

God, Give Us Your Vision:
Intercessor's Kingdom Prayer Guide
Ron Clement, D.Min.
Salt Lake Baptist Association

Introduction:

We, the people of God, known as the Salt Lake Baptist Association have been in existence since the 1950's. We have a long history of watching God work, touching many thousands of people, seeing the births of many churches, and making an impact on the community through community ministries such as Disaster Relief, the Baptist Concern Center, World Changers, and ministry during the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. We have much to celebrate and to give thanks to our very good God and His Son, our Savior, Jesus.

Although we have much to celebrate, there is still much to be done. Without a lot of thought, we can see that there are hundreds of thousands in our valley who still need to know the true Holy, Almighty God, creator of mankind and His Only Son, Jesus, the One and Only Savior of mankind.

So, what do we do? What does God desire of His people who have been placed in this valley? I believe the answer includes a heavy emphasis on seeking the face of God together, in our local churches and among our sister churches. Hopefully, by the time you read through this first section explaining the need and purpose of unity and united praying, you will agree that prayer and time in His Word is to be one of our main priorities.

Our Salt Lake Baptist Association (SLBA) may be standing at a pivotal juncture in history. Although we can't control God's hand, our insistence to seek Him diligently could be a turning point in the future of our valley. Placing priority on listening to His guidance could set the tone for years to come about how we will go about the Lord's business in our churches and in our

association of churches. It very well could be that God will move as never before because we humbly and passionately place our future in His hands. It very well could be that God will choose to move in extraordinary ways because we unite in prayer and purpose as Jesus so prayed in John 17.

May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have love them as You have loved Me. (John 17:21-23)

This turning point has much to do with our unity. It has much to do with local churches collectively humbling themselves before God and placing unity in prayer as a priority. It has to do with sister churches collectively humbling themselves before God and one another to make prayer with one another for the redemption of our valley a priority.

This turning point involves a choice. It is a choice to make all that we do about the glory of God. It is a choice to join the Psalmist in our cry to God, *Not to us, Yahweh, not to us, but to Your name give glory because of Your faithful love, because of Your truth.* (Psa. 115:1)

This turning point is a choice to realize that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mk. 3:25). It is a choice to be churches and be the Church that stands united based on the will of the Father. We must come to the place where we are sickened by anything less. We must come to the place where we are sickened as was one pastor. He wrote, "When I first went into the ministry I was shocked by the evil of the party spirit. I was taken aback that ministers would rejoice in the scandal and the problems that other churches would have. And if another church was blessed, they would downplay the blessing of the other church if it was not their own group. So

you have the body of Christ supposedly believing in the Bible where Jesus prayed, *'Father...that they may be one just as We are one'* (Jn. 17:22), and yet instead of praying for one another and rooting for one another, we are competing against each other. God will never bless that!" (Jim Cymbala, *Division Brings Destruction*, workshop at 2004 Heart-Cry for Revival Conference) We must live and love in a way that is the heart of God. We must choose to live out the prayer of Jesus for our unity.

In 2 Chronicles 7, the Lord gives a process to His people in order for His promise to come. His people were exhorted to a joint-humbling and confession before Him. This joint-humbling and confession gave promise not merely for individuals, or for His people, but it extended for the benefit of a land. It was given by God as a means for dealing with disastrous circumstances. Take note of the plural pronouns used in this passage. It is clear that God called on them to unite in their humility and confession for the sake of the healing of the land.

The Lord said, If I close the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the grasshopper to consume the land, or if I send pestilence on My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. (2 Chron. 7:13-14)

Although, we, at least at this point, are not undergoing similar natural disasters, we do live in a land with little belief in the Word of God as fully true and without error. We live in a land where few accept the sacrifice of Jesus as the sole means of salvation. Is this passage any less applicable as a process that God expects for our land to undergo change?

Furthermore, we live in a field of ministry here in the Salt Lake area along the Wasatch Front where gospel saturation is slow. My former boss said that spreading the gospel here is like plowing concrete. We face an enormous challenge to see the

spiritual transformation of our area we call “home.” You have seen the data and experienced the reality of just how difficult this area is for the evangelical church to make significant impact.

Some have taken steps to inform us of the challenge before us. J.D. Payne writes, “There are fifty million evangelicals in the United States. For the most part, the Northeastern section of the country represents the least reached states. The only exception to this reality is Utah... For example, 98% of the populations of Utah and Rhode Island do not have a relationship with Jesus.” (*Unreached Peoples; Least Reached Places*, J.D. Payne)

Not only do others bring out the challenge before us, but our experience validates it. Yes, we can accurately conclude that this is a difficult place to minister and to reach people with the Good News that Jesus is Lord and the only means of salvation.

Since we do have such a challenging mission, the temptation is for our local church give too much credence to tools and resources as the answer to bringing lasting change. Yes, resources are definitely helpful in working toward our mission. More money for ministry does help, finding more aids that enable us to share the gospel helps, and new ideas can be beneficial. However, they are not the ultimate solution. Our ultimate solution is beyond human means or resourcing.

Many would agree that our setting in Utah may be a place where typical resources, ideas, and strategies implemented elsewhere will not necessarily be as effective here. Interestingly, Greg Frizzell indicates such strategies may not be as effective elsewhere as some believe they are effective. He states his opinion this way, "Let's face it, if intense promotion, strong funding and new strategies could produce sweeping revival, Southern Baptists would have long since seen the greatest awakening in history. Yet in spite of a fifty-year flood of new programs, the nation has witnessed its worst spiritual

collapse and our baptisms their worst stagnation.” (Greg Frizzell, *Biblical Patterns for Powerful Church Prayer Meetings*, p. 17)

Wow, that statement is not only disturbing but heart-breaking as we must admit it is all too true. If we were completely honest, we would likely discover a feeling of weariness in a vast majority of our churches because we see so little impact of the local church upon its field of ministry. Others on state and national denominational levels wring their hands at the all too common patterns of fewer conversions to Christ.

Although ministry in Utah might be categorized as more difficult than some areas of the country, it is just as disconcerting for us to fall into the thinking that we’ll never really see much difference made. It is so tempting to fall into a skeptical attitude and lose hope in the One who can do the impossible.

We must resist these temptations and tendencies by placing trust in the One who can do the impossible. We must maintain the belief in the truth of God’s Word and the power of His Word and the gospel that transforms lives. A good reminder is found in Ephesians 3:20.

Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20)

Humbling ourselves together is so crucial in our days ahead. We must cry out with urgency and contrition. Bill Elliff writes, “I can find no biblical illustration—not one—of God’s people crying out together in humble, desperate, repentant oneness that God did not answer their prayers! This indicates to us a pattern and a prescription. It seems that if we will unite in one cry, God will hear and give us what we so desperately need. Again, we cannot manipulate God, but doesn’t this biblical

pattern teach us that the very first step we must take is to cry out together to the One who can bring deliverance.” (Byron Paulus and Bill Elliff, *OneCry: A Nationwide Call for Spiritual Awakening*, 1478-1485, Kindle locations)

It is my belief that the answer to empowered ministry is found in God’s revelation, an ongoing presence of God’s grace, an embedded presence of God’s power, a firm resolve to the truth of God’s gospel, and obedience to Him and all of His ways.

It is my belief that such transformational power comes by pursuit of the Lord through prayer and His Word in such a way that it transforms our hearts and minds to His will and to His ability to do the seemingly impossible.

Thus, my prayer is for our SLBA to place intentional focus on what God says in His Word about mission and ministry and to call upon His name to grant His divine revelation for our days ahead as well as to show His divine power in ways that wake up His people and shake the false foundations of those who do not know His Son, Jesus, as the One and Only Savior.

