


When we pray disruptive prayers, revolution begins. This book shows you how to equip leaders, fuel kingdom movements, and do real damage to the powers of darkness. Discover how your own heart will be transformed as you begin to see the power of both prayer and God.

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Contents

The World Awaits a Prayer Revolution	11
PART 1: KINGDOM PRAYER BREAKS IN	
CHAPTER 1: The King Comes in Prayer	21
CHAPTER 2: The King's Strategy for Prayer	35
CHAPTER 3: The King's Passion for a House of Prayer	53
PART 2: KINGDOM PRAYER BREAKS OUT	
CHAPTER 4: How Christ's Ascension Brings a New Day for Prayer	71
CHAPTER 5: How Holy Spirit Advances Ignite in Prayer	91
CHAPTER 6: How Prayer Fuels a Global Movement	111
CHAPTER 7: How Prayer Brings Urban Renewal	129
PART 3: KINGDOM PRAYER BREAKS THROUGH	
CHAPTER 8: How a Nation Is Renewed Through Repentance	149
CHAPTER 9: How Idols Are Removed Through Kingdom Prayer	169
CHAPTER 10: How Exiles Are Sustained Through Regenerating Prayer	187
CHAPTER 11: How a Church Is Revived and a City Is Renewed Through Prayer	205
Conclusion: Praying the Spirit's Vision	227
Appendix A: Ten Steps Forward: How to Implement Kingdom Prayer for Church and City	245
Appendix B: A Prayer Grid to Build the Coming Kingdom	255
Appendix C: A Prayer for the Heart of Your Nation (or City)	259
Bibliography	263
Acknowledgments	265
Notes	267



THE KING COMES IN PRAYER

Jesus imparts His life of prayer through presence, teaching, and example. The coming of the King signals the coming of the kingdom.

The Bible's concept of kingdom is rich but not complicated. In its most simple sense, when Jesus tells us to pray, "Your kingdom come," He emphasizes that we are to live in light of His triumphant return. We live today in light of tomorrow. Christ's coming again frames the vision of every believer. As the new day steadily approaches, the ever-brighter splendor of His coming crests the horizon of cosmic history—lighting the way for kingdom advance. No present suffering, discouragement, or opposition can overcome our confident hope that Jesus will soon restore all things.

The coming of the kingdom is embedded in cosmic and world history. There is a time dynamic to the forward advance of the kingdom—from present day to final fulfillment. As the prophet foretold, "The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast" (Zeph. 1:14).

From present day to final fulfillment, the window through which we survey the horizons of the coming kingdom is the coming of Christ. The kingdom of God is specifically the kingdom of Christ. It is Christ's comings that are the framework and cosmic backdrop to kingdom advance.

The beginning of kingdom history begins with Christ as the eternal Creator-King. As John 1:3 says, "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Jesus' kingdom comes in person when He "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). In the incarnation of Jesus, the kingdom proper takes up residence in the domain of humankind. Reconciling heaven and earth through His blood, Jesus becomes the firstborn of the new humanity and the Redeemer of all creation. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is God's verdict that Christ's work is finished, final, and forever sufficient for completing every kingdom purpose: "[God has] declared [him] to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

The kingdom moves from promise to realization when Jesus ascends and is exalted to the right hand of God. "From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky,"¹ Jesus ascends upward to the apex and summit of heaven and earth. The vulnerable Savior has become the invincible King of kings. Christ pours out His Holy Spirit from on high, the sum and symbol of His redemptive victory.

The eyes of faith are fixed ever upward to the enthroned King. The gaze of faith is ever forward to His imminent return.

Praying, especially praying together, is our means of experiencing the present ascension presence and power of Christ. As Jesus told His disciples, "Wait. . . You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." And the disciples "joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:4, 8, 14 NIV). Prayer is the instrument and means

by which believers are sustained until Jesus returns. All prayer is now kingdom prayer, as all prayer is mediated through Christ, every promise guaranteed by His power and magnificence.

THE KING COMES IN PRAYER

As we contemplate Jesus' life among us, a central observation emerges—that the King comes in prayer. Jesus lived a life of prayer. He navigated His life by prayer. He enjoyed uninterrupted fellowship with the Father. Through His prayers, Jesus called down from heaven infinite grace and power to inaugurate and advance the kingdom. By His life of prayer, His teachings on prayer, and His giving us a spirit of prayer, Jesus births a praying people. As praying people, the following is what we need to understand.

