, the Lord is looking for leaders and followers who will stay the course against sin and lead the American church back to Him in godliness and holiness through revival and reform. What will you do? Will you stay the course?

PRAYER NOTES
For as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers

2 CHRONICLES 20:33

- Ask God to protect you from the evil one and keep you clean before Him each day.
- Lord, may the hearts of Your people in churches everywhere be “established” on You in a new way through revival.
ARE YOU CLEAN & CLOSE?

When I was ordained into the gospel ministry as a young pastor, an older, more seasoned pastor leaned over and whispered into my ear, “Young man, be sure that you are ‘fessed up’ before the Lord everyday as you serve Him.” When I looked up to clarify what he meant by “fessed up,” he said “confessed up.” He explained, “The enemy is always looking to destroy God’s work and His servants. Be sure that you stay clean before the Lord and close to Jesus everyday of your life.”

Following Jehoshaphat’s rebellion with Ahab and God’s subsequent discipline and restoration (2 Chronicles 18; 19:1-3), Jehoshaphat seemed to be on track with leading Judah back to the Lord through various reform efforts (2 Chronicles 19:4-20:30). However, as today’s verse vividly points out, despite Jehoshaphat’s efforts during his reign, Judah ultimately did not return to the Lord and the people continued in their rebellion toward God. Why was that the case? Part of the reason was that Jehoshaphat did not stay the course in his removal of the high places, which allowed for a watered down and blended worship of Yahweh.

But today’s verse gets to the root issue and reason why true reform in Judah was not completed and sustained during Jehoshaphat’s reign. It was a heart problem with God’s people. God’s people had not yet “directed their hearts toward the Lord.” The term “directed” means “established” or “made firm” and portrays a people who were distracted, disloyal and genuinely not seeking the Lord with their entire heart. True repentance and change had not occurred.

Instead of despising the “high places” and returning to the Lord with their whole heart, the people evidently embraced them, making forms of Baal worship and idolatry a part of their worship of Yahweh and in their everyday lives. Thus, they were halting between two opinions and were weighed and found wanting in their hearts before God (1 Kings 18:21; Daniel 5:27).

Satan is always crouching at the door with temptations, wiles and traps that can easily ensnare God’s people (Genesis 4:7). Because of this, it is essential for believers to draw near to Christ daily in confession and closeness, so that through Jesus, they can walk with and shine for the Lord in their world. Revival and renewal always flow through those who are clean and close. Are you clean and close?

PRAYER NOTES
Section 4
God’s Word & My Neighbor
SECTION 4

“ALSO IN THE THIRD YEAR ... HE SENT HIS LEADERS ... AND (THEY) HAD THE BOOK OF THE LAW OF THE LORD WITH THEM; THEY WENT THROUGHOUT ALL THE CITIES OF JUDAH AND TAUGHT THE PEOPLE.” (2 CHRONICLES 17:7, 9)

Jehoshaphat knew that true revival and reform was not possible through the implementation of governmental policies or even by way of a royal decree. Revival and reform was something that only God could accomplish in His people. As Psalm 19:7 says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”

Therefore, part of Jehoshaphat’s plan to see lasting change was to permeate the land with the teaching and sharing of God’s Word. Likewise, sowing of the seed of God’s Word is essential today if our neighbors are going to see, hear and experience the truth of God’s Word through revival and spiritual awakening. Spiritual famine is only eradicated through spiritual power. And as Hebrews 4:12 clearly demonstrates, “The Word of God is living and powerful.” This section focuses on the importance of God’s Word as it relates to impacting my neighbor, my church and my community toward revival and spiritual awakening.
He sent his leaders ... to teach in the cities ... and ... he sent Levites ... and had the Book of the Law of the Lord with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people

2 CHRONICLES 17:7, 8, 9

PRAYER PROMPTS

• Lord, forgive my arrogance for not depending on You and Your Word for moral and spiritual transformation.
• Ask the Lord to use your church to take and teach God’s Word to all people.
LASTING CHANGE

After removing the high places and pagan idols from Judah, Jehoshaphat’s next step was to fill the spiritual vacuum that was increasing throughout the land. Jehoshaphat knew that the pagan rituals were deeply embedded in the culture and that simply removing the idols and high places would not ensure an automatic return to Yahweh worship. He also knew that there was a famine of God’s Word in the land, which, if left unattended, would lead to greater spiritual famine and ultimate destruction (Proverbs 29:18; Luke 11:24-26). Therefore, Jehoshaphat developed a plan to deal with the spiritual void across Judah and permeate the land with God’s Word.