When God moves in that way then it would, perhaps, generate a spiritual awakening. Henry Blackaby tells us, “Spiritual awakening occurs when large numbers of people (or a high percentage of people in an area) experience this new birth to spiritual life in a short period of time. Spiritual awakenings are not just times of mass decisions for Christ. Decisions may or may not reflect a new birth. In a spiritual awakening people’s lives are changed radically. Often a spiritual awakening results in a changed society in a city or a nation. Major social reforms have often accompanied spiritual awakening. When people put off the old life of sin and put on the new life in Christ, things are different...If our nation is going to turn around from the rapid moral decline we’re in, people’s lives must change. Only Christ can change lives that drastically. And that’s what we want to seek together---a

changed nation.” (Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Fresh Encounter: Seeking God Together for Revival in the Land*, p. 7)

Yes, we want to seek together a changed society so that our nearby cities experience the wonderful redemption of God given through Jesus Christ. We long to see them set free from bondage and blindness so they can experience the Truth setting them free. Our prayers for spiritual awakening must be driven by our longing for God to get all the glory. Bill Elliff wrote in his book, *OneCry: A Nationwide Call for Spiritual Awakening*, “We must pursue spiritual awakening for the right reason. We groan under the oppression of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We long for relief, and we should. But we should cry out earnestly for a sweeping awakening for God’s glory. We should pray that God would intervene in our nation so that we would no longer deprive His Son, Jesus Christ, of His rightful place in every dimension of His world and every corner of our hearts. He deserves our full adoration and joyful obedience.”

In addition, my longing is that our churches will begin to discover the amazing things He has in store for them and the larger family of SLBA churches as we minister in this harvest field in which He has called and placed us.

As we walk through the next 30 days or so, we invite each church to join us in special united prayer gatherings on January 3 (FBC, West Valley City, 9 am- noon), January 17 (FBC, Provo, 6-8:30 pm), and January 29 (Redeeming Life Church, Rose Park, 6-8 pm). This guide and these prayer gatherings are intended to aid us in gaining clarity for the future and power in the present. They are intended to seek God with oneness of heart and purpose.

The Need for United Prayer:

Unity is so essential for the church and the Church. Jesus prayed for it; God affirmed it.

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! (Psa. 133:1)

The meaning of the word “good” really indicates something that is the very best. The word “pleasant” speaks of something that is sweet and delightful to the Lord, our God. What does He see as best and delightful? When we “live together” (settle, sit down, dwell) to unite in united fashion. This is more consistent with the Hebrew language in this passage. We are to unite unitedly in the Lord. This places double emphasis on our unity in Him. It is such unity that brings great pleasure to Him.

Now when we speak of unity we are not expecting uniformity. In our unity, we may still maintain our autonomy apart from other churches ruling over our decisions. However, since it is a biblical mandate, we are asking churches to voluntarily unite in prayer. In doing so we are agreeing to seek His revelation from the One who knows us and knows our field of ministry so that He ultimately receives the glory for what He does in our midst.

J. Edwin Orr speaking at the National Prayer Conference in October 1976 gave multiple illustrations of God working through united prayer. At the conclusion of his message here's how he addressed a picture of united praying.

God expects us to pray. But we must not forget Jonathan Edwards' statement that we must promote explicit agreement and 'visible union of all God's people in extraordinary prayer.' When you find people getting up at six o'clock in the morning to pray, or having a half-night prayer till midnight, that's extraordinary prayer. When they give up their lunchtime and go and pray at a noonday prayer meeting, that's extraordinary prayer.

But it must be united and concerted. It doesn't mean that a Baptist becomes any less than a Baptist, or that an Episcopalian is less loyal to The 39 Articles, or that a Presbyterian turns his back on the Westminster

Confession. Not at all. But that we recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ and are prepared to pray together in concerted prayer that God may hear and answer. But we haven't reached that stage yet. This National Conference on Prayer is unprecedented in some ways. It is a sign of the direction in which we are moving. It's what I call extraordinary prayer. But you folks who are here, those who are listening to my voice, must take it get back to your churches and when they are prepared to set aside a time to pray for a spiritual awakening, that's when God is going to answer. Some people say "then that means it's up to us." Oh no we can't say that either, Matthew Henry said, "When God intends great mercy for His people, He sets them a praying." Even God is sovereign in this matter. We must respond for He has chosen to never work without our cooperation. So, whether your interpretation of revival is Calvinistic or Arminian, it is a very simple thing. We must pray. Then God will work.

May God help us so to pray. Amen.

Jonathan Edwards was convinced of the need for united prayer. This conviction led him to pen a famous call to the church prior to the First Great Awakening. The document entitled, "An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth" had a long name and a short purpose: to unite the church in prayer for revival. This call was one of the most significant tools God used to ignite united prayer among God's people that led to the First Great Awakening. Edwards's endgame was not united prayer for the sake of united prayer, nor even revival for revival's sake. He longed for united prayer that would lead to the reviving of the church, so there would follow the rapid expansion of the kingdom and the increased worship of Christ. A revived church, marching in sync with the Master, opens the door for great spiritual awakening among those without Him. Edwards was biblically convinced that this

must begin in a united cry. He understood what would happen if the church would agree together in prayer. And the First Great Awakening that followed validated his theology. (Byron Paulus and Bill Elliff, *OneCry: A Nationwide Call for Spiritual Awakening*, Kindle Locations 1376-1386)

J. Edwin Orr was often heard saying, “No great spiritual awakening has begun anywhere in the world apart from united prayer—Christians persistently praying for revival.” (Wesley Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, used in an article in *Herald of His Coming*, June 2010)

God’s Work in United Prayer:

Perhaps one of the greatest promises of united praying is given by Jesus in Matthew 18. In this passage, Jesus speaks of God answering us when we become like a fine tuned symphony praying according to that which honors His name.

Jesus said, Again, I assure you: If two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there among them. (Matt. 18:19-20)

It will be helpful to understand the meaning behind the word “agreement.” This word in the Greek language is where we get our word “symphony.” As you might know, “symphony” is a musical term of many instruments working together to produce beautiful music. With that understanding, we can think of united praying as praying that is under the One conductor, God, leading us to pray that which is consistent with His will and ways.

A.T. Pierson gives insight into how this occurs. Although his comments are extensive, they do give important understand as we think of united praying. He wrote,

The symphony of prayer, in which believing suppliants unite, is not the result of any mere formal agreement or covenant with each other...Such agreement is only effective when it is the result of the Holy Spirit's own working. He brings disciples into accord first with Himself and then with each other, like a master musician who first tunes all the keys according to a concert pitch, and then strikes such notes as are prepared to blend harmoniously in one chord...The Holy Spirit, the divine musician, lays His hand like a true artist, on two or more keys, which He has first brought into harmonious relations with God's will and each other, and which are thus prepared to sound in the divine ear a perfect chord; and so there come into the ear of God both melody and harmony,--the melody of acceptable individual prayer; the harmony of acceptable joint supplication...

The implied inference is that you and I cannot arbitrarily 'agree' as touching anything that we shall ask, and then plead this promise. Except so far as we first agree with the Holy Spirit, so that our prayers become the expression of the divine will, there can be no agreement with each other as this promise implies. In other words, *sympathy with God must first be the basis of symphony among disciples*. When the Holy Spirit is thus able to move upon the hearts of disciples, however far separated by distance but still united by spiritual proximity and sympathy, He often touches suppliants who are strangers to each other and brings them into unconscious accord and concord in prayer for the same objects. Thus, when the secret thoughts of many hearts are revealed, we shall undoubtedly find that praying disciples, far apart, in distant lands, often unknown to each other, have been led of the Spirit into simultaneous and sympathetic prayer for the same blessings, praying at the same time for the same things, with a degree of holy accord, explainable only by the fact that the same divine

Spirit has been moving in their hearts and interceding in and through them...

