

# Voice of Thanksgiving

Calling a Company of Believers Together for Prayer

For the Week of January 10, 2010

He who is good at making excuses is seldom good at anything else. – An old saying.

## *The Life of Prayer*

### *Sharpening Our Tools*

David Williamson

As I write this, it is cold in many parts of the world and when it is this cold it is hard to think of the warm days of spring to come, however this is a good time to be preparing. The wise gardener and the smart home owner, takes this time to strategize for when they can begin to go to work. One aspect of this preparation is getting their tools ready for use. Just as gardening tools need to be cleaned, repaired, and sharpened, so we should prepare for effective prayer.

The tools of effective prayer undergo wear and tear throughout the year and we must clean, repair, and sharpen these tools, if we are going to have success in prayer. The world we live in presents problems, hindrances, and sins designed to keep us from prayer or at least reduce our effectiveness in prayer. If we do not do regular maintenance, we limit how we can be used. The Lord has made provision for us so that we can be a vessel fit for the Master's use, but a vessel must be prepared for good use. It is not ready if it is dirty, or in need of repair.

***But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.*** 2 Timothy 2:20-21 (NKJV)

God has done His part; He has made provision for us to be His children and to be guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit for good work. And by the working of the Holy Spirit we can cleanse our self and be prepared for every good work God has planned. This is especially true in prayer. We can come boldly to God because Jesus has gone before us. We can boldly cry out to God, confident that He hears us, and we can pray correctly with great power because the Holy Spirit is our guide and aide to effective prayer. The question is will we do our part. People who do not pray are not effective in prayer and people who do not prepare for use in prayer, will not be effective in prayer. Today, let us prepare to be champions of prayer, prepared for every good work.

One day when my son, Nathan, was a little boy, even though he had been told not to do so, he went out in the yard and played in the mud. When he first came in, he tried to deny that he had been playing in the mud, but I knew because I had seen him playing and there was other evidence; it was all over his hands and clothes.

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Living in this world, it is hard not to get dirty. There is so much around us that is not Heaven on earth. We have been directed to be in the world, but not of the world. This is a tough assignment and requires that we have regular times of cleaning. Even with good intentions, if we are not careful we will have evidence of the world on us, just like Nathan had mud. Paul's admonition to Timothy is good for us as well; we should cleanse our self.

Just as dirty tools are not safe and inefficient and must be cleaned, so we need to clean our heart, if we are going to be effective in prayer. Cleansing always begins with our heart. Out of our heart come the issues of life. What we say, think, and do, comes from our heart. If we have allowed the world, sin, unbelief, doubt, fear, unforgiveness, or other things into our heart we will struggle. A clean heart is guarded from pollution of the world and abundantly flooded with the Word of God. This combination, guarding and abundance are required for a clean heart. Check if you have a clean heart, check what you allow in, how you are feeding your heart, and make changes as needed.

We also must have clean thoughts. This is more than staying away from bad jokes and conversations, this is thinking like God thinks. He has called us to agree with Him in what we think. We have been given the mind of Christ; not as something to put on the mantle and show our friends, but as the way we are to think. A new creation in Christ, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit can and should think like Jesus. With right thinking, I can do all things through Christ. I no longer think worldly thoughts, negative thoughts, doubting thought, I think what God has and is saying about me and the situations I face. This is especially important for prayer. We negate our appropriation of the promise, if we do not believe we receive. This is a result of our thinking. Wrong thinking, not believing, gets no answer. Right thinking, believing that we receive, gets answers. Check your thinking and be sure to think like God and make changes as needed.

***So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. Mark 11:22-24 (NKJV)***

A few years ago I went on a mission trip with some young people. They had been trained for ministry on the trip and this included speaking good and not evil in any and all forms. They had begun to check each other for those little things that slip into our everyday conversation, those bad confessions and statements. As I spent time with this group, they began to take notice of the things that had slipped into my conversations and began to call me on them. It was embarrassing, but they were right, what I was saying was wrong. We should be saying what God and His Word says, not what the world says. Check and see what you are saying and make changes as needed.

The fence in back of our house is an all wood stockade style, picket fence. Our neighbors put it up many years ago and it gives us some privacy in our very small back yard. Unfortunately, over the years nothing was done to take care of the fence. The years of wear and tear had taken its toll and

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the fence was in danger of falling down; one good blast of wind would have done it in. Finally after much neglect, I decided to repair the damage before we lost the entire fence. It turned out that the pickets and rails were in good shape, the only problem was the posts. Several of these are nearly rotted through. In places we were very close to having nothing holding up the fence. The repair was simple we fortified the posts. We used metal posts in several places to support weakened posts. Just like this fence, we often need repairs to our prayer life.

The Devil runs around looking for places and ways to attack us. In Christ, we have full protection and the Devil cannot touch us. It may not seem that way because too often we have left an opening. Like a breach in a wall around a farm or estate, this opening allows attack. To live, work, and pray effectively, we must make sure to make repairs. We should be repairing the wall and hedge around our heart, life, family, and ministry. Check and see if you have allowed openings in your protection and make changes as needed.

People can be difficult to deal with and it is easy to stumble concerning relationships. We cannot live well or be effective as a neighbor or friend, if we do not regularly repair our relationships. This is important concerning our relationships with God. It is also required for relationships with other people. Effective prayer is hindered or even stopped by having unforgiveness in our heart. It is easy to have problems rooting there way into our heart and our thinking. In relationships little things can and often do become big things ruining our relationships and our prayers. Check to see if you have aught against any and make changes as needed.