Jehoshaphat’s plan was threefold. First, he “sent his leaders” and “Levites” into the land. “Sent” means that the group was given a specific mission and purpose to accomplish by the king. The group included government officials, which likely included princes of high position, and leaders from the Levitical order, which included musicians, guards, servants and priests. The combined makeup of this group demonstrates Jehoshaphat’s commitment to teach, implement and organize the kingdom of Judah around the moral and spiritual truths found in the “Book of the Law of the Lord,” which was the Pentateuch.

Second, Jehoshaphat sent them to “teach” God’s Word. “Teach” means to train and educate. So their mission was not just to acquaint the people with the contents of God’s Word, but also to educate them on how to use and apply the Word in their everyday lives (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). In essence, this was an attempt to restore the civil, moral and spiritual authority and value of God’s Word among the people. Notice also that they actually carried the “Book of the Law” with them on their mission. This act added authority and credence to their message.

Third, Jehoshaphat sent the teaching cohort “throughout all” the cities, and they taught the people. “Throughout” means that they were going from place to place. They went among the people into “all” the cities. No place, no person and no community was left without access to the training and education that was being provided concerning God’s law. Notice also that the ultimate goal was to “teach the people.” It was not about a royal decree. Instead, this was about the moral and spiritual lives of people.

Today, the American church struggles to impact an increasingly pagan culture that has very little knowledge of the Bible or respect and desire to embrace and live by its truths. How can this change? I think Jehoshaphat’s plan has great application and value for lasting change, even today. Don’t you?
For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... piercing even to... soul and spirit ... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart

Hebrews 4:12

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Ask God to use His Word to pierce and examine your heart concerning your sin.
- Father, use my church as an instrument to faithfully share Your Word in our world.
GOD'S WORD & CONVICTION

The conviction of sin that takes place as the result of the prayerful preaching and sharing of God’s Word has always played a central role in movements of revival and spiritual awakening. This was certainly the case in 1741 during the First Great Awakening in America. It was during this time when Jonathan Edwards stood in the pulpit in Enfield, Connecticut, and preached his famous sermon “Sinner’s in the Hands of an Angry God.” The sermon, based upon Deuteronomy 32:35, was filled with imagery and illustrations related to man’s hopeless condition and inability to change his own course toward hell apart from the grace, mercy and pleasure of God in Jesus Christ.

Before Edwards could finish the sermon, deep conviction filled the room as people were overwhelmed by the manifest presence of God. Many believers were overcome with uncontrollable tears and brokenness because of their own sin. Others, including many lost people, were so moved by God’s Spirit that they cried out verbally and with great distress asking what they must do to be saved. The verbal outbursts became so prevalent that Edwards eventually quieted the congregation so that he might continue. Soon many lost people were converted and believers were made clean through confession and repentance.

Hebrews 4:12 points to four reasons why God’s Word is such an essential component of God’s convicting work among people. First, it is God’s Word and not man’s and is eternal, redemptive, timely, objective and always true. Second, God’s Word is “living” and not stagnant, outdated or oriented toward death. Rather it is overflowing with life and able to give life. It is also “active,” energizing, catalytic and full of inherent power, authority and purpose. Third, it is “sharp,” “piercing” and “dividing,” which means it cuts to the deepest depths of a man’s mind, inner being, heart and soul while bringing to light all conscious and subconscious motives, thoughts and desires. Fourth, it is also a “discerner,” meaning it is able to take the hidden thoughts, intentions, desires and motives of a person’s heart and exercise fair and exact judgment upon them in the truest sense.

Coupled with God’s Holy Spirit, the two are an unstoppable force of God’s redemptive work among men. It’s no wonder that Isaiah would proclaim “So shall my Word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). God’s Word is essential if revival and spiritual awakening is ever going to take place. If there ever was a day when the church and culture needs to hear and encounter God’s Word, it is now. What shall we do?

PRAYER NOTES
The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple

**Psalm 19:7**

**Prayer Prompts**
- Father, teach me to be a faithful student and share Your Word with others.
- Ask God to make your church a catalyst for the sharing of God’s Word with the lost.
William Perkins, a well-known and influential Puritan preacher and theologian during the latter 1500s, had an unwavering love for preaching God’s Word. His model for preaching is found in his classic work The Art of Prophesying, in which he advocated for the centrality of God’s Word for effective and fruitful proclamation. This was due to his belief that the Scriptures were completely true, pure, authoritative and powerful.