What boundless paths and fields of suggestion this lesson on symphony in prayer opens up! Yes, and what possible power too. What an illuminating light is thrown on our Lord's words about joint prayer for the harvest-field, and that divine thrusting forth of laborers into its wide, vast vacancies, which is the one sovereign remedy for the world's need, and the efficacy of which is so illustrated in the thrusting forth of Barnabas and Saul from the praying assembly at Antioch! (Acts 13:1-5)." (Arthur T. Pierson, *Lessons in the School of Prayer*, pp. 76-78)

Could it be God's will that we do this together and in doing so, He is pleased with our unity and chooses to grant us His plan that will absolutely revolutionize our Wasatch Front? Could it be that God will work in more extraordinary ways as His people unite in prayer? Is Spurgeon correct when he is quoted as saying, "Pentecost might never have come had not *all* the disciples been with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1), waiting for the descent of tongues of fire. God is pleased to answer individual prayers, but at times He seems to say, you may entreat My favor, but I will not see your face unless your brethren are with you. Why is this? I take it that our gracious Lord is setting forth His own esteem for the communion of saints...The value placed upon union and communion among the people of God is seen by the fact that there are certain mercies that are bestowed only when the saints pray unitedly. How we ought to feel this bond of union! How we ought to pray for one another." (Leonard Allen, *The Contemporaries Meet the Classics on Prayer*, pp. 263-264)

John Franklin identified thirty-seven verses in the gospels related to prayer and out of those, thirty-three were in the plural pronouns. Franklin points out, that in Acts there is a similar pattern. Although there are a few occurrences of individuals praying, "the majority of God's recorded workings

came when his people prayed together.” (John Franklin, *And the Place was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting*, Kindle locations 224-259) He takes it a step further, as did J. Edwin Orr, and states, “A study of church history and conversations with experts confirmed my expectations. In fact, I did not discover a single example in which the church transformed the culture when Christians did not spend significant time praying together.” (John Franklin, *And the Place was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting*, Kindle locations 276-304)

If united praying is that crucial to God working, then, would you be willing to make it a priority to gather together with other believers to pray for a movement in your church’s ministry field as well as across the Wasatch Front?

Aligning our perspective with God’s:

As stated above, it is very tempting to look for a “new” resource that might enable us to see the tables turned in our favor. Or, we might believe that the answer is found in a new leader who, we hope, will take us to brighter days ahead.

However, we must remember that our resources are, in reality, secondary to our success in mission and ministry. And, although leadership can bring common focus, equipping, and inspiration, it too is not the ultimate solution.

God does not tell us there is no value in leadership or resources. Yet, He does remind us that the primary place of trust is in His great name and power. God’s Word provides some sobering insights to those who tend to think resources or the right personnel are the answer to effective mission.

His Word says,

God, we have heard with our ears—our ancestors have told us—the work You accomplished in their days, in days long ago: to plant them, You drove out the nations with Your hand;

to settle them, **You crushed** the peoples. For they did not take the land by their sword—their arm did not bring them victory—but **by Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face**, for You were pleased with them. You are my King, my God, who ordains victories for Jacob. **Through You** we drive back our foes; **through Your name** we trample our enemies. For I do not trust in my bow, and my sword does not bring me victory. But **You give us victory** over our foes and let those who hate us be disgraced. We boast in God all day long; we will praise Your name forever. (Psa. 44:1-8, HCSB, *bold font for emphasis)

A king is not saved by a large army; a warrior will not be delivered by great strength. The horse is a false hope for safety; it provides no escape by its great power. (Psa. 33:16-17)

Do not trust in nobles, in man, who cannot save. When his breath leaves him, he returns to the ground; on that day his plans die. (Psa. 146:3-4)

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in nobles. (Psa. 118:8-9)

When we place our trust in Him, we are injected with confidence through His guidance and power at work in us. Here are some ways the Scriptures inspire us toward confidence in Him.

The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation. Happy is the nation whose God is Yahweh—the people He has chosen to be His own possession! (Psa. 33:11-12)

If His plan is solid, dependable, and unstoppable then it would appear that we, as His people, should be seeking that plan

from Him. We would be wise to cry out as many did in the Word of God.

Make Your ways known to me, LORD; teach me Your paths. Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; I wait for You all day long...The LORD is good and upright; therefore He shows sinners the way. He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them His way. All the LORD's ways show faithful love and truth to those who keep His covenant and decrees. (Psa.25:4-5, 8-10)

When God makes His ways known to us, we are merci-fully receiving the gift of His revelation. That revelation gives us God's perspective on what He desires to do in our midst, what He desires to do in us, and what He desires to do through us. Without revelation, we are in danger of spinning our wheels without much eternal progress.

Without revelation people run wild, but one who listens to instruction will be happy. (Proverbs 29:18)

Henry Blackaby gives us clarity on what a revelation from God might entail. He writes, "When God speaks, he does not give new *revelation* about himself that contradicts what he has already revealed in Scripture. Rather, God speaks to give *application* of his Word to the specific circumstances in your life. When God speaks to you, he is not writing a new book of Scripture; rather, he is applying to your life what he has already said in his Word." (Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Hearing God's Voice*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002, p. 18)

So, with these Scripture truths in mind, we invite you to gather with others in your own church as well as with others in your sister churches throughout the Salt Lake area to seek God's plan for reaching our ministry field with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our intent is not to create some big plan and ask God to bless it. Instead, our intent is to acknowledge that we can

do **nothing** without Him and to cry out admitting to Him, God we don't know what to do but our eyes (and ears) are yielded to You for Your plan(s). This prayer guide will serve as an aid to seek God's heart. This prayer guide should bring challenge, inspire confidence, and broaden your perspective on what God is doing in our valley and how you, your church, and other churches can faithfully participate in that plan.

As you work through this prayer guide, you are highly encouraged to gather with other saints to pray. Prayer is so essential to our work of taking the gospel to our neighborhood, communities, state, nation, and to the ends of the earth. Prayer keeps us dependent upon God's power and resists the temptation to rely on human strength.

Frizzell writes, "Without intense prayer, programs easily become man-centered rather than God-dependent. Clearly there is immediate need for a fundamental change in priority and practice. That change is a wide spread return to the very root of our power – the dynamic corporate prayer meeting! (In truth, that's just about the only thing we haven't tried.)" (Frizzell, *Biblical Patterns for Powerful Church Prayer Meetings*, p. 17)

A time for intense prayer:

Earlier, it was mentioned that we are at a pivotal place in our valley. Although we see many indicators that God is moving among His people and blessing their efforts, it may well be that God is calling you and the Church to a deeper level of commitment for the sake of our cities. It is time to get serious about the heart and will of God as never before. It could be that your choice, your church's choice, and churches choosing to join together in passionate prayer will be the process that God chooses to bless in a way where spiritual awakening among the lost occurs and revival among the saints comes.

E. Stanley Jones said, “The future of the world may well be determined by small groups of people praying, thinking, and acting beyond the rest.” (Helen S. Shoemaker, *Prayer and Evangelism*, p. 58) Did you catch the phrase, “people praying, thinking, and acting beyond the rest”? This is the search of God and the call of Scripture. God is looking for and Scripture, as God’s Word, calls out to His people to shatter the notion that intense prayer makes you a freak, to shatter the belief that God changes the world through people who are half-hearted, and to shatter the erroneous thinking that you must be super-human in order for God to do something extraordinary. God is more apt to use the faithful than the skillful. God is looking for the committed rather than searching for the intellect that believes he or she already has it all figured out. The Proverb reminds us of what God desires.

Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man? (Prov. 20:6)

God does not expect us to have the most talent. He will use us in remarkable ways when we surrender our all to Him and for Him. He commands us to take up our cross daily and follow Him. When we do that, He is pleased and honored and we leave the results up to Him.

Our prayer for God to move in society and to move us to action is our act of rebellion against the norm of hatred, unbelief, fear, confusion, and captivity in the culture surrounding us. David Garrison wrote, “We pray because our vision exceeds our abilities. Prayer is the soul’s deepest cry of rebellion against the way things are, seeing the lost of the world and crying out, ‘This does not glorify God, and so, by God’s grace, it must change!’ Prayer comes from God and ascends back to God on behalf of those who do not know God.” (David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements; How God is Redeeming A Lost World*, pp. 176-77)

Spurgeon, in addition, calls for passion in prayer on behalf of a culture bent on defying God. He wrote, “Remember that prayer is effectual with God.... Are we not getting weary of living in this world among so many who are going to hell? Is it not terrible to think that after all the church is doing, thousands are being lost every day? We ought to bestir ourselves for men’s souls, and we cannot do better for them than by praying for them. Let us, therefore, bestir ourselves in prayer.” (*The Power of Prayer in a Believer’s Life*, compiled and edited by Robert Hall, 1993, p. 191)

Although it is difficult to understand, God does place great importance on prayer and factors it into His work of redemption in the world. In Ezekiel, God looked for a man to stand in the gap on behalf of the wicked so they would find mercy but none could be found (Ezek. 22:30). Jesus gave the responsibility for the church to pray collectively that His kingdom would come His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). Jesus told us that His harvest field was ripe and ready for harvest so we should pray for the Lord to thrust out laborers into the harvest field (Matt. 9:37-38). The early church was heavily persecuted but, instead of cowering, they unitedly turned to God in prayer that He would grant them boldness to speak the truth of the gospel. God answered that prayer and they went out fearlessly telling others the Good News (Acts 4:23-31).

These Scriptures prevent us from thinking prayer is all we are to do. Christians are not to hibernate or hide from the world in prayer. Christians are not called to stay on their knees before God and never to engage culture. The Bible is full of prayer that moved God’s people to action as He revealed His will to them. We see it in requests as “show us what to do,” “give us boldness,” “let the gospel spread rapidly,” and “pray for laborers to be thrust out,” etc. These are prayers of action and for action.

We often fail to realize when in prayer and time in the Word, we will encounter the very heart of God which, in turn, stirs us anew to be on mission with God. When the Church pursues what is on God's heart in prayer, the result should be a Church thrust out into the harvest field empowered by His strength, filled with a God-given passion, awakened by a sense of urgency to see those without Christ come to saving faith. Sadly, there are few examples of Christ-followers passionate about the mission of telling the Good News of Christ. That reality is very much an indication of how little our prayers fail to be about God's kingdom and fail to ask God to use us to bring about His kingdom through the working of the Holy Spirit in us.

Do you ever feel disappointed at your lack of motivation to share your faith in Christ? Do you, more often than not, defer to your feelings of fear rather than stepping out in faith and confidence to tell others about Jesus? Do you find yourself resenting your pastor or others when challenged to get busy about sharing Jesus? Do you have a sense of frustration about how difficult it seems to be a faithful witness to others? Do you long to see your church become influential in transforming your community for the glory of Christ? Do you long to see a flood of righteousness across the Wasatch Front?

Well if you said "yes" to any of these questions it might be that you are struggling with this because your motivation is not God-driven. It might be that you and your church have tended to neglect the truth of God's Word and to be empowered with the Holy Spirit of God for mission.

Al Whittinghill, a revivalist with Ambassadors for Christ, International, said, "The world is waiting to see the New Testament Church, clothed with power from on High, and brimming over with the joy of Resurrection Life. Revival in the Church! It is the only hope for our nation and the world. Isn't it true—the Church cannot have a message for the *heart* of the world until the Lord has the heart of the Church? The

Church must be ignited by the Lord, or we will be ignored by the world! God loves a Church aflame; He cannot abide in the lukewarm. It is time to seek the Lord, to let the Holy Spirit burn the promises of 2 Chronicles 7:14 into our very being.”

When our motivation does not come from the heart of God it is not uncommon to see evangelism as a duty, to be frightened at the potential failure of our evangelistic efforts, or to resent others telling us we should be telling others about Jesus. When we allow ourselves to reside in the presence of God seeking His heart the result is a life that walks in the power of the Spirit of God for witness (Acts 1:8) and goes forth claiming the truth of God’s Word for the spirit of love, power, and self-control (2 Tim. 1:7). Prayer that encounters God will generate a new passion for His kingdom to advance in a manner that causes the person to share the Good News consistently and confidently.

This intercessors guide is meant to lead you before God in order to gain His heart for evangelism of the world. This guide was developed to get you past the frustrations many believers feel when connected to the work of evangelism. It is intended to lead you before God in order to reverse the sad trend of ineffective evangelism in today’s church.

If you faithfully get into God’s Word asking for His heart for the world and use the suggested passages and others to which God leads, you will develop a compassion for those without Him. You will encounter passages of Scripture that teach the promises and power for being effective witnesses for Jesus. You will be challenged to look at what many consider an impossible task in a different light, the light of the truth of the nature, power, and authority of God when evangelizing. The one who chooses to get into God’s Word and to pray with a teachable and obedient heart, will experience the activity of the Holy Spirit giving a greater passion for sharing one’s faith, clarity in how to share one’s faith, broadening one’s scope of sharing that faith, and building a God-given confidence when

sharing one's faith. Spending time in the Scriptures and prayer will assist you to move from being self-consumed in your devotional time to being consumed with God's kingdom.

This may take a new approach to your devotional times. Unfortunately, most of us miss the broader scope of God's kingdom because we've been taught to merely go to God's Word seeking what it means to our own lives. Very little instruction (at least in my experience) teaches us to view our time in the Word from a kingdom perspective and to seek guidance related to the witness responsibility of our local church and/or advancing God's kingdom beyond our own direct field of ministry. If we were to spend time in the Word with that larger picture of time before God, God would begin to show us the need for witness far beyond our own field. Then, the local church would begin to prayerfully consider other kingdom partners. Other kingdom partners could include joining with other local churches in gospel witness or other evangelical groups. Within my own context as a Southern Baptist, other kingdom partners should certainly include a local association of churches, the state convention of churches, the national partnership of churches through the Southern Baptist Convention to reach North America and the ends of the earth for Christ. Of course, Southern Baptists alone cannot and should not do so on their own. We must prayerfully consider how we can join hands and resources with other evangelicals to take the gospel from our own ministry field to the ends of the earth. This is the reason individuals and churches should be praying and reading the Word from a kingdom perspective.

The Bible teaches that kingdom prayer is not merely individualistic but includes a partnership. The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) is given from a partnering perspective. We are to say "our" Father and ask him to give "us" and forgive "us." Thus, when praying that His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven it implies that such praying is broader than just a

request for our individual needs. We should be praying that His kingdom would come to our church, to our mission field, and to the ends of the earth. And, as we pray that way, we are asking God to use us to be an instrument in His kingdom coming.