For a Life of Prayer, We Find All We Need in Jesus

While there are many kinds of prayer, Christian prayer is all about Jesus. It is Christ-centric. Jesus not only brings believers through the veil dividing them from God, He removes the barrier altogether. Through Christ every Christian takes residence in the very throne room of God, with Jesus providing everything we need to ensure our constant communion with God. As the writer of Hebrews wrote, “Since then we have a great high priest . . . let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace” (4:14, 16). We not only have Jesus' example and teaching, we also have His personal friendship, His mediation, and His presence in prayer.

Jesus Offers Every Believer a Prayer Friendship

Those who pray experience intimacy with Christ as He reveals His plans and purposes: “The servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard

from my Father I have made known to you . . . so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” (John 15:15–16).

True prayer is friendship prayer—friendship with Jesus. Who doesn’t need a good friend? A friend is someone you can always confide in. A friend is someone you can always rely on. Realizing that Jesus is your best and truest friend in prayer opens a whole new world of confidence and adventure.

Jesus Mediates Our Prayers

As we pray, Jesus as our mediator prays with and for us on the basis of His finished work on the cross. This is an astounding truth and great blessing in prayer: we can cast aside guilt and doubt when we offer our prayers in the name of Jesus, for “who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Rom. 8:34).

Jesus Purifies Our Prayers

Our prayers are made acceptable in the mediatory work of Jesus. This image is found in Leviticus 16:12–13 and Revelation 8.

In Leviticus we read that once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the high priest offered a sacrifice on the burning altar. After taking bloodied and burning coals from the altar, he placed them in a censer and filled the censer with two handfuls of incense. As the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, symbolizing the very presence of God, he waved the censer so that a fragrant smoke billowed and filled the room. As the cloud of incense covered the mercy seat, God was pleased with the fragrance and accepted the sacrifices and offerings for His people.

Corresponding to this Old Testament drama, in Revelation, John described the parallel experience as a believer prays today.

When any believer enters the throne room, the incense of their prayer ascends to God. The believer's pleas and praises are mixed with the blood of the Savior, resulting in fragrant, purified, and pleasing petitions to God:

Another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.

REVELATION 8:3-4

God answers such Christ-filled prayers with powerful transformations that not only change the one who prays, but also that shake the world and shape its destiny. As John continued, "The angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake" (Rev. 8:5).

Every believer has confidence entering the most holy presence of God through the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus carries us into heaven itself. This high-priestly work of Christ brings a profound and enduring boldness to our prayers (see Heb. 10:19-22).

This is what it means to pray in Jesus' name; as we pray, we invoke the purifying merit of His mediatory work.

Jesus Indwells Us in His Spirit of Prayer

In order that we might enjoy answer upon answer to our prayers, Jesus gives each believer His Spirit of prayer. Often we do not know how to pray; the Holy Spirit dwells deep within every believer and "groans" alongside us. Often we do not know what to ask for; the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray the right thoughts and words (see Rom. 8:26-27).

Whenever we find ourselves stumped in prayer, Jesus encourages us that the Father always gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask (see Luke 11:9–13).

**JESUS' PRACTICE OF PRAYER IS THE
PERFECT EXAMPLE FOR US**

Jesus' life of prayer is outlined in fullness and detail, especially in the book of Luke, to furnish a clear pattern for how we, like Jesus, are to navigate life by prayer, enjoy our union with God through prayer, and call down the kingdom realities of grace and power using prayer.

I recall the first time I earnestly studied the many passages about Jesus' prayer life from Luke's Gospel. It was a number of years after I had done a major study in the book of Acts about the priority of prayer. I had not yet connected the prayer life of the early church to the prayer life of Jesus. Luke wrote both a Gospel by his name and the book of Acts, so it is not surprising that Luke stressed the theme of prayer in both. Over several weeks, I studied the prayer life of Jesus. I discovered that prayer was a first priority of the apostolic church simply because prayer was a first priority of Jesus. The deeper I went in Luke's Gospel, I found it was not only Jesus' teaching about prayer but His very praying life that could impart a spirit of prayer.

The outcome for me was inescapable. Jesus lived a life of prayer and Jesus said, "Follow me!" If I was going to follow Him and become like Him, I needed to live a life of prayer as He did. I knew this would be revolutionary and would disrupt my way of life, but I knew it would be infinitely worth it.