Habits come in two types, good and bad. Prayer at a certain time every day is a good habit. Being lazy is a bad habit. Often our routines are changed over a holiday season and our habits are changed or broken. It is important that we break out of the bad habits that were formed during this time and reestablish the good habits we should have and need. Check your habits, if you have bad habits or need to reestablish good habits, make changes as needed.

My family celebrates with turkey and all of the trimmings of a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Some years my two brothers and my two sisters and all of their families and often some friends gather for a great meal. One of the big chores for getting this meal ready is carving the turkey. The key to effective carving is having the right knife for the job and it being sharp. A dull knife can ruin even the best cooked turkey and make carving a difficult task. To be ready for the big day we must sharpen the knife. To be effective in prayer, demands sharpening as well.

Write the vision. This command from Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:2-3), is important to our success. We must know what we are doing. It is important to have a vision and plan, and to regularly sharpen that vision. Situations, people, and conditions change, forcing us to make sure we see the vision clearly. It is easy to slip into a state of a false or misguided vision. The vision must be from God and in accord with His will and way. We should have a godly vision of all we do, anything less than what God says, is a faded or false vision. For every aspect of life, write the vision, make it clear; write

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what God says to write. Check your vision; get one if you need, be sure it is not faded or false and make changes as needed.

I do not remember who revealed to me the secret of starting a fire with a magnifying glass. I do remember being intrigued by this strange wonder; holding the glass in line with the sun and then focusing the circle of the light on a piece of paper. As the circle of light was focused tighter and tighter suddenly there would be smoke and then fire. “Wow that was neat!” The key was the focus of the energy. Focus is also needed in a victorious Christian life and an effective prayer.

Success in the Christian world comes from focus. As we focus on Christ and abiding in Him, His guidance, wisdom, and power flow into and through our life. Failure can often be traced to lack of focus. The world and all that is in it are powerful agents of decreasing or destroying focus. This can be a sin, but often it is things that are not sinful in themselves, but they are a weight, a hindrance, and a stumbling block to what we should be doing. Success in all we do and in effective prayer requires a focused life. Champions of prayer have always been focused and today that is still true. Check and see where you are focused; is it on Christ and His Kingdom or the world. If you do not know your focus, find it in Him. If you have lost your focus, trim away things that are not central to your focus, and make changes as needed.

For a time when I was young I had a bad habit of putting off my parents. They would ask me to do something and I would agree to do it, but would put it off. Sometimes I would finally do what they said, often after being asked again, but other times I would not get done what they asked. This was not obedience to them. Obedience is chief among the attributes of successful Christians. Check and see if your obedience of the Father is quick and complete, and make changes as needed.

How is your preparation for effective prayer? Are your tools sharpened for a season of use as a vessel fit for the Master? Champions of prayer regularly check to be sure they are prepared.

*Let us pray!*

## **A Call for Prayer**

**Pray to be a Champion of Prayer** – Pray this week for your self. It is important that we deal with the issues and hindrances that keep us from being effective in prayer. The ministries listed in ***Voice of Thanksgiving***, as well as the many other areas that you have taken responsibility in prayer need champions to pray through to success and fulfillment of all God wants. They need you to be your best in prayer. Take time this week to check your self and your practices and make changes if needed.

## **Continue Faithful in Prayer**

**Pray for ... *Continue Faithful in Prayer*** is not just the heading for a list of ministries for prayer. It is a call to make prayer a focus of your life. The ministries listed here are worthy of your prayers, but

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they are also reminders of other areas where you have taken responsibility for seeking God. All of you have family, friends, church, work, ministry, and government needs, needing effective, fervent prayer that avails much. The section ***Continue Faithful in Prayer*** is a call for prayer and a reminder to pray, both for these areas listed and others you know. Check to see that you are continuing faithful in prayer for these and those areas, and make changes if needed.

This week I have grouped the prayer requests by type to remind us to pray for these and to be praying for the other churches, works, ministries, and governments for which you pray.

## **Pray for Nations and the Churches of Nations**

Israel and the peace of Jerusalem  
Churches in Belarus  
Churches in Lithuania

## **Pray for Pastors of Churches**

DK Limbu Daniel – Pastor of a church in Nepal  
Jacek Gromadzki – Pastor of a church in Kolobrzeg, Poland  
Mark and Patty Spencer – Pastor of a church in Longmont, Colorado  
William (Bill) Williamson – Pastor of a church in Cedaredge, Colorado  
Charles and Janice Wilson – Pastors in Wyola, Montana

## **Pray for Leadership over multiple Churches**

DK Limbu Daniel – Church planter among Nepalese people  
Marek Kaminski – Bishop of Poland and co-founder and leader of the BBB Conference

## **Pray for Christian Ministries**

Joyce Abrahamson – Head of a Christian school in Brazil  
John Coon – Ministry in Europe and the USA  
Marianne and David Dean – Missionaries on college campuses in East Asia  
Lori Farquhar – Children's Ministry Director  
Bernd and Heike Pastor – Ministry in Germany  
Mark Spencer – Worldwide ministry, and co-founder and leader of BBB Conference  
Patty Spencer – Worship leader, and musician  
William (Bill) Williamson – Leader of mission outreach in India  
David Williamson – Writer and editor of ***Voice of Thanksgiving***

## **Calling Christians to Effective Fervent Prayer**

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