When the Spirit of God is given to a believer, He is given to empower them for witness beyond that individual's neighborhood. His power extends to the broader context of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). That being the case, when relating this to Southern Baptist culture, our praying and kingdom partnership should include asking God to show us how our local church can reach our ministry field, how our association can impact its region, how our state convention can join together to impact lostness, how we can touch North America for Christ, and touch those to the ends of the earth who are not yet Christ-followers. However, it would be a grand mistake and arrogant to think Acts 1:8 is intended to be applied within the context of our denomination. Christ's prayer for unity in John 17 is that all followers of Christ would be one as He and the Father were one.

It is clearly evident in the Word of God that He expects His people to be on mission with Him. It is suggested that you use the included month long journal to become more centered on and in His mission. As you work through the suggested Scripture passages, ask God to give you a broadened kingdom perspective. While working through the passages, use the journal (or use your own) to record what God is saying in the Scripture passages to you about your church's mission field and the Salt Lake region. However, remain sensitive to His insight and guidance related to Utah, North America, and the ends of the earth.

It will be most helpful to link with others in the same process for accountability, encouragement and growth in the process. The journal will help you record God's guidance and allow you

to retain it so that it can be shared with your pastor and congregation during as well as at the end of your month long daily prayer process. J. Oswald Sanders wrote, “Both Scripture and experience unite to indicate that there is cumulative power in united praying. Faith is infectious, and infection spreads where numbers congregate. Unbelief, on the other hand, thrives more readily in isolation. A single stick can kindle a fire only with great difficulty.” (J. Oswald Sanders, *Prayer Power Unlimited*, p. 133)

There is great value in gathering together with other believers when you walk through a prayer process such as this. It is suggested that your church establish some corporate prayer times with the primary intent to hear the will of God for your church. While in corporate prayer settings, ask God for a listening ear and discerning spirit to capture what He is revealing to your group. As God speaks to and through others in a corporate prayer setting, your church should be able to see a broader scope of His will for the body that would be difficult to discover in your individual prayer times.

Our hope is that we might have many similar experiences in united prayer as recorded in God’s Word. Some examples are:

They raised their voices to God unanimously...And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness.... When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s message with boldness. (Acts 4:24-31)

There was a vast number of enemies poised to destroy Judah but Jehoshaphat led the people to seek God diligently. *Jehoshaphat was afraid, and he resolved to seek the Lord. Then he proclaimed a fast for all Judah, who gathered to seek the Lord. They even came from all the cities of Judah to seek Him. He prayed, Our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this vast number that comes to fight against*

us. We do not know what to do, but we look to You. All Judah was standing before the Lord with their infants, their wives, and their children. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel and God said, Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast number for the battle is not yours, but God's. Then God set an ambush and destroyed the enemy without His people engaging in battle. (2 Chron. 20)

Can you begin to see the possibilities of what God might do? Can you see the reality of what He can do? Let's gather together before our Lord and see His salvation go to work. You will want to calendar in the afore-mentioned dates in January 2017 (page 6) for SLBA-wide prayer gatherings.

We are choosing to conclude the month long process by gathering together on January 29 at Redeeming Life Church in Rose Park at 6 pm with other SLBA to share what God has been saying related to reaching those near and far with the gospel. This time will allow all of our churches to hear, share, and participate in what God has been saying to us about our Salt Lake area ministry field.

For pastors and leaders interested in knowing how to do this, a guide entitled "Pastor's Guide for 'God, Give us Your Vision'" is available for download at www.slba.org.

Using the month long journal:

A journal is a notebook in which a person records personal information, thoughts, and issues of the heart. A journal allows a person to process and retain significant God-given lessons for life. This is the purpose of this guide/journal. This guide/journal is provided for you to process and record God's guidance, insight, and challenges as well as your heart-felt response to His leadership. You are simply treasuring what God gives so that you don't forget it and to enable you to share with others what God has been teaching. The journal is a tool to help you retain significant interaction with God to

help you in current and future living related to His heart for the nations.

Each page of the journal will have the same format for ease of use. It will begin with a suggested Scripture passage then include a main idea and a few thoughts on the Scripture. Blank spaces are provided to record what God is saying. If you prefer using your own journal, do so, but just make sure you are recording what God is saying to you so that you are able to clearly share with others and for future reference when following the leadership of God.

Rest assured, any thoughts from the author of this guide are merely meant to stimulate your thinking. It is critical that *you pray* over these passages, that *you listen* to the Spirit's leading, and that *you record* what He reveals to you. It is essential to let the Word of God be your guide. The author's thoughts are secondary. You must learn to discern on your own (with the Spirit's guidance) what the Bible is saying and how He wants you to apply it to your life, the life of your church, the life of the SLBA, and to other kingdom partnerships. Once you do so and obey, your efforts will be maximized, your time will be used wisely, and the kingdom of God will advance. The blessing of your personal experience with listening and obeying God's voice will come in the joy of seeing how God leads you in daily living, places you in the right place at the right time to be involved in His kingdom work, and the motivation for witness being generated by His Holy Spirit rather than manipulated or forced by others. In all likelihood, the SLBA will discover a collective joy as we see the amazing way God will bring unity to our hearts and minds in order to demonstrate His glory in our midst.

Tips for your devotional/journaling time:

Prepare your heart. Confess any known sin, get in a solitary place where you can clearly hear the voice of God, and approach God with sincerity, humility, and teachability.

Pray for God's guidance. Ask God to show you what the passage means and what He wants you to do in response.

Read the passage. Spend time meditating on its meaning. Do any cross referencing, key word studies, and deeper research needed in order to fully grasp what God is saying in the passage(s). Some prefer to highlight key words and/or verses for easier recollection.

Rewrite the passage. As you do, you will be concentrating on what it says. You will find yourself paying closer attention to key words, phrases, and words or truths that are repeated.

Summarize the passage. Restate the passage in your own words so that you have a clearer handle on what it says. As you do, work toward knowing it well enough to restate it to others.

Record God's direction for you personally in relationship to the passage. Ask God what you should do.

Record God's direction about what this means for your local church. Ask God what your church should do.

Record God's direction about what this might mean for your church's partnership with sister churches and other kingdom partners. Ask God what He desires of you and your church in these partnerships.

Record what God is saying about to whom to share this insight. Some insights will need prayer support from confidants since they will stretch people out of their comfort. Some insights will need to have great spiritual wisdom applied.

Aligning with God Prayer Journal

Week One: It All Revolves Around God

Day 1

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:10-13, 44:6-8

The Pre-eminence of God. The word “pre-eminence” means to be superior or to stand out in front of or above all others. Prayerfully consider the verses and how God’s pre-eminence affects your activity as a follower of God. How does such truth affect your interaction with those who don’t know Him? Prayerfully consider how these verses apply to you, your church, and the region around you. Journal those thoughts with this in mind, “Since God is pre-eminent, it leads me to.....” or, “it leads my church to....” Record any directives from God in your journal.

Note: If you have no certainty that you know God personally, take note that you are in need of His total forgiveness of your sins and in need of total surrender to Him as Savior and Lord. Any attempt to pray and use this guide apart from knowing Him is merely a wasted religious exercise. If you are not certain you have surrendered to Jesus as Lord, read the following verses and fully surrender your life to Him (Rom. 3:23, 6:23, Rom. 5:8, Rom. 10:8-10). If you have just now made such a commitment, get in touch with your local church pastor or church leaders as soon as possible to share this good news. If one of those individuals is unavailable, it is recommended that you contact our SLBA office at ron.clement@slba.org.