Perkins believed that preachers of God’s Word needed to devote themselves to the careful study of Scripture, proper application of the text and Spirit-anointed proclamation of God’s message to all people. Finally, Perkins also believed that at the heart of all preaching should be Christ — His death, resurrection, lordship and salvation. Perkins’ influence on a whole generation of Puritan leaders and preachers, including Jonathan Edwards, was felt for many generations following his death.

In today’s verse, David, helps us see the vital role that God’s Word plays in His redemptive work. God’s Word is “perfect.” “Perfect” refers to complete in integrity, truth and fact. This means God’s Word is without error, infallible and only contains truth. This is the case because it is the “law of the Lord,” which denotes the Torah or Pentateuch of God given through Moses. Scripture is divinely revealed, instructional and has the well-being and best in mind for those who hear and embrace the truth it contains. Because it is perfect, God’s Word accomplishes the work of converting the soul. “Converting” refers to the ability to bring back to life or to impart new life into man’s soul.

Next, David says that the “testimony,” which is a reference to the Ten Commandments, is “sure.” “Sure” means firm, certain, steadfast or dependable. It portrays the strong arms of a parent holding an infant. God’s testimony will never let man down or not accomplish its intent. It is sure, steadfast, never wavering and therefore makes the “simple” man “wise.” “Wise” refers to wisdom for knowing, doing and living the will of God. “Simple” refers to the man who is open or easily led astray (Isaiah 53:6). Thus, because God’s Word is completely true, dependable and certain, it is able to bring to life those who are lost and easily led astray.

These truths have great implications related to revival and spiritual awakening. God’s Word has power to revive a believer or church that is apathetic and complacent or has departed from the Lord and lost their way. It also has power to convert the lost and bring them new life and redirect their eternal destiny through Jesus. In every spiritual awakening, there are always multitudes of lost people who are converted to Christ through the rapid running of the Word of God. Because of this, don’t you think that your lost neighbors need to encounter God’s Word? What will you do?
Remember the Word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your Word has given me life.

Psalm 119:49-50

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, may Your Word rekindle my hope in Your work of lasting restoration and revival.
- Pray for God to use His Word to bring revival to your church and spiritual awakening in America.
Psalm 119:49-50 gives two reasons why the centrality of God’s Word is so important during times of seeking and trusting the Lord to bring restoration, revival and spiritual awakening. First, God’s Word sustains our hope in the Lord to fulfill His promises toward restoration, revival and spiritual awakening. “Word” represents God’s personal, authoritative and revealed word to His servant. “Remember” points to his desperate plea for God to fulfill His “Word” to his servant. Notice that the psalter’s desire for God’s swift and complete fulfillment of His promise is full of “hope.” “Hope” refers to an expectant hope that is based upon God’s past promises and faithfulness. The psalter is brought “comfort,” which means that he was granted consolation and filled with hope during his season of distress. The word “comfort” is often used throughout the prophets to encourage God’s people who were in need of hope and restoration while in exile (Isaiah 40:1).

Second, God’s Word is what gives new and sustained life to His people when they are in desperate need of His deliverance or restoration. “Life” refers to a renewed, restored and vital spiritual life that comes from God’s renewed presence with His servant through His Word. Therefore, as God’s Word restores the vital spiritual life, the servant’s desire to press forward toward greater deliverance and continued restoration through the Lord’s hand is rekindled.

During the great Welsh Revival of 1904-1905, the Lord moved mightily by bringing more than 100,000 people to Christ within the first six months. The impact on society was also great with many stories of transformed lives impacting the rate of alcoholism, crime and even the language of many coal miners who were converted. The impact on those converted through the revival was lasting, as there is evidence that many of the people converted during the revival remained faithful in the churches a number of years later.

The Welsh Revival was also used by God to spark revival movements in America and around the globe in nations where the story was shared. Despite all these records of lasting impact, the revival in Wales began to wane in its intensity after only a couple years. Although it contained many of the common components of revival movements such as prayer, worship, soul-winning and personal experience, it was lacking in one foundational component — the centrality and preaching of God’s Word. This eventually curbed the evangelistic impact of the revival in Wales leading to its decline.

