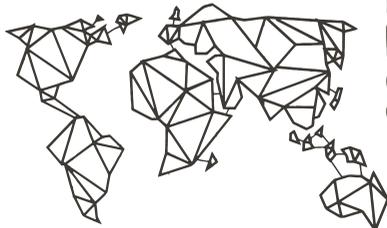




¹ As cited in Dave Earley, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High Impact Leaders* (Chattanooga, TN: Living Ink Books, 2008), 5.

Notes:

**GREAT
COMMISSION
LEADERSHIP**
HOMEWORK
PACKET
SEVENTEEN



LEADERS PREPARE

MAKING PRAYER A PRIORITY

Those who do not believe do not pray. This is a good functional definition of faith. Faith prays, unbelief does not.

John A. Hardon

Work, work from early till late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.

Martin Luther

BEFORE GOING ANY FURTHER, IS CHRIST ON THE THRONE?

If not, make sure He is!

MEMORY VERSE

...pray continually...

1 Thessalonians 5:17 [NIV]

YOUR WALK WITH GOD COMES FIRST

In our standard Exponential Harvest training, we start by considering the sower who went out to sow seed (Mark 4:2-3). As the sower had to prepare before going out to sow, so must we. First, we must prepare by abiding with Christ and allowing His Word to abide in us (Jn. 15:5-9). We also must prepare by allowing the Spirit to empower us (Eph. 5:18). This requires that we consciously submit to the Spirit moment by moment, inviting Him to fill and empower us for all He calls us to. Another aspect of preparing is always starting in prayer (1 Thes. 5:17). Unfortunately this is often neglected by busy leaders. Finally, we must prepare by accepting the Great Commission call (Matt. 28:18-20).

Since most of these topics have been covered in previous homework packets in more depth, so this week we will be focusing on the importance of always starting in prayer. Jesus taught His followers to pray (Matt. 6:6-13) and taught that prayer was a fundamental component of fulfilling His Great Commission (Matt. 9:37-38).



² Mark Batterson, *All In: You Are One Decision Away From a Totally Different Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 32.

³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press, 2012), preface.

Notes:

→ **What difference do you notice between the times that you prepared with prayer and the times when you just jumped into ministry?**

LEADERS PREPARE WITH PRAYER

Prayer is a critical part of preparing in ministry. Epaphras was a prayer warrior! We don't know much about Epaphras but Scripture tells us he was a beloved servant of Christ who ministered alongside Paul and other believers (Col. 1:7) and who was imprisoned along with Paul for his faith (Philemon 1:23). He is only mentioned one other time in Scripture and that is in Col. 4:12, which states, "...He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured" (NIV). Epaphras is remembered not for his great achievements nor spectacular accomplishments but for his commitment to serving God and those he ministered to in prayer. He was "always wrestling in prayer" for those he led and great leaders will always do the same for those they lead.

PRAYER: A MINISTRY ESSENTIAL

Mark Batterson writes, prayer "is the difference between the best you can do and the best God can do"² and it "is the difference between us fighting for God and God fighting for us."³ The effectiveness of your ministry is directly proportional to the quality of your prayer life.

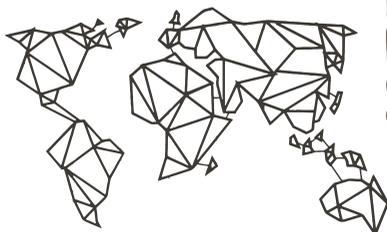
It is equally important to cultivate a life and ministry founded on fervent prayer. Concerning prayer in ministry, Andrew Murray writes, "...when we learn to regard [prayer] as the highest part of the work entrusted to us, the root and strength of all other work, we will see that there is nothing we need to study and practice more than the art of praying."⁴ Similarly, Samuel realized that failing to pray for those he led was sin (1 Sam. 12:23). Leaders must lead on their knees.