Day 2

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:1, 1:26-31, Isaiah 43:6-7, John 1:1-5, 1:10-14, Colossians 1:15-20

The Rightful Ownership of God. Since God is Creator of all, how should that affect you personally? How should it influence your church’s purpose in advancing His kingdom? How does that affect your attitude in telling others the Good News of Jesus Christ? What do you discover about the reason people were created? Record in your journal any insights God gives related to His rightful ownership and how that applies to you, your church and other kingdom partners.

Note: If you are struggling to gain insight, pray sincerely and wait patiently for God to lead you. You might also want to commit meeting with a few others during this process so you can share with and learn from each other. In addition, practice confessing any known sin so that the lines of communication are open between you and God.

Day 3

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 7:23-27, 9:11-14, 22, Isaiah 53:1-10, John 3:16

The Sacrifice of God. Consider the cost to God for our forgiveness. How should that influence your attitude, your

behavior, and your devotion to Him? What ways do you see your church reflecting an understanding of such a sacrifice? Did you note the terms in these passages that reflect the sacrifice of God for *all*? How does God's sacrifice for *all* direct the scope of your intent to evangelize? How would that affect your church's partnership with sister churches? Record those God-given thoughts in your journal.

Day 4

Scripture Reading: Genesis 22:13-14, Psalm 50:10, Philippians 4:19, Matthew 6:25-34, Luke 10:2, John 15:16

The Provision of God. In light of God's ability to provide, how should your prayers be offered when needing the resources to reach those around you for Christ? How should your church pray about its need for reaching its ministry field? What does the Matthew 6 passage instruct us to do before we can expect God's provision? God may be speaking to you about laying your resources before Him in order to have the impact in spreading the gospel. Be attentive to God's leading on this issue. Are you, your church, or other kingdom partners in danger of worrying about resources while neglecting being about the King's business? Pray about what God would have you journal related to His provision in your personal life, your church, or the SLBA. Record any of those insights and directives.

Day 5

Scripture Reading: Psalm 103:1-18, Matthew 9:35-38

The Compassion of God. God is a compassionate God who is slow to anger and full of loving kindness. The scriptures for today give deep insight into His mercy toward us. What is God revealing to you about how His compassion should affect you? What is He telling you to do in response to hearing His Word about His compassion? Is He revealing any needed changes in attitude and/or priorities? Is He revealing a new attitude to breed in your prayer life or your church's prayer life when thinking about His compassion? How does His compassion affect the way you view those outside the kingdom of God? Ask God to give you compassion in line with His compassion. Journal any directives and insight from God in relation to His compassion.

Day 6

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 52:11-12, Psalm 66:18, Revelation 4:8, 1 Peter 1:15, 2:11-12, Acts 5:1-11

The Holiness of God. As our holy God He must be revered. In meditating on these passages what do you learn about the effect of holiness on the church and those outside the church?

As you read the verses, what do you see that is necessary to be evangelistically effective? Ask God to create a distress in you over your sinful tendencies and any sin in His body, the Church. As you read and re-read these passages what is the Spirit saying to you? Has God revealed something to you about your holiness, the holiness of your church, or the holiness between sister churches in your region? Is there something that needs to be dealt with, something you need to put in place, or something that needs to be confessed? If so, record those thoughts and obey what God is telling you to do with that revelation. Be holy because He is holy.

Day 7

Scripture Reading: Psalm 115:1, 145:1-21, Revelation 5:1-5, 11-14

The Worthiness of God. How is your worship? Do you take the time to honor and exalt Him? Is your heart full of praise? Have you taken the time to acknowledge that He alone is worthy to open the Lamb's Book of Life? Do those who are familiar with you and your church know the value you place on God by your worship of Him? If they were asked, would those outside your church say you are a people that honorably live for Him? Would they say that your adoration of Him is clearly seen in your attitudes and actions? Record in your journal what God is saying to you personally, about your church, and anything He is saying to you about other kingdom partnerships.

Week Two: The Activity of God in Your Life

Day 1

Scripture Reading: Psalm 32:1-8, Psalm 103:11-12, Proverbs 28:13, 1 John 1:8-9, Luke 7:36-50

The Forgiveness of God. The forgiveness of God should draw a person to a great sense of humility and gratitude. Honestly reflect on some of your tendencies toward sin and express gratitude for God's forgiveness. Does His forgiveness motivate you to share His Good News of His Son's death, burial, and resurrection? Is there an apparent sense of gratitude and humility present in your congregation due to His grace and mercy in your midst? Consider how such forgiveness should influence you in your interaction with fellow believers and then with lost people. Is there any group that you and your church appear to believe cannot be forgiven? Record what God impresses upon your heart about responding to His great forgiveness and to how such forgiveness should be responded.

Day 2

Scripture Reading: Acts 4:13-21, 5:17-32, Matthew 7:21-27, Colossians 1:15-19

Lordship of God. Who is the ultimate authority in your life? Who is the ultimate authority in your church? It is not religious activity that proves His lordship. Submission to His lordship boils down to obedience. Does your life, your church, and your area churches reflect submission to the lordship of Christ? Is there an attitude of obeying God above any and all authorities? Is there any person or group who has displaced Christ as head of your church? What would God have you do when such a coup is in place? Prayerfully consider what deterrent such a coup is to reaching your community for Christ. Record in your journal anything that God reveals that should be obeyed or changed in relationship to His lordship.

Day 3

Scripture Reading: John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Ephesians 1:7-8, 2:8-9, Romans 1:16, 2 Timothy 1:8-12

Salvation of God. It is commonly thought that there are multiple ways to God. This is absolutely *untrue*. There is only one way to God. God appointed His obedient Son as the Only Way. Salvation is a gift through faith in the Lord Jesus. This truth should motivate us to speak confidently of the message of salvation. Have you humbly accepted that Jesus alone is the means of salvation? Does your church and association of churches clearly proclaim Jesus as the way? Is the message of

Jesus' work on the cross and His resurrection central to your life message, your church's message, and your association's message, or that of your state convention? Record what actions God reveals about His salvation in your life, your church, and sister churches. Continue praying for Him to give clear direction and what to do with such truth.

Day 4

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:11-12, 10:26-33, John 19:11, Acts 4:23-31

Protection of God. Although it is common for God to place a hedge of protection around His followers, He never promises that we won't suffer as His followers. In fact, He states that we are blessed when persecuted for His name's sake. The believer should operate from the perspective that his/her life is secure in Christ. We should see this life as temporary and life beyond as eternal. The believer should live as one always under the supremacy of God. The believer should know that no one can harm us without God's permission. Does your life reflect cowardice or courage? How do these verses influence the way you live or the way your church operates? Fear will paralyze your evangelism. Record anything God shows you about your own life, your church's mission, and your region.

Day 5

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:17, 2:11-12, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, 1 John 2:15-17

Strangers in a foreign land. Although we live *in the world*, we are not to be *of the world*. Our lives here are temporary. As followers of Christ, our home is Heaven. Ask God to reveal to you anything in your life or in your church or area churches that causes confusion of His lordship among non-believers. Is there evidence that Heaven is more home to you and your church than society? Do your possessions or does status hinder your ability to be faithful to the mission of God? Is your church guilty of placing too much attention or resources on the facility rather than on telling the Good News? Record anything God reveals and any changes He directs.

Day 6

Scripture Reading: Exodus 9:16, Jeremiah 10:23, Acts 13:36, 17:28, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:15

Appointed to live during the time and in the place where you do. We are saved in order to live for Him. Our lives are not our own for we were bought with a price. Since that is the case, the Lord has purposely placed us in our neighborhoods and communities to be a lighthouse to the community and draw people to Him. Therefore, we should prayerfully ask God to

reveal to us His plan and purpose for us in the church field, in our neighborhood, in our jobs, and with our friends and families. In addition, we should prayerfully ask Him to show us His purpose and plan with other kingdom partners.