If America is ever going to experience a lasting revival and spiritual awakening that significantly impacts lostness in our neighborhoods, cities and states, God’s Word must be boldly and faithfully preached, taught, shared and lived. Evidently, since lostness continues to increase at a rapid rate across America, this is not happening yet. What will you do?
How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

PSALM 119:9-11

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Ask the Lord to help you give careful attention to and treasure His Word.
- Father, have mercy upon us, and restore Your church as an instrument of holiness in America.
LIVING GOD’S WORD

In today’s verses, the psalmist addresses the issue of how a young man can walk blamelessly before God in an unjust and sinful world. First, he can accomplish this by “taking heed according” to God’s Word. “Taking heed” means to attend to or watch with great care. It carries the idea of a person exercising the discipline and personal responsibility necessary to search out, understand and do God’s will as revealed through His Word.

Second, it is accomplished by seeking the Lord in whole-hearted prayer toward a blameless life. This kind of seeking requires an unwavering dependence upon God’s grace and mercy so as not to “wander,” or go astray from God and His “commandments.”

Third, it is accomplished by hiding God’s Word in his heart. The term “hidden” means that God’s Word is to be like a stored-up treasure in one’s heart. This provides motivation and wisdom to walk in obedience and “not sin” against God. The psalmist’s advice can be summarized in this way — with your whole heart, seek God for the motivation and wisdom to give careful attention to storing up and treasuring God’s Word in your heart, so that you will not live a life of sin and hypocrisy before God and others.

E. Stanley Jones, a well-known Christian missionary for the Methodist Church during the 20th century, was a friend to Mahatma Gandhi, the “Father of India.” One day, Jones asked Gandhi why he was not a follower of Jesus. Gandhi responded that it was largely due to the fact that his experiences with so-called Bible-believing Christians were usually not very positive as many Christians presented lifestyles that often contradicted the teachings of the Bible. Gandhi went on to share that when he was a young lawyer in South Africa, he was studying the Bible and seriously considering the claims of Jesus. Soon his study led him to attend a local church. As Gandhi walked up the steps to enter, he was met with animosity by a church elder because of his race. Gandhi was immediately told to leave, that he was not welcome and would be forced to leave if he resisted. Because of that encounter, Gandhi eventually rejected Christ and Christianity. What a sad story.

Today’s Scripture and story should cause believers to examine any inconsistencies in their own lives. Most Christian demographers paint a picture of Christianity in America that shows a significant amount of moral and spiritual decline and failures. The reality is that American believers are blending with an ever-increasing pagan culture and living lifestyles that line up less and less with the Bible. Do you ever wonder why our neighbors are not following Jesus? Do your neighbors see and experience God’s Word when they encounter you? If not, what will you do?

PRAYER NOTES
I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches

Psalm 119:14

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, may my life portray the joy of Christ to others as I regularly partake of Your Word.
- Pray that your church would be a place where God’s Word is lifted up as an instrument of joy, hope and real life in the world.
Years ago, when I was a boy, we had some neighbors who lived up the road who were professing Christians. They seemed to attend church a great deal on weekends and sometimes even throughout the week. They were not mean people, but they weren’t very friendly or joyful, either. I rarely saw them smile and hardly ever heard them laugh.

This family usually kept to themselves but would occasionally allow some of the neighborhood kids to play and ride bikes with their kids in their yard. However, the adults often spoke in a very curt manner to their children when they wanted them to stop playing and come in for dinner. They would often sit on their front porch reading the Bible, but would hardly speak when someone would pass by their house. A sad and unhappy demeanor seemed to radiate from the whole family. To be honest, I often felt sad for them, and I was not a Christian.

In the verse today, the psalmist challenges God’s people to live out God’s Word with joy and delight before others. He says, “I have rejoiced.” “Rejoiced” is from a root word that means to exult, delight in or to make joyful. It refers to something that brings great joy and actually lifts up rather than something that weighs down. This happens as the psalmist rejoices in the “way” of God’s testimonies. “Way” signifies a well-worn path that is familiar and taken regularly. Thus, the psalmist is lifted up and joyful as he regularly walks in the path of God’s Word. This rejoicing in God’s Word is likened to the possession of great wealth, riches or provisions bestowed upon him as a reward from God (Psalm 112:3). It truly satisfies and produces contentment in the psalmist’s life because he knows God is pleased with who he is and what he is doing.

As a young boy who was not a Christian, I saw my neighbors as people who seemed weighted down by their faith. Therefore, it did not appear that their faith was something that produced liberty, joy or even life. That’s what can happen when we focus on what we do and how we perform as Christians rather than a vital living relationship that treasures God’s Word. It is also what can happen when we are not regularly engaging and rejoicing in God’s Holy Word.