→ **On a scale of 1 to 10, how is your personal prayer life?**

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

→ **On a scale of 1 to 10, how is your ministry doing with prayer?**

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩



Notes:

- **What step(s) can you make today to improve your personal and ministry prayer life (remember 1 Thes. 5:17)?**

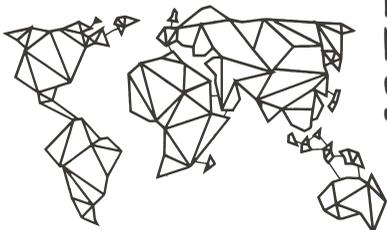
HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

We should follow Jesus' example (Lk. 5:16, 6:12) and format (Mt. 6:5-13). One great way to remember this is the **ACTS** acronym which believers have used for many years. The **ACTS** acronym stands for **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication. Spend time in prayerful praise, confessing sin, thanking God and asking Him to meet your and others' needs. It is also important to pray directed by the Holy Spirit, praying when and how He directs (Eph. 6:18).

We should be faithful (Rom. 12:12), alert, and self-controlled in prayer (1 Peter 5:8), and should pray in Jesus' name, according to His will, and He will answer (Jn. 14:13, 15:7, 16, 16:23). We should pray in agreement with other believers (Mt. 18:19), with a heart and attitude of humility and repentance (2 Chr. 7:14), persistently regardless of results (Lk. 18:1-8), and continually (1 Thes. 5:17). We should pray in faith without doubting (James 1:6), while being wary of our motives (James 4:3). Follow David's example (expressed in the Psalms) of praying honestly, from the heart, about everything that was on his mind. Paul mentioned not ceasing and not forgetting to pray for those he led (Eph. 1:15-16). Keeping a prayer list will help you remember what God wants you to be praying for.

- **What from the list above do you need to incorporate into your daily prayer life?**

- **Do you have a prayer list (refer back to the application section for Homework Packet 2)? If not, take a few moments to write one out now. If so, how has it impacted your prayer life?**



⁶ Studylight.org, "Energeo Definition," <http://classic.studylight.org/isb/bible.cgi?query=James+5%3A16§ion=0&it=nas&oq=eph%25206%3A13&ot=bhs&nt=na&new=1&nb=eph&ng=6&ncc=6> (accessed January 8, 2014).

⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Business of Heaven: Daily Readings from C. S. Lewis* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Inc., 1984), 290.

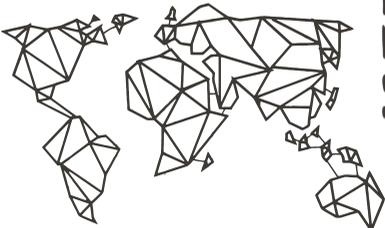
Notes:

→ **Prayer recharges you! Jesus called his ministry weary disciples to get some rest with Him (Mk. 6:31). How has prayer recharged you in life and ministry?**

Prayer is not a means to an end. If this were the case, we would be left feeling frustration, anxiety, doubt, and a lack of peace, when the end isn't realized. Prayer is not micro-managing the universe. God does answer prayer, but those answers are in areas He already intended to work. He answers according to His will. The object of prayer is not the point of prayer, the fellowship with God is. Prayer is fellowship with God and co-laboring in His work. When you pray, you are laboring together with Him (1 Cor. 3:9), focusing on what is close to His heart. That yields intimate fellowship with Him and powerful results. Co-laboring with the God of the universe never turns out poorly.

THE POWER IN PRAYER

Prayer is powerful because it is co-laboring with God, helping Him in His work. Ps. 127:1 says, "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain." The laborers must labor and the watchmen must watch but unless God works nothing significant will happen. It is impossible to co-labor with God in prayer and not see results. When you pray for others they will really be helped as a result (2 Cor. 1:10). James 5:16 states, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (NIV). The word "effective" in the Greek is *Energeo*. It is not an adjective but a verb (the root from which we get the English word energy) meaning "to be operative, at work, and to effect putting forth power."⁶ This verse promises us that when we pray according to God's will we will see powerful and effective outcomes. The power of prayer doesn't come from our emotional intensity. Godly prayer is always powerful. C.S. Lewis reminds us that, "Emotional intensity is in itself no proof for spiritual depth. If we pray in terror we shall pray earnestly; it only proves that terror is an earnest emotion. Only God Himself can let the bucket down to the depths in us."⁷ Some people incorrectly assume the volume or intensity of their prayer will effect results. Any prayer prayed according to God's will, and with correct motives, will be powerful and effective!



