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Are You Praying Most Effectively for the Elections?



Do you realize that when you get on your knees to pray you are actually going into battle? Ephesians 6:12 tells us:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Because of this constant struggle, praying effectively for the best success is vital. This is especially true during this season of upcoming elections which are critical to the future direction of our country. I don't believe I am overstating it when I say that these elections will, among other crucial issues, affect whether America will remain strong in sending missionaries across the globe in obedience to God's Great Commission. Given that biblical command, it is imperative that committed Christians be praying for an outcome that glorifies our Lord, and that more believers will win office.

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★ PUBLIC SERVANT ENDORSEMENT

Bill Johnson

U.S. Representative, Ohio
6th Congressional District



“If legislators in every state could benefit from a Capitol Ministries Bible study, there would be a reformation; you would see America returning to biblical principles.

“On June 28, 1787, when the Founding Fathers were in the throes of trying to write the Constitution, they were at an impasse. It was Benjamin Franklin, one of the most unlikely members of the Continental Congress, who said the country should call upon God. Franklin was a person of faith, but he didn’t express it like George Washington or John Adams and some of the others did. But he gave a speech on the House floor and, in essence, said, ‘Mr. Speaker, when we decided to go to war with England to pursue our independence, we went before the Almighty every day for guidance and direction and God never let us down. But we have been debating and arguing

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The importance of these elections cannot be overstated.

To be effective, we need to examine how we can be our best at prayer and in prayer, not only for the outcome of the elections, but also for the outcomes of our lives. But what does it mean to pray effectively? The Bible provides the answer.

In this study, let’s take a close look at how we can elevate our prayer life to a greater level!

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

Let us closely examine the closing section of Paul’s address to the church at Ephesus to learn how to increase our effectiveness in prayer. The passage is found in Ephesians 6:18:

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

In this closing section of Paul’s letter to the believers in Ephesus, he reveals the purpose for believers to remain in the world after they have been saved. In that specific regard, 2 Timothy 2:4 adds and makes it extremely clear that all believers have been called by Him to be His **soldiers** in the theatre of spiritual battle post-salvation in Christ, prior to going home to be with Him. Paul states to Timothy in this regard:

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

After being saved by God and His grace, we are to **soldier** on in this world for Him. In the book of Philippians, Paul reserves the term **soldier** as the highest moniker of distinction which he uses to describe another believer. In the ascensive progression of Philippians 2:25, Paul states regarding his beloved friend Epaphroditus: **my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier**. This climactic title in Paul’s way of thinking is to call him a **fellow soldier** for the sake of the gospel. There are **brothers** and **fellow workers** in ministry, but he deems few as a **fellow soldier**.

In this study’s home passage of Ephesians 6, Paul codifies the battle that all believers will face after being saved yet remain in the world. The title of **fellow soldier** is therefore a befitting metaphor of personal distinctiveness relative to the faithfulness of the believer post-salvation.

With all of that explanation in mind, note how this section of Ephesians 6 begins:



Ephesians 6:18

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the full armor of God... (vv. 10–13).

Herein Paul identifies the main aspects of the believer's battle armament in the spiritual war that he has been enlisted to fight in by Him as a *fellow soldier*. Distilled from this familiar passage (verses 11 to 17 that I have not listed due to length) are the following specifics of the *fellow soldier's* spiritual armament for this battle:

- A. **TRUTH:** The effective spiritual warrior will be grounded, living, and characterized by truth (without personal hypocrisy) stemming from...
- B. **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, i.e., personal holiness, righteous living, and uncompromising in biblical convictions, the spiritual warrior possesses an internal...
- C. **PEACE**, which comes from having a reliance in Who enlisted him as a soldier in the first place, which means he lives his whole life by...
- D. **FAITH**, not by his own sight or way of doing things. Scripture is his guide, not selfish ambition; he lives to achieve His desires, not his own. Accordingly, he is empowered mightily by the Holy Spirit because of his...

E. **SALVATION**, which means he is in intimate contact with his General. It follows that He has trained him and imputed certain specialty skills to each spiritual warrior via the...

F. **WORD OF GOD**, which is the only offensive weapon mentioned, is his continual source of knowledge for his specific assignment in battle.