If the church in America is ever going to experience revival and impact lostness, we must begin to rejoice in and truly treasure the riches of God’s testimonies before others. Is God’s Word a weight or a joy in your life?
The Fear of God & My Neighbor
Revival and reform among the people of God produces fruit with people who are not a part of God’s kingdom. In Jehoshaphat’s day, the surrounding nations began to see that God’s blessings and favor were resting upon Jehoshaphat and Judah and they soon began to fear God. God was no longer seen as a God who was weak and unable to bless His people. No longer would the surrounding nations say to Judah “Where is your God?” (Joel 2:17). God was now actively at work manifesting His presence and power among and through His people.

When God’s people in America begin to fear God, others will also begin to fear God. This brief final section focuses on the relationship between the fear of God and impacting our neighbors and our nation for Christ through revival and spiritual awakening.
And the fear of God fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah... they did not make war... Also, some of the Philistines brought presents... and the Arabians brought flocks... So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful.

2 CHRONICLES 17:10-12

PRAYER PROMPTS

• Father, send revival to my heart so that I might fear You before my lost neighbors.
• Pray for the Lord to bring about a spiritual awakening through His holy manifest presence among the lost.
WHEN WILL WE FEAR GOD?

When God’s renewed favor and blessings were manifested upon Jehoshaphat and Judah, the surrounding nations began to realize that God was with and for His people. The result was that the “fear of God fell” upon the surrounding nations. “Fear,” in today’s text, represents a feeling of reverent terror and trembling that resulted from the nearness of the object being feared. The reverent fear was not caused by the reforms of Jehoshaphat or the blessings of God on Judah. The fear was caused by the manifest holy presence of God that was with and for His people.

The use of the word “fell” in verse 10 is significant. It is used in this context to describe a sudden work or manifestation of God that resulted from His holy nearness. The root and verbal form of this word is also used in the Old Testament for the personal name of God and means “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Thus, the “I AM” God of the Bible drew near and His fearful presence suddenly came upon “all” the kingdoms surrounding Judah.

The terror-filled reverence for God gave rise to a renewed respect for God and His people. This produced two significant God-sized blessings for Judah. First, the nations did not “make war” with Judah. This showed Judah that God’s divine protection was present and resting upon them. Second, the “Philistines” and the “Arabians” brought “presents” to Jehoshaphat. These were gifts of tribute and respect and included “silver,” which was used as the common standard of trade in that day. The Arabians paid respect and tribute by giving “flocks” of rams and goats. Both animals were useful for meats, milk and fabrics. Also, the possession of large flocks represented great wealth and blessing. These gifts were significant provisions from God and represented God’s favor and provision of physical and material wealth and resources for Judah.

What was the final outcome of these God-sized blessings? Jehoshaphat became “increasingly powerful,” and was able to continue with strengthening and growing the kingdom of Judah through civil and spiritual reform. “Increasingly powerful” means that, because of God’s favor and fear, Jehoshaphat’s greatness and ability to have influence with his people and the surrounding nations continued to expand and grow.

What can the church in America learn from this? First, God’s people must genuinely fear Him and return to Him in revival and reform before the lost world will ever begin to fear and turn to Christ. Second, nothing but God’s holy manifest presence can ever create a holy fear of God and spiritual awakening among lost people. Do you think we need a revival and spiritual awaking?

PRAYER NOTES
And Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast... So Judah gathered to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. Then Jehoshaphat stood... and said: ‘O Lord God’

2 CHRONICLES 20:3-6

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, we need You and Your help. Teach me to fearfully seek You and Your help.
- Lord, use my pastor and my church as instruments to gather Your people to fearfully seek You.
Fearing and Seeking God Together

Following Jehoshaphat’s rebellion with Ahab and his discipline and restoration by the Lord, he went back to work instituting further civil, judicial and political reforms in Judah (2 Chronicles 18-19). It was during that period that the consequences of his earlier rebellion began to show up in the form of an army of Moabites, Ammonites and others. However, Jehoshaphat responded to the overwhelming presence of the approaching army with a great fear of God and appropriate action.