⁸ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press, 2012), 31.

⁹ Ibid.

Notes:

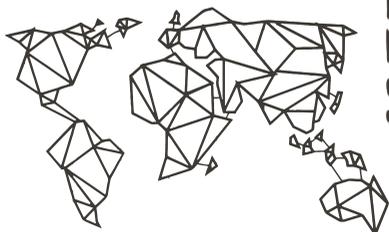
- **Jesus tells us that we'll receive if we ask (Mt. 7:7) and James reminds us that we do not have, because we do not ask God (James 4:2). How has praying in line with God's will affected you in the past?**

Prayer does not change God's mind nor force His hand; both would undermine His deity (Jer. 15:1, Gen. 18). God does call us to "stand in the gap," fighting for people in prayer, according to His will (Ps. 106:23). Prayer is not passive. Prayer is action and must be accompanied by action. We must seek God in prayer and work wholeheartedly at what He has called us to (2 Chr. 31:21). Andrew Murray rightly articulated this point, writing, "do you not realize that time is needed, much time in fellowship with the Father and the Son if you would experience the power of God within you?"⁸ Remember Sonny Perdue, governor of the state of Georgia who called for a prayer meeting on the steps of the state capitol, to ask God for rain when Georgia was in the middle of a drought in November of 2007? The next day it rained over an inch in Atlanta, and God's name was glorified! Prayer powerfully accomplishes God's will. Murray reminds us, "... Man's prayer on earth and God's answer in heaven are meant for each other."⁹ Amen!

- **List a few prayers God has answered, and how they glorified God.**

PRAYER AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:18-20). He also told them to pray for laborers for the harvest (Mt. 9:37-38). The limiting factors in the harvest are laborers and prayer. You are God's solution to both needs. Remember what has long been called the Divine order, "First talk to God about people then talk to people about God." The Great Awakenings, D.L Moody's ministry, the Welsh Revival, and pretty much every revival in history (remember Acts 1:14 and the result in ch. 2) began in prayer. Fulfilling the Great Commission in this generation will as well. Revival doesn't happen because we pray causing God to finally do something. He isn't lazy and we don't motivate Him. Revival happens when we pray because that is



Notes:

when our hearts finally get where they need to be with God, and He then is freed to do what He wanted to do all along. Revival is always imminent—I need to draw near to Him—I don't have to force His hand. When Christians begin drawing near to Him, they begin to be changed into the people they need to be to see true revival happen around them. Christians must cultivate revival catalyzing hearts through prayer.

→ **List 3 areas things you'll be committed to praying for for your community (add these to your prayer list).**

1.

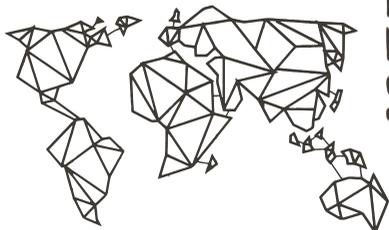
2.

3.

FASTING

Fasting is refraining from some type of activity (usually eating) to focus on God (Mt. 6:16-18). Fasting is not one of the most eagerly anticipated parts of the Christian life but it is a very important one. God intended fasting to loose the chains of injustice and to untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and to break every yoke; to let your light break forth and your healing quickly appear, to let your righteousness (through His work) go before you and the glory of the Lord be around you and to have answers to your prayers (Is. 58:3-11). We often reduce this awesome blessing to a very disliked chore. Fasting like every other act of obedience must be done out of love. Christians are called to fast. Jesus said that when He went to be with the Father, His followers would fast (Mt. 9:14-15, Mk. 2:18-20, Lk. 5:35).