All are marks of an effective *fellow soldier*. Elsewhere such men and women of God are referred to with different metaphoric, picturesque, and communicative language. Note such in 2 Corinthians 5:20:

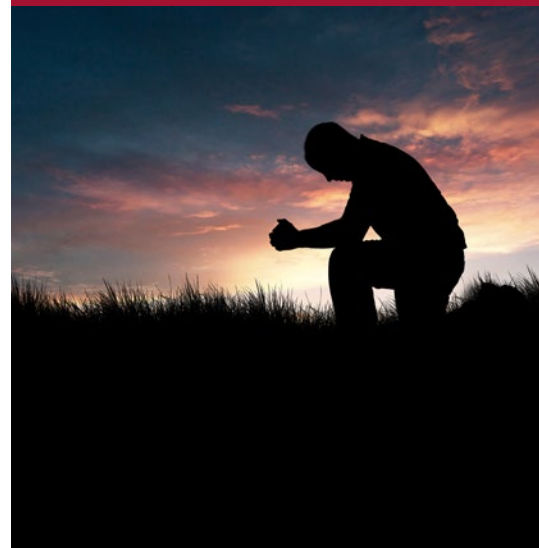
Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us....

God determines *fellow soldiers* to remain in the world after saving them to make *an appeal through them* to the world as His *ambassadors!*

One more basic ingredient is found in the context of Ephesians 6 that every mature believer must possess for effective spiritual warfare: a profound, biblically informed understanding of and commitment to *prayer!* Your skills in this discipline are so important to your overall value as a *fellow soldier!*

Don't misinterpret the elections: they are first and foremost a spiritual battle requiring mature, spiritual weaponry.

The believer should be wiser than those who do not know Christ or His Scriptures. Many are those who view the elections through a political lens only.



Pray hard and long!





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for weeks about how to put the Constitution together. We have studied every republic government form in the world and throughout human history and we cannot solve these problems. Why would we not now turn to that same Source of divine wisdom? If we don't this great republic and all the victory we have achieved will become just another human endeavor and it will fall way short of where the Almighty has led.'

"It was Benjamin Franklin who called for prayer through that impasse and his speech on the floor is the reason today that every session of Congress starts with a prayer and a pledge. So it is very, very important that Capitol Ministries Bible studies are installed throughout the country and in federal capitols across the globe. They are of tremendous benefit to a nation—and to the world."

— REP. BILL JOHNSON

When I say "many," I am including many believers who are naïve to what this study teaches. In contrast, the believer should concentrate on being the most effective prayer warrior in the upcoming elections! May I whisper the point I am making? Being a valuable *ambassador for Christ* is far more important than possessing political campaign skills (as important as those are). To say it bluntly, I know too many Christian spiritual hacks who know nothing, and seemingly don't care to know anything, about the spiritual dimension of an election! Don't be one of them!

If the elections are first and foremost—definitively—a spiritual battle per Ephesians 6:10, then it follows that your best way to run your own campaign and help others in their campaigns is to be a victorious spiritual warrior in an election! Spiritual combat is most triumphant to the degree that one meets and is characterized by the aforementioned! Again, think of the criteria of Ephesians 6 as prerequisites for being the most effective person in regard to the elections. Do you really believe *our struggle is not against flesh and blood*?

Accordingly, consider the following biblical insights on how we can best spend our time and hone our skills as they specifically relate to our personal prayer life.

II. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE ENDORSED

With all prayer...

The Greek word *proseuche* that means *prayer* is used 85 times in the New Testament (NT). Across the board, *proseuche* is the most comprehensive word to communicate the concept of *prayer*. Importantly, gleaned from all its usages, efficacious human *prayer*—prayers that

are heard and acted upon by God—are only achieved through His Son Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of man's fallen nature, he is not in a position to expect God to hear his *prayers*. Accordingly, how then can God hear the sinner's *prayers*? A sinner's prayers are certainly not based on his personal merit. Save the *prayer* of repentance from sin, the *prayers* of unregenerate people are ineffective. Note specifically Isaiah 59:2, one of many biblical passages that serves to make this point:

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

It follows that we need the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ for our *prayers* to be heard by God. James 5:16b states this truth in the positive:

The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

James is talking about *imputed*, not *personal righteousness*; no one is *righteous* based on his or her personal merit. Therefore, the *prayers* we are aiming at God, the *prayers* we are hoping He will answer, apart from Christ's endorsement or enablement, will not be heard by God. We must have an Advocate with the Father (cf. 1 John 2:1) for our *prayers* to be heard. In keeping with the outline, Christ must advocate, i.e., endorse everyone's *prayers* to God! This foundation must first be laid in regard to any biblically sound study on *prayer*. Otherwise, we are praying *ineffectively* for the elections.

III. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE DETAILED

and petition...

Continued on page 4



The Greek word for **petition** (*enteuxis*) means “to fall in with someone.” The idea behind **petition** is that believers are to get involved in terms of understanding the sinner’s plight. We do not pray for the lost with a cold, detached, mechanical attitude, but with love and concern regarding their future destiny. More specific than the first word examined for **prayer** (*proseuche*), **petition** (*enteuxis*) denotes specific requests made to God by the believer. Requesting is therefore appropriate in **prayer**! Biblical **prayer** is more than adoration and worship (as important as that is)! Paul expects believers to include supplication, i.e., **petitioning** in their prayer life! Jesus underscores this in John 14:13–14:

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”

By asking for specific requests (in line with scriptural priorities, which is the idea behind praying **in My name**), the answers ultimately glorify Him! Why? His power is evidenced in the world via answered **prayer**. To illustrate this idea, Paul **petitioned** for Timothy **night and day** (2 Timothy 1:3), and as a result, he was successful in changing the direction of the Ephesian Church from its heretical takeover (cf. 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:1–2). Indeed, that turnaround in response to Pauline **petitioning** brought glory to God in the world. The fact that Paul **petitioned** with specific, detailed prayers **night and day** informs us of one element as to how we ought to be **praying**.

The explicit command to “petition in your prayers” communicates the idea of being detailed in your prayers.

By way of personal illustration, for years I have kept a running “yellow sheet” on my computer wherein I record requests and answers. May I suggest that you list your **detailed petitions** (that are biblically based with biblical values) on your smartphone. I have my old way of doing things, but I feel sure some good **petition** apps are available. The point is, God delights in answering **detailed, quantifiable petitions** versus nebulous, immeasurable, flighty thoughts. This explanation leads to the third point Paul makes in the passage:

IV. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE DELIBERATE

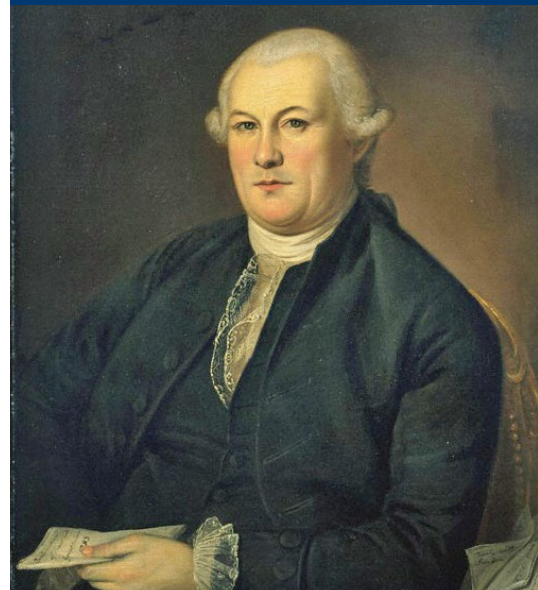
pray at all times in the Spirit...

The Greek word used for **time** (*kairos*) denotes “a season of **time**” when it is found in Scripture coupled with this particular use of the Greek word **all** (*panti*). Better understood, in this portion of Ephesians 6:18 under study, there exists the literal idea of “every critical season.” An upcoming election certainly denotes a **critical time** both in the life of a public servant and in the course of a nation! The applied general idea for elected officials, or any citizen for that matter, is:

We should be praying more when the pressure is the greatest!

Isn’t that how it usually goes with us anyway? But take solace here, in fact, Paul is commanding it: in light of the larger context of the passage, when the believer wields the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and Satan reacts through his minions, **critical times** or seasons for necessary **petitioning** will come—that is, if we are **soldiers** for Christ! Our prayers must be deliberate and specified, espe-

Elias Boudinot



“Let us enter on this important business under the idea that we are Christians on whom the eyes of the world are now turned ... [L]et us earnestly call and beseech Him, for Christ’s sake, to preside in our councils. ... We can only depend on the all powerful influence of the Spirit of God, Whose Divine aid and assistance it becomes us as a Christian people most devoutly to implore. Therefore I move that some minister of the Gospel be requested to attend this Congress every morning ... in order to open the meeting with prayer.”