Immersing myself in the prayer practices of Jesus, my prayer life changed. Praying like Jesus became a discipline and a habit.

Like Jesus praying all night before choosing His disciples, before major decisions and crossroads, I take seasons and days of prayer. Our team does not make plans, we make prayer plans—meeting regularly for interactive times of prayer and planning. We have learned to face the ever-present onslaught of electronic noise and busyness by waiting on God. I often share days of prayer and fasting with others going through severe trial. Like Jesus, who met exhaustion by withdrawing to pray, I am growing in the practice of conversing with God and laying down the many burdens that cling to my soul. Like Jesus, I want to have a contagious prayer life. I follow Jesus and I strive to lead others by example. Prayer is more caught than taught.

Jesus is the supreme teacher of prayer, and He invites us into His school of prayer. He demonstrates to us what a praying life looks like. He provides a model for prayer with very specific prayer practices, and we can overlay His prayer life on ours to cultivate richer prayer lives.

I invite you to learn what a praying life is about by studying the prayer life of Jesus. One at a time these texts from Luke's gospel have weight, yet read together, they will carry you to new heights of joy and adventure in prayer.

As you read, pray. Allow the Word to do the speaking. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you what you need to learn from Jesus' life of prayer. His practice of prayer is presented in detail. As you follow His example step by step, you will learn to emulate Him in prayer. You too will be convicted to withdraw from a crowded life and find more time alone with God. Like Jesus, you will take extended time to pray before you make plans. Jesus talked with God all the time and will teach you the art of conversational prayer. The great reward for following this example is that your prayers will move from one-way words to a distant God to confiding with

Prayer is the first breath of a new believer. Once the first breath happens, the rest of life is simply a matter of continuing to breathe.

a Friend. And as you follow Jesus' life as your guide, you will experience more of the following:

From the Start, Jesus Lived a Life of Prayer

Jesus' baptism inaugurated His ministry. The Spirit fell upon Him while He was praying:

When all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

LUKE 3:21-22

Similarly, the entire Christian life begins with prayer. Prayer is the first breath of a new believer. If that first breath does not happen, life cannot begin. Once the first breath happens, the rest of life is simply a matter of continuing to breathe.

Before Jesus began His public ministry, He prayed, fasted, and fought the devil for forty days: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1-2).

Those who are weak in faith meet adversity with anxiety. Jesus' followers face the enemy with prayer and with power.

Jesus Prayed to Recover from Ministry Chaos

We leave our busy lives to pray. Jesus left His praying life to be busy: "Even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray" (Luke 5:15-16).

Jesus Prayed in Advance of Major Decisions

At every critical juncture, Jesus turned to prayer: “He went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles” (Luke 6:12–13).

For Jesus, prayer initiated every kingdom advance. The author Luke took pains to present this fact with indisputable detail. How much more should this become true of us? How foolish for us to make our important plans and decisions with little or no prayer! Planning for the future moves us from anxiety and uncertainty to adventure and opportunity when we immerse our decision-making in prayer. As we pray and fast, we partner with Christ, and we learn to yield to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus at Prayer Elicited the First Great Confession

Time and again, Jesus retreated to be alone with God, and the disciples noticed. Eventually, they realized this man of prayer was the Son of God:

It happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.” Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

LUKE 9:18–20

Someone once said, “We are what we pray.” Jesus’ identity is most clearly revealed as He prays. Likewise, our true identity is revealed by our prayer lives. Others cannot fail to notice.

While Praying, Jesus Was Transfigured

Prayer is the environment for transfiguration: “About eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white” (Luke 9:28–29).

It is while He prayed that Jesus manifested His glory. It is in earnest prayer that Christ’s followers see the vision of His splendor and glory. As we pray, our vision of Christ is like looking at the sun in its full strength. Paul put it this way, “We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Jesus’ Prayer Life Inspired His Disciples to Pray

Jesus not only prayed—His prayer life was contagious: “Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1).

The disciples had just returned from a mission trip. They preached the gospel, healed the sick, and fought demonic forces. They were excited by their ministry but had awakened to the enormous challenges before them. Prayer moved them from pious practice to urgent necessity. Hungry for Jesus’ power and peace, the disciples turned to the Great Teacher to learn His secret of kingdom advance.