Fasting is usually associated with repentance in Scripture. In Biblical times, fasting was often done in "sackcloth and ashes," a term which was used to express deep conviction, humility, and repentance. Fasting strengthens your faith by putting everything else in its proper place. Fasting is referred to as a way of "humbling" yourself (Ps. 35:13, 69:10). When you put your most basic human desires on the back burner, in order to focus on God, your faith will be strengthened. Fasting can be done to get guidance (Ex. 34:28, Dt. 9:9, 2 Sam. 12:16-23, 2 Chr. 20:3-4, Ez. 8:21-23, Acts. 13:2-3, 14:23). Fasting can be done along with prayer and intercession asking God to work in an area or situation (2 Chr. 20:3,



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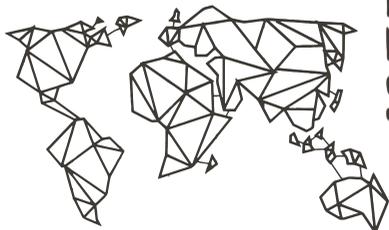
Mt. 17:21, Mk. 9:29). Fasting can be done to glorify God and humble your self, by putting God in His rightful place (Ezr. 8:21, Ps. 69:10). Fasting is a great way of putting your flesh in its place. Fasting is supposed to be done correctly, not out of a religious attitude, but in sincerity (Is. 58:5-12, Jer. 14:11-12, Zech. 7). Fasting is a way of serving God (Lk.2:37). Fasting can be done individually or corporately. There are several Biblical examples of groups fasting together (Judges 20:26, 2 Chr. 20:3). Fasting can be done according to a schedule, as the need arises and also according to the Holy Spirit's leading. Fasting from different types of things is possible.

Food is not the only thing we can fast from. You can fast from anything that can distract you from God. Some Christians often do "Daniel's fasts" where they eat only fruits and vegetables (Dan. 1:8-14). (Note: that this is one way we can fast but Daniel didn't do it as a fast.) Married couples can fast from sex (1 Cor. 7:5). You can fast from T.V (if you have it), movies, or other entertainment. You can fast for one meal, two meals, or three meals for one day, two days, or more. When you fast, don't do so for attention—to show how "holy" you are—but don't lie if someone asks you why you aren't eating or refraining from certain activities (Mt. 6:16-18). Fast for the right reasons (to focus on God, to get guidance, to seek God concerning something) with the right motives (love for God, sense of urgency for what you are fasting about). When you fast, devote yourself to seeking God while you are fasting. Fasting is not a "magic bullet" that will solve all your problems—it is a way of getting self off the throne and focusing on Him. Fasting is for all believers. Talk with whoever is discipling you for more information about fasting.

- **Is there an area in your life where you are desiring to align your heart with God's heart? If so, pray about fasting related to this issue. As you pray, write down a time-frame you will commit to for this fast, and the name of someone who will help you stay accountable. (Also, if you have current health issues, please consult your doctor before you begin.)**

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILING TO PRAY

Jesus is the greatest example of a leader and every godly leader should strive to emulate His example of consistent and committed prayer. Unfortunately, Christ-likeness, in this regard, eludes so many leaders

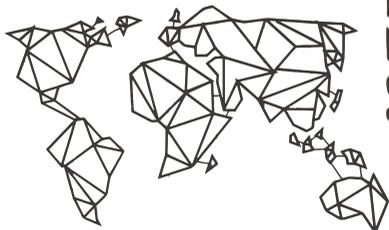


Notes:

today. In addition to missing out on being like Jesus, these leaders miss out on many of the other benefits of a fervent prayer life.

Here are ten things leaders who fail to pray always miss out on:

1. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on the joy of co-laboring with God (1 Cor. 3:9). Instead of the exhilaration of answered prayer, they experience the monotony of ministry routine.
2. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on what God could have done in and through them (James 4:2). God can sovereignly choose not to do what His followers selfishly choose not to pray for.
3. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on God's unparalleled power (Eph. 3:20-21). Ministry quickly becomes an exercise of the flesh rather than a powerful work produced by faith (1 Thes. 1:3, James 5:16).
4. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on God's peace (Phil. 4:6-7). Instead of casting their anxieties on Him (1 Peter 5:7), they struggle to fabricate ministry on their own, resulting in frustration, burnout and pride.
5. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on victory in spiritual battle (Eph. 6:10-20). Instead of wrestling in prayer (Col. 4:12) they resort to passivity and lethargy.
6. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on God's blessing (2 Chr. 7:14). Content with the status quo, they arrogantly get stuck with it.
7. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on God's heart. Praying in line with God's will (Matt. 6:10, Jn. 14:13-14), unites a believer with His heart for His world, His people and His ministry; leaders who fail to pray fail to acquire His heart for those they serve.
8. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on God's vision and direction. Instead of prayerfully acquiring God's wisdom (James 1:5), they negligently rely on their own.
9. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on partnership with other believers. Prayer is an instrumental component of authentic fellowship (Acts 2:42) and leaders who fail to pray for other believers alienate themselves from them.
10. Leaders who fail to pray miss out on intimacy with God. Instead of uninterrupted intimacy with their Savior (Jn. 15:5, 1 Thes. 5:17), they experience only a fraction of the fellowship they could be having with Him. This is undoubtedly the worst consequence of failing to pray.