— Elias Boudinot, president of Congress, signed the Peace Treaty to End the American Revolution, first attorney admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, framer of the Bill of Rights, director of the U.S. Mint.

Elias Boudinot, *The Life, Public Services, Addresses, and Letters of Elias Boudinot*, J. Boudinot, editor (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1896), Vol. I, 19, 21, speech in the First Provincial Congress of New Jersey.



Elbridge Gerry



He called on the State of Massachusetts to pray that ...

“And for our unparalleled ingratitude to that Adorable Being Who has seated us in a land irradiated by the cheering beams of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ... let us fall prostrate before offended Deity, confess sincerely and penitently our manifold sins and our unworthiness of the least of His Divine favors, fervently implore His pardon through the merits of our mediator.”

— Elbridge Gerry, signer of the Declaration of Independence, fifth vice president of the United States, serving under James Madison, member of the Constitutional Convention, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. congressman, ninth governor of Massachusetts.

Elbridge Gerry, *Proclamation for a Day of Fasting and Prayer*, March 13, 1811.

cially during these times! This is the best way to understand what *all times* means in this passage, versus thinking that if we are not praying every second of the day—all the time—we are disobedient and living in sin.

The closely following phrase *in the Spirit* need next be understood. Herein is the power source of the believer’s *prayers*. It could be an additional point in the outline, “Our Prayers Must Be Driven.” Indeed, that is the case! We glean additional insight in this regard from Romans 8:26–27, which declares that the *Holy Spirit* is the One Who *intercedes for the saints*.

When it comes to prayer, think of the Third Member of the Trinity as likened to the power-steering pump in our car.

We initiate (based on His prompting), and He takes over and empowers the task! He energizes our sometimes-mumbling gibberish and *intercedes*, presenting our requests in a form acceptable to God the Father! Wow! Accordingly, we cannot feel like our efforts in *prayer* are somehow lacking in prose and/or adequacy—the *Spirit* will edit and empower them on our behalf! We might say that one of the ministries of the *Holy Spirit* is to spruce us up! He indeed delights in doing exactly that! What great news for someone like me! Note the following from Romans 8:26–27 that amplifies this thought:

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the

Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Combined with the aforementioned points, it is the believer’s standing with courage on God’s Word and its principles that riles satanic forces. His or her use of *prayer in the Spirit* during those *critical seasons of time* mightily aid in the victory; the believer is to cry out to God on the various occasions of the assaults of darkness. An election is such a critical *time*.

In an illustration of contrast, when persecution arose because of his earlier identification with Christ, the Apostle Peter fled from associating with Him (cf. Matthew 26:69–70) versus going away to *pray*! What is our response when persecution arises—especially when our opponent conjures up falsehoods against us in an election? Is our first response to *pray*? Do we believe that God can turn the tide if we react with this kind of spiritual maturity? Our *prayers* must be *deliberate* in these *crucial times*.

V. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE DETERMINED

and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition

The conjunction *and* (*kai*) connects what follows to that which has just been stated, *and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance*. The words for *alert* (*agrupnountes*) and *perseverance* (*proskarternesis*) have similar meanings. One lexical translator states that this means “to continue to do something with intense effort...to devote oneself to, to keep on, to persist in.” This coupling of the ideas of timely *prayer* with *alertness* and *perseverance* is replete throughout Scripture:



Prayer manifests itself in perseverance just as perseverance manifests itself in prayer

They fuel each other; that is to say, our *prayers* must be *determined*! Note this spirit of determination in *prayer* as modeled in the following passages:

- In the Gospels, Jesus told His disciples to *watch and pray* (Matthew 26:41).
- In Colossians, Paul told believers to *devote themselves to prayer* (4:2).
- In the parables, the widow wore out the judge (Luke 18:2–9) because of her relentless *perseverance* in *petitioning*.
- Years later Peter would say from earlier failure, *Be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer* (1 Peter 4:7).

All of them—Jesus, Paul, the widow, and Peter—were tenacious prayer warriors. We should be too!

When a believer is faced with spiritual challenges like an election, his first response should be to *pray* with determined *perseverance*; such is the time to put on our game face and *pray* with earnestness! God will strengthen and empower our petition as we step out in obedient faith to *pray*!