It is important to note that Jehoshaphat’s “fear” was not directed toward the approaching armies, but toward the Lord. Thus, “fear” in today’s text does not refer to terror or dread, but rather a reverent fear of God and His judgment (2 Chronicles 19:1-4). Jehoshaphat’s course of action in response to God and the approaching army was fourfold. First, he “set himself to seek the Lord.” This means that he devoted, or set his undivided face and heart in a position to “seek” the Lord. “Seek” refers to a humble, genuine and careful seeking of God. Thus, Jehoshaphat was determined not to allow anything to distract him as he sought the Lord with one goal in mind — God’s holy presence and help.

Second, he proclaimed a fast throughout all the land. This action signified the serious nature and intense manner in which their seeking took place. Third, Jehoshaphat “gathered” Judah together, which resulted in people from all the cities coming to seek the Lord with their whole hearts. Jehoshaphat understood the desperate hour and the need for oneness in seeking. Fourth, Jehoshaphat led the people in prayer. He was their leader, God was judging him and his people because of his rebellion. Now, as their leader, he led them to the Lord. That’s what leaders do.

Today, like Jehoshaphat and Judah, believers should be filled with a reverent fear of God. Why? Because it is evident that the church has her back against the wall because of God’s judgment. The indicators are easily identified: spiritual famine and darkness are prevalent in the culture, most churches are in decline, social and political unrest increases, weather patterns and natural disasters continually intensify, leaders in all facets of society seem to lack wisdom, and evil, sin and lostness are rapidly increasing in most communities. These indicators should wake up the church in America and cause us to fear and seek God together. We have sinned, have blended with the pagan culture and have depended on our own ways for moral and spiritual change.

What shall we do? Shall we fearfully seek the Lord through repentance, fasting and prayer? We must fear God and seek Him together. Leaders, will you take the lead?

PRAYER NOTES

TEXT PRAY30DAYS TO 313131 FOR DAILY PRAYER PROMPTS IN OCTOBER
O our God... we have no power against this great multitude... nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You... Do not be afraid... for the battle is not yours, but God’s. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms.

2 CHRONICLES 20:12, 15, 29

PRAYER PROMPTS

• Father, may I fear You and become desperate for Your mercy, that others may fear You.
• Lord, may my church become a catalyst that fearfully seeks You and Your mercy for revival, spiritual awakening and Your glory.
O GOD! HAVE MERCY!

During the winter of 1809, a significant earthquake rocked the Cape Peninsula in South Africa. Strong aftershocks continued to shake the area for an additional eight days. Fear filled the hearts of the inhabitants, including the British soldiers that were stationed on Cape Peninsula assisting with protection of the cape from possible French aggression.

Prior to the earthquake, a young Methodist minister, who was also a British soldier, had noticed very little interest in the spiritual life among the more than 1,000 soldiers stationed on the cape. However, as is often the case when men are faced with their own mortality, an openness to spiritual matters and a reverent fear of God began to sweep the camp. Soon soldiers all over the camp opened their hearts to God’s truth and eternal salvation through Jesus. Men who were apathetic Christians or hardened sinners the day before were suddenly drawn to prayer meetings and began crying out with tears for God’s mercy and salvation. Hundreds were soon converted to Christ.

In today’s passage, Jehoshaphat and Judah were in a hopeless and overwhelming situation. An army of Moabites, Ammonites and others were approaching with the intent of destroying Judah. The only thing that was standing between Judah and utter devastation was the mercy of God. Driven by a reverent fear of God, Jehoshaphat cried out in verse 12, “O our God.” This desperate cry for God was followed by a humble, honest confession regarding Judah’s lack of wisdom and power to defeat the approaching army, “we have no power against this great multitude … nor do we know what to do.” Then Jehoshaphat prays, “but our eyes are on You.”

Jehoshaphat was totally convinced that God was their only hope! What happened next? God sent Jahaziel the prophet with these words “Do not be afraid … for the battle is the Lord’s” (verse 15). Thus, God gave Judah victory without even having to fight a battle (2 Chronicles 20:20-25). Since this was God’s battle and victory, it ultimately produced fear and wonder for God’s great name among the surrounding nations (2 Chronicles 20:29).

Today, the American church is in a battle for the soul of America. In fact, we are losing the battle one neighbor and community at a time as lostness increases throughout the land. Will we, like Jehoshaphat and Judah, fear God enough to admit that we do not know what to do? Will we also fear God enough to admit failure and humbly set our eyes totally on the Lord, crying out for His great mercy? Psalm 103:11 is appropriate here, “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him.” For the sake of God’s glory and for the sake of our lost neighbors, will we fear God? Time will tell. What will you do?
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