When believers leave the safe confines of the local church, they discover the deep joys and great challenges of the harvest field. This brings a growing hunger for prayer. Those who step forth in obedience to the mission urgently seek out Christ to teach them how to pray.

Jesus Cleansed the Temple Because of Prayer

Jesus was hailed as Messiah as He entered the city. Descending from the Mount of Olives, He surveyed Jerusalem and wept for her. She had no eyes or heart for His coming, and Jesus prophesied terrible judgments on the city and her inhabitants: “Your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you . . . because you did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:43–44).

The next day, Jesus entered the temple and, eaten up by jealousy for God’s honor, His words of judgment became actions of wrath: “He entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be a house of prayer,” but you have made it a den of robbers”’ (Luke 19:45–46).

At the temple we see Jesus as we have never seen Him before. He held court, pronounced the verdict, and executed the judgment of God. The reason for His fury was straightforward but profound: God intended His temple to be a place for all nations to gather in prayer. All the splendor of this building, the temple service, teaching, and sacrifices meant nothing if prayer for the nations was missing.

The same holds true today. The cleansing of the temple is a monumental call to prayer for all time. Building projects, Sunday services, excellent programs, and offerings of money and time mean nothing if we are not building the Father’s house of prayer for a lost world.

In Anguished Prayer, Jesus Prepared for the Cross

Jesus could not have faced the cross without prayer. He did not set aside His human nature to bear our sin; He faced the cross in His full humanity in order to be our sacrificial representative. As

He cried out in prayer, His approaching suffering was more than He could possibly bear: “Being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

Jesus was only able to face His greatest challenge by collapsing before His Father in prayer. How much more do we need to face the most significant challenges of life and death by crying out to our Father?

Jesus Forgave His Enemies on the Cross

The challenge of forgiveness is in proportion to the cost of forgiveness. It is no challenge to forgive a nickel debt; it is a considerable challenge to forgive a million-dollar debt. The highest cost of forgiveness is to forgive someone for taking a life. Jesus settled the debts of forgiveness because He paid the highest price: “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ And they cast lots to divide his garments” (Luke 23:34).

The greater the injury done to us, the greater the need for us to ask again and again for Christ’s spirit of forgiving prayer. An unknown poet put it this way:

*“Forgiving again?” I asked in dismay. “Must I keep forgiving
and forgiving always?”*

*“No,” said the angel, whose eye pierced me through. “Stop
forgiving when the Savior stops forgiving you.”*

Jesus Surrendered His Soul in Prayer

Jesus began His ministry in prayer, and He ended His ministry in prayer:

*It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness
over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun’s
light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in*

two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

LUKE 23:44–46

This cosmic prayer of surrender expressed Christ’s final release and paramount accomplishment for humankind. Prayer and surrender are synonymous—all true and effective prayer commits our spirit into the hands of God.

Jesus Prayed Blessing upon His Followers at His Ascension

As He ascended to His eternal reign, Jesus lifted His hands to pray: “He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50–51).

His hands are lifted still! He ever lives to pray His resurrection blessings upon His people (see Rom. 8:34). Just so, we are never more like the risen and exalted Christ than when we bless others in intercession.

IMITATION IS MUCH MORE THAN FLATTERY

The Christian life is many things, but it certainly involves the active imitation of Christ. Imitating others is not wrong. Paul told the Corinthian believers, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

We can imitate Jesus by following the example of godly women and men of prayer—people who model a life of prayer. Their contagious integrity draws us into their leadership. We intuit that their godliness comes from following Jesus. Their passion for God makes us want to imitate them so that we, too, can experience and enter the prayer life of Jesus.

Older and wiser believers who model integrity of life, largeness of faith, and passion for mission reveal what following Jesus looks like to those coming after them. Sheep follow their shepherds. The next generation depends on it!



Kingdom-Come Prayer Today

- 1.** Evaluate your prayer life in light of Jesus' prayer life. Note where you find differences. Ask God to help you lead and serve "from the knees," as Jesus did.
- 2.** In what ways are you currently handling major decisions or challenges? To what degree are you driven by worry rather than empowered through prayer? What will it take to move from anxiety to adventure?
- 3.** Isaiah 30:15 tells us, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." When depleted and exhausted, what do you do? How do you feel about taking a day of restful prayer as Jesus did?

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