Notice that this is the fourth time the word *all* has been used in the passage. The believer is to use *all prayer* forms in *all critical times*, with *all perseverance* (intense effort), for lastly, *all the saints*. (*More about that in the final point*).

The NT uses other words in the context of *prayer* that provide us with an even deeper understanding of the subject. More specifically, in verse one of 1 Timothy 2, Paul uses four words to elaborate on specific kinds of *prayers*. Two of them have already been examined from our home passage in Ephesians 6. But let us expand our study to include the two we have not previously mentioned:

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority... (vv. 1–2).

Notice that the direct object of *prayer* mentioned in this passage is not merely *all men*, but specifically public servants, i.e., *kings and all who are in authority*! If you are a special, singled-out focus of *prayer*, it follows you should be an expert on the subject, i.e., what other people are supposed to be doing for you! Each of the following words are in answer to that:

A. ENTREATIES

The Greek root for the English word *entreaties* (*deesis*) means “to lack, to be deprived, to be without something.” Its use in the context of *prayer* here and elsewhere throughout the Scriptures carries the idea of the prayer warrior’s inner realization of the needs of the lost. The believer is to *pray*, motivated in part by the hope that God would supply the sinner the remedy for his sin via the cross of Christ. The object of our *prayers*—men and women who have enormous spiritual needs—should compel us to *pray* that God would touch each public servant with His grace and forgiveness and lead them to the way of salvation (if they are not already saved)! Accordingly, we must

entreat God to save lost politicians, versus hating them because of their lack of character (which is equally present in less visible people as well).

B. THANKSGIVING

The other Greek word we have not yet studied is the English word *thanksgiving* (*eucharista*), which means that the believer should be motivated to *pray* for the lost because this great privilege has been granted to him by God. As an *ambassador for Christ*, every believer is given a role to play in the salvation of others. Exercising the privilege of leading another to Christ begins with *thankfulness* to God for the opportunity! Here then is an additional motivation for *prayer*: what a great and powerful opportunity the *fellow soldier* in Christ has to battle for the souls of public servants!

In summary of this point, believers are to *petition* God *on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority* motivated by their understanding of these four distinct facets of *prayer* found in part in Ephesians 6 and more fully in 1 Timothy 2:

- We *entreat* Him because we are sensitive and in concert with the needs of lost political leaders.
- We *pray* to Him and give Him glory because of His power to save.
- We *petition* Him because we are concerned for their future without Christ.
- We *thank* Him because we are grateful for the opportunity to witness on His behalf.

These four biblically revealed, specific aspects should motivate us to address God to receive His answers to our



prayers. May these aspects of communion with God inspire us to *pray*, especially in *critical times*, and may they increase our determination to *pray*!

VI. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE DYNAMIC

for all the saints.

Remember that Paul is addressing the Ephesian believers as he is teaching about *prayer*. Accordingly, per the first point, *prayer* is a discipline for believers. In applying this concept to *praying* for a God-glorifying outcome to an election, it follows that believers should be *praying* that believers will win office!

The ideal candidates for public office are those who have a great résumé, understand and abide by God's stated purpose for government in Romans 13:1–8, have a proven track record, and are mature in Christ. We need to ask God to raise up candidates who are mature believers and possess all of these characteristics. We need many more mature believers in office. Praying for *all the saints*, applied here, means our *prayers* must be for believers to gain office and those in office to come to Christ!

VII. CONCLUSION

Believers are enlisted in a spiritual battle. Just as nuclear wars cannot be won with rifles, spiritual battles cannot be won by engaging the Enemy with the wrong weaponry. Voting believers (and every believer should vote) must be sober to the spiritual dimension to elections.

Furthermore, the qualified believer who is in office or is a candidate must be sober to the fact that the battle is *not against flesh and blood*. Ours is ultimately a spiritual battle and herein is the armament: not the least of which is *prayer*—and specifically for His elevating believers in public service in the upcoming elections! Remember, our prayers aimed at achieving these goals will be most effective when they are endorsed, Detailed, Deliberate, Determined and Dynamic! Pray accordingly with each of these critical elements—elements common to those who are the most powerful prayer warriors—and then watch with anticipation as these prayers are answered and make a difference in the direction of our nation!

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- Carson City, Nevada
- Charleston, West Virginia
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