¹⁰ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press, 2012), 1, 3.

Notes:

heart for Himself and for prayer in you (remember James 4:8). You'll also see Him do more than you can imagine or ask in your ministry (Eph.3:20-21). We all have so much room to grow in prayer and we desperately need God to grow our hearts for Him and for prayer.

Andrew Murray describes Christ's example of prayer and ability to teach us to pray saying:

And as we see Him pray, and remember that there is none who can pray like Him, and none who can teach like Him, we feel the petition of His disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray," is just what we need ... Jesus has opened a school, in which He trains His redeemed ones, who specially desire it, to have power in prayer. Shall we not enter it with petition, Lord! It is just this we need to be taught! O teach us to pray.¹⁰

Jesus will teach you to pray, just like He did with His disciples, if you'll allow Him to.

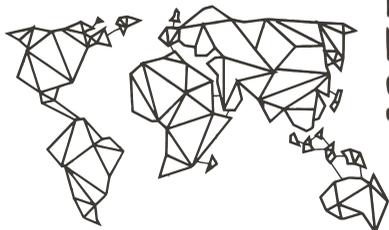
→ **Take 10 minutes right now to pray using the ACTS acronym:**

- » **Adoration:** Take a few minutes to praise God, telling Him what He means to you.
- » **Confession:** Take a few minutes to confess any sin He reveals to you.
- » **Thanksgiving:** Take a few minutes to thank Him for all He has given you.
- » **Supplication:** Take a few minutes to ask God to meet your needs and win your community to Himself.

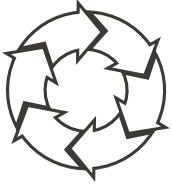
We must prepare by abiding with Christ (Jn. 15:5), by allowing the Spirit to empower us (Eph. 5:18), by always starting in prayer (1 Thes. 5:17), and by accepting the Great Commission call (Matt. 28:18-20). Each of these is important.

Prayer is often neglected in the Christian life. We need to pray! Leaders must lead on their knees. Don't let questions or a lack of understanding about prayer keep you from praying. There is a time and a place for asking questions about why we should pray, how we should pray, how prayer relates to God's sovereignty, etc., but those questions must never get in the way of simple, child-like prayer.

Remember, your weaknesses, inabilities, failures and past present no challenge to God's will for your life. Your willingness does. Be willing to be and do what God made you for. You don't have what it takes but God's Spirit in you does so be the leader He made you to be and turn this world upside down for Him!



Notes:



ACT NOW

PRAY AND REMEMBER

→ Write down 6 specific prayer requests that relate to the ministry God has put you in. Then, when God meets these prayer requests, write down what happened.

1. Ministry prayer need:

- Date: ___ / ___ / _____. How did God answer this prayer?

2. Ministry prayer need:

- Date: ___ / ___ / _____. How did God answer this prayer?

3. Ministry prayer need:

- Date: ___ / ___ / _____. How did God answer this prayer?

4. Ministry prayer need:

- Date: ___ / ___ / _____. How did God answer this prayer?

5. Ministry prayer need:

- Date: ___ / ___ / _____. How did God answer this prayer?

6. Ministry prayer need:

- Date: ___ / ___ / _____. How did God answer this prayer?

→ For review, fill out the Exponential Harvest Strategy diagram in the Notes column on this page, then circle "Prepare". What is one way you can grow in this area in your walk with the Lord?