Day 7

Scripture Reading: Psalm 2:8, Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 24:46-48, Acts 19:8-10, 26; 19:20

Total gospel saturation. God’s activity is so that not one person would miss an opportunity to hear and respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ. He reminds us to pray that the nations become our inheritance. He commands us to pray for laborers to be thrust into a ready for harvest world. He says the gospel must be preached to all nations. Can He do this? Can He do this through you and your church and other kingdom partners? Reread Acts 19:8-10 and 19:26. It is suggested that you spend extra time in the book of Acts asking God to show you what enabled Paul to be so effective in total gospel saturation. Prayerfully ask God to give you belief that He can do so. Record any thoughts that He gives related to total gospel saturation.

Week Three: God’s Search for the Faithful

Day 1

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 9:4-6, Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 1:12, Roman 8:1, 33-39, 9:15-16

The Faithfulness of God. A common Hebrew word for “faithful” means to be firm, steadfast, reliable, truthful and trustworthy. God is faithful to His promise. His faithfulness is not based on our effort or behavior. When considering His faithfulness, what does this do in your heart? Does it affect your attitude toward Him? Prayerfully ask God to give you some reminders related to how such faithfulness should affect your witness for Him. Are there promises that you, your church, and other kingdom partners have failed to operate by? Journal anything that God gives in relation to His faithfulness and how you, your church, and other partners should function.

Day 2

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 20:6, Jn. 21:15-23, Revelation 2:1-7

A faithful man who can find? What are your claims about faithfulness to God or as a follower of Christ? Does your life

accurately reflect those claims? Because some know there is inconsistency in their claims versus their behavior, the tendency of many leaders and church members is to lower the standard to a less than a biblical standard when evaluating our obedience to God. Yet, when compared to what the Bible teaches, how is your love for the Father? Or, we tend to attempt to measure our lives against others' lives. According to some recent research it takes over 40 Southern Baptist church members to lead one person to Christ. The lack of others' faithfulness in sharing Christ is not a good starting point for determining faithfulness. Certainly, it is not up to any individual to bring the harvest (1 Cor. 3:7) but God still calls all to be obedient in sharing Christ/making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Consider God's standard above your standard or anyone else's. Ask the Father to give you a clear understanding of what an undying love for Him would look like in your life. Record anything from God that He reveals related to your faithfulness, the faithfulness of your church, or your sister churches and other kingdom partners. Record any adjustments in these entities that will be required to be faithful to God's mission.

Day 3

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 2:35, Jeremiah 5:1

Defining a faithful follower. 1 Sam. 2:35 gives a clear definition of what a faithful person would be doing. Read that passage and record what you discover about a faithful individual? In Jer. 5:1, God places a challenge before His

people that they are to be searching for a particular type of person. What are the characteristics that are sought? What is the potential effect of such a person? Ask God to help you see your life as He sees it. Ask Him to show you anything that would hinder His use of you for redemptive work, in your church, or in or through other kingdom partners. Record any guidance or insights related to these passages.

Day 4

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:1-8, Ezekiel 22:30, Isaiah 62:1, 6-7

The search of God for those faithful in prayer. God indicates that He looks for those who will not give up when it comes to prayer. He clearly states that prayer has an effect on the redemption of mankind and the work of God in and through the church. Does your life reflect that of one who could stand in the gap? Is your church one that has non-stop prayer for the advance of God's kingdom? Does your church pray as if it all depends on God? Does your church pray for the lost on a regular basis? Does your church and/or association demonstrate a belief that God will open doors for evangelism by its commitment to corporate prayer? Record any insights from God that He shows about what should be happening in your life, church, and area churches.

Day 5

Scripture Reading: 2 Chronicles 16:9, Psalm 33:16-19, Philippians 4:13

The strength of God availed to the faithful. God scans the earth looking to strengthen people. In 2 Chron. 16:9, what condition does He place upon giving His strength? Look at verses 5 and 12 in 2 Chron. 16 for evidence of what happens when people do not rely upon Him. Consider His strength in comparison to trusting in worldly resources. Ask God to reveal those items that you and your church tend to rely upon instead of on Him. Confess anything related to your own lack of trust in God. Record anything God shows in relation to your church and sister churches' trust in Him as you attempt to carry out His mission.

Day 6

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:57-62 and 10:1-2

Putting your hand to the plow without looking back. Distractions, loss of focus, half-hearted commitment, shallow faith and loving others more than Christ will prevent us from being in the center of God's activity. Take time to examine whether you would be seen as any one of the three "followers" (Lk. 9) who lacked commitment. In addition, consider the insight in Luke 10 that Christ looks for laborers of

a different kind than those that lack commitment. Is God calling you to reprioritize, realign, or to remove anything in your church or your own life that detracts from accomplishing His will? Record any insight from God that applies to you, your church, and your association of churches, and/or other partners. Record any guidance from God on what is needed to be fully committed to His purpose for you, your church, and other partners.

Day 7

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 42:8, Galatians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 10:17-18, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 3:20-21

All for the glory of God. We have no right to share in God's glory, no room to boast in our abilities, no place at the table of honor next to God. He is supreme. Any efforts made, any success realized, and anything we do is to be done for the glory of God. Any eternal difference made is due to God's work, grace, and mercy in our midst. Reflect on these verses. Ask God to show you anything which attempts to steal His glory. In addition, ask Him to show you whether your church is so Spirit-filled and Spirit-led that it gives Him glory as He performs the unimaginable in your midst and through you. Expect God to lead you to carry out the seemingly impossible. It is through obedience in faith to these God-given impossibilities that He works them to fulfillment. Through such fulfillment the world takes notice and the church adequately brings glory to Him.

Week Four: Understanding God’s Process for Building His Kingdom

Day 1

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:18, 13:31-32, Ephesians 3:20-21, Acts 11:19-21, John 16:7-11, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Christ builds the Church. Churches tend to operate as if their resources, understanding, assessments, or wisdom are the only means available for the church to carry out its mission. What do these Bible passages teach about growth? Can growth be expected? What is the source of growth? Is the gospel dependent on our persuasive speech? Who is responsible for convicting people? If God is responsible for building the church and we, in our own ability, do not have the necessary resources, what difference should that make in our evangelism? Record any truths God has shown you in relationship to growth of His kingdom. Make sure to record anything that He reveals about how growth takes place and anything He leads you, your church, and partners in the kingdom to obey.

Day 2

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8, Ephesians 3:16-17, 4:29-30, 5:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Acts 4:8-12, 5:31-32, 6:8-10

The Holy Spirit empowers. The same Spirit that empowered the life of Jesus lives within us. He lives in us for a purpose; His purpose is to bring honor and glory to Jesus through testifying about Him. Prayerfully consider whether your life and the life of your church reflects the power and filling of the Spirit of God. Record God's revelation about such matters to you, about your church, and about partners in the harvest. Record any instructions that God gives on what to do about this.

Day 3

Scripture Reading: John 5:17, Matthew 9:37-38, Acts 13:15-17

The Father is always at work. God the Father is always at work. He has not left Himself without testimony. He is the living God. He is Lord of the Harvest. How do such truths influence your life? Do you live with expectation that He is at work around you? Do you enter into each day with an expectation that the Lordship of Christ in your life will mean encounters with others who need Him and who are being drawn to Him? Do you believe that the fields are ripe for harvest? Do you regularly pray, individually or as a church, for God to create a heightened awareness to His activity around you? Do you, as a church or association of churches prayerfully consider what God is doing and how He desires

you to join Him? Record and respond to anything God is saying to you about His activity. Record anything that He reveals related to your church and other kingdom partners about His activity.

Day 4

Scripture Reading: John 5:19-20, 30, 8:27-30, 38, 47, 15:4-8

We do nothing on our own. It is absolutely important to grasp this truth. Jesus spoke of His intimate relationship with the Father. He didn't dream up religious activity. He didn't give His own opinions. Everything He did and said came from His intimacy with His Father. Thus, He didn't waste time, words, or energy on what He thought best but only did that which came from the Father and pleased the Father (Jn. 8:29). Likewise, we are to remain connected to Him. How does your behavior, your church's decisions, the vision of your association of churches reflect that you believe you do absolutely nothing on your own? Humbly consider your life, your church, and other kingdom partners' past planning or current planning. Record anything God shows and any necessary adjustments He reveals.

Day 5

Scripture Reading: Acts 8:26-39, 16:6-10

The Holy Spirit leads. As the Holy Spirit leads, we will know when to stop and when to go. Yet, it is essential that we keep the lines of communication open by living a Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18) while preventing any grieving (Eph. 4:29-30) or quenching (1 Thess. 5:18) of the Spirit. As God is at work, the Spirit leads those with a determined attitude toward obedience and a sensitive spirit to encounter and engage in God's activity. In your life and that of your church's, is there evidence that you are being led by the Spirit of God? Are the leaders of your church, your association people filled and led by the Spirit of God? If they are not, what is the Spirit of God saying about that? Prayerfully record anything God shows you about this truth. Remember to listen and record the Spirit's leading personally, corporately, and in regard to other kingdom partners.

Day 6

Scripture Reading: Mark 4:1-20, 26-29, Acts 5:41-42, 8:4, 40, 13:49, 20:25-31

The gospel must be thoroughly sown. Many churches and believers treat evangelism and kingdom work with a compartmentalized approach. Certain settings and times are deemed appropriate for kingdom activity. Other times are considered inappropriate. Others have an erroneous

perspective of the extent in which the gospel should be shared. Since the earth and all in it belong to the Lord, sharing Jesus should be appropriate anywhere and everywhere. Are there areas in which you've failed to share the gospel? Do you and the members of your church have an attitude that the gospel must be shared by all members? Listen and record what God is saying about your approach to kingdom work. Listen and record what God is saying about your church and other kingdom partners as they attempt to evangelism and kingdom work.

Day 7

Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 11:19-26, 14:1-4, 21-22, 15:36-41

Conversion is not the final step. Evangelism is not complete without discipleship. Discipleship includes teaching people how to mature in Christ. Discipleship always includes an emphasis on investing in others who will in turn keep investing in others. It is an unbroken chain of one Christ follower passing the Christ life on to another. Jesus modeled this very thing with His disciples. As you look at the preceding scripture passages pray for God to show you what is taking place and what He desires you, your church and other kingdom partners to put into place. Prayerfully consider how well you and your church are assisting others to become and stay faithful followers of Christ. Journal anything God reveals to you about the discipleship process.

Week 5: Living for the Savior; Attaining the Prize

Day 1

Scripture Reading: Philippians 1:21, Mark 10:27-31, Philippians 3:12-16

To live is Christ; to die is gain. Whether we live or die in Christ, we win. Thus, our suffering and sacrifice is not in vain. What do these passages say to you about any difficulties you experience as a result of being a follower of Christ? In the Philippians passage, what does Paul state as a mature way of looking at life? What is Paul's example for us in how to live? Ask God to show you anything about His will for your life, your church, or sister churches. Record these in your journal.

Day 2

Scripture Reading: Scripture: Luke 19:30, John 14:28-31, Acts 13:36

Finishing well. Many a race has been lost by easing up too soon. Many have missed finding a valuable treasure because they have quit one search short. Christ endured to the end and we benefitted eternally from it. He said, "It is finished." He finished well in order that the world would see His love and commitment to the Father's will. He finished well because He knew where He had come from and where He was returning. He finished well because He knew the Father's will and the Father's love for the lost. Take note of the Acts 13 passage: What did it tell you about King David? How is your commitment to finishing well? How is your church's commitment? How about your association of churches? Record anything that God tells you about finishing well.

Next Steps:

Individual time in the Word. Keep spending time in the Word with the broader scope of God's plan in mind. God desires for you to daily meet Him in His Word and in prayer. Pray for His guidance regarding which Scripture passages to go to next. As you get in His Word, the Spirit of God will lead you to particular passages, books of the Bible, or studies on themes and Bible characters that will benefit you and advance His kingdom.

Expect God to continue to show you important life-changing truths from His Word. Continue praying and meditating on the passages you've just studied. It is not uncommon for God to reveal further truth as you show yourself committed and

diligent in discovering the deeper treasures in the Word of God. Keep an open mind and heart.

Gathering together with other believers to share God's guidance. As you have spent the last month or so reading, listening, meditating, recording God's Word and guidance, it is time to share that with the body of believers. If your pastor and/or church leaders have not provided an opportunity to share what God has been saying, you should prayerfully and humbly approach him/them asking for such an opportunity. Be careful to respect the authority of your pastor.

At the end of your journaling process in *Aligning with God*, it is suggested that members of the body gather together to share what God has been saying. This is not a gripe session, nor a time to criticize the church and its leaders, nor is it time to offer your own opinions. This is a time to humbly share what God says about you, the church, and its larger partnerships related to carrying out His mission to reach the world for Christ. When God speaks to a person, that person has no room to boast or have an attitude of superiority.

It is essential to use scripture as an evaluative tool for anything that people share during the church's sharing time. God will never contradict His Word. Furthermore, the Lord will be leading His people to a place of unity in what He is saying and what needs to be done. If there is a sense of disagreement over what God is saying, the body should humbly gather together in prayer before God and cry out for clarity on what He is saying. It will be further necessary to pray over what to prioritize and any areas that need adjustment in order to be obedient to what God is saying. Listen carefully for common themes. Often these common themes will be indicators of what needs to be your highest priorities.

Gather together with other kingdom partners to share God's guidance. Since the scope of the will of God includes an Acts 1:8 scope, it is also crucial to share God's guidance with other

kingdom partners. It would be wise to gather together with the local association of churches to share God's insights and leading. Again, however, humbly respect the role of your associational leaders since they may not have been intentionally seeking God's heart for the previous month. In addition, it would be wise to invite some state staff or denominational leaders to participate in this session so that they can hear how to assist in what God is leading you to do and to consider any necessary shifts in their focus.

This guide is just an initial starting point for you to learn to seek God's face about His kingdom. It is this author's prayer that a good practice for seeking God's will and engaging in evangelism has been established for you, your church, and other kingdom partners. From this point forward you should daily seek the face of God to align your heart with the heart of God. As you consider future directions for your church and other kingdom partners, you should be going before God asking Him for clarity on what to do and how to do it.

May this be the beginning of days where no one coerces you into faithfulness to the Great Commission but instead you are driven from the very heart of God with excitement and expectation of God using you for great and mighty things in advancing His kingdom. May this be used as a means to lead you toward a lifestyle of motivation from the heart of God; programs have no enduring value to keep anyone motivated for kingdom purposes. Effective evangelism begins in the presence of a worthy, kind, and forgiving God who prepares us for His mission and provides every resource needed to accomplish His call upon our lives. Playing on His team brings great joy when your role contributes to lives transformed for eternity. It is my prayer that you'll get a taste of that joy and keep coming back for more as you are privileged to participate in the advance the kingdom of Almighty God.

In Christ,
Ron Clement, Executive Director

Additional Notes:

