



PLEASE KEEP ME IN YOUR PRAYERS

SERIES: "INVEST & INVITE"

BY PASTOR SEGUN 'SHEGZ' AIYEBUSI

LOVE JESUS CHRIST. SERVE HIS CHURCH. CARE FOR PEOPLE FAR FROM GOD.

===== A BLOG =====
SHEGZNSTUFF
----- DOTCOM -----


PLEASE KEEP ME IN YOUR PRAYERS

My father went home to be with the Lord a number of years ago. Though he lived most of his life apart from God, he trusted in Christ not too long before his final journey home. I'd like to share with you how he came to faith in Christ because God graciously allowed me to play a role in it.

Several years earlier in college, I, like most kids, felt burdened to begin praying for my father to trust in Jesus Christ. But I was thousands of miles separated from him. He was in Nigeria. I was at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey. So I wrote him a letter, (remember those?). In it, I shared some personal things with him. I also spelled out the gospel in it and wrote out a prayer I'd always wanted to pray for him, then sent it.

He never responded, nor did he acknowledge the Gospel content I shared when we later chatted over the phone. Thinking my letter writing approach had been futile; I simply occupied myself with praying regularly that Christ would draw him into a saving relationship with Himself.

Fast forward some 3-4 years after my letter, I received news that he had suffered a major stroke. As soon as I could, I got on a plane back to Nigeria to see him. After a week or two of hospital visits and physical therapy, he and I ended up spending one long afternoon together chatting about old times. I'm not sure how we got on the topic of the Gospel, but he suddenly perked up in the middle of our conversation. He then asked me to reach behind one of his closet doors and bring back the sheets of paper

he had pinned to the door. I got up and reached for the notes, and as soon as I saw it, my jaw dropped open wide.

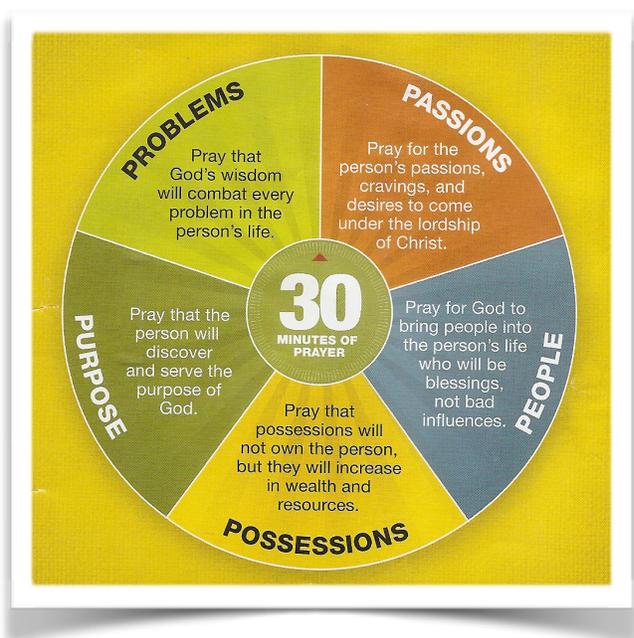
It was the letter I'd written to him 3-4 years earlier.

As I looked at it, I noticed that the sections in it about the Gospel and about praying to trust in Christ had been highlighted in yellow marker. I turned to him looking for an explanation and he smiled and said, "Yup. I prayed that prayer and put my faith in Jesus Christ three years ago like you suggested. Good job Segun!"

I recall feeling a rush of emotions as I stood there, grateful to God for my dad's salvation. Something else I do recall more clearly was this thought, "Man, there are certain battles in our lives that God has chosen to intervene in ONLY when we pray."

I think it's accurate to say that if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you presently have a few people in your life who you love, people who are far from God, and people you desire to see come to saving faith in Jesus Christ? Perhaps you've invited them to Church or even shared the gospel with them to no avail?

With this message, my aim is to equip you with some very practical spiritual tools that will help you become more intentional about engaging the people in your life who are far from God. Specifically, I want to share with you five very practical ways you can start praying for those people you love so dearly; five ways that you can prayerfully begin having a real spiritual impact on their lives.



(By the way, I owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. David Ireland (senior pastor of Christ Church, New Jersey) for his prayerful inspiration for this message. The 5 points in the image above, originate from him. He states what they are in his book, "**The Kneeling Warrior: Winning Your Battles Through Prayer**", I

simply build on each point with Biblical content of my own.)

When you start praying for those you love, start by praying for the PEOPLE God brings into their lives.

PEOPLE:

Pray that God would bring into their lives godly people who take a genuine interest in them. Also pray that through those new relationships, they would see Jesus Christ more clearly than they ever have.

There's a great example of this happening in the 9th chapter of the book of Acts. Prior to becoming an apostle, Paul (who was known initially known as Saul) terrorized Christians in the early church. He literally went from house to house, arresting, torturing, and overseeing the death of believers because he genuinely believed they were a threat to his Jewish faith. But one afternoon, Jesus corners him on his way to kill more Christians, blinds him, then commissions him to become a full time missionary. As result, Paul ends up traveling the world and sharing the very message he had been trying to snuff out! While that was good news for the Church, it did present one small problem for Paul - HE NO LONGER HAD ANY FRIENDS! All

the Christians were afraid of him and were keeping their distance because all they knew of him was that he was a hit-man for the religious establishment. Unfortunately for Paul, the religious leaders who sent him on his initial errand were now his enemies because he was had turned to Christ. To make matters worse, he is blind and has no one to care for him, no one to lead him around or embrace him as friend and family.

Can you think of people in your life who are far from God and who might be feeling this way?

Now here's the good news. Because God is an INITIATING Father, God calls a Christian named Ananias to go visit Paul, to pray for him, and to restore his sight. Ananias hesitates at first, but then agrees and goes. He gets to Paul, (who by the way, had already received a vision from God in his blindness that a man named Ananias was coming to meet him) and listen to what he does according to Acts 9:17-19. Ananias shows up, places his hands on him, (so he embraces him), prays for him, baptizes him, feeds him, and then later introduces him to other Christians in the city of Damascus.

How incredible a friend was Ananias? Listen, those people you love so dearly and long to see come

to faith in Christ, could very well be waiting for you to pray that God would send someone, or some people into their lives who will have such a godly influence that THEY not only turn to Christ, but become a vessel God uses to spread the gospel just like Paul.

Along with the people God brings into their lives, pray for their PASSIONS.

PASSION:

When I speak of passion in this context, I'm talking about praying that all their cravings, longings, and desires would be surrendered fully to Jesus Christ.

Passion is a good thing. It can serve you well when it drives you to excel in your line of work, or when you use it to motivate others to strive for something better. However, if not kept in check, or surrendered to Christ, passion can spiral out of control and put you outside of God's will and game plan for your life rather quickly!

The apostle Paul, again, is a great example of this. In Acts 22:3-5, he recounts the life he lived before meeting Jesus. "Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was

carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. 4 And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. 5 The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished." (New Living Translation).

If there ever was a man who lived his life with passion, it was Paul. However, you'll note that even **he** recognized that his zeal and passion for God's law was misguided, and put him on a dangerous path. Fortunately, when he met Jesus, Christ transformed his life, not by reformatting his brain, but by leveraging all his scholarly knowledge and insight about the law, for the spreading of the gospel. In fact, the apostle Paul is responsible for writing around 80% of the New Testament, and for planting most, if not all the early churches that start in the book of Acts.

Some of you have friends and family who are skilled, talented, well educated, and are passionate

about their fields of study/focus, but they have not yet given their hearts to Christ. When you pray for them, pray that Christ would call them to Himself, and ask God to reclaim their passions and desires for HIS glory, for HIS purposes and to build His kingdom.

Some of you have friends and family on your list whose passion has caused them to spin completely out of control. Pray that God would redirect their passions and cravings to Him so they would return to him like the prodigal son to his loving father.

Pray for people in their lives, passions to be surrendered, and pray for their POSSESSIONS.

POSSESSIONS:

Here I speak of praying for the material needs in their lives. What do you know that they currently lack, and desperately need in their lives? Pray that God would provide in abundance the possessions they need by blessing the work of their hands. Pray that as a result, they would prosper and succeed in their efforts so that they can become a blessing to others.

In the Old Testament book of 1 Chronicles 4:10, we meet a guy named Jabez who prayed this

prayer to God, “Oh, that you would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!” There’s a lot more to this story than just the prayer request, but if you dig into the context a little deeper, you’ll understand that Jabez was essentially asking God to bless the work of his hands and his business so he would experience great profit. Hence the prayer, “expand my territory”, (in other words, grow, multiply what you’ve already given me.)

Now here’s the best part, verse 10 ends by saying, “And God granted him his request.”

We’re not told how God responded or how quickly, but other accounts in scripture where his name is mentioned (1 Chronicles 2:55) indicate that he later became a man of such great influence that a city was named after him.

So here’s the deal with praying for POSSESSIONS in the lives of the people you love and care for.

- Pray that God would bless them materially, not just as an end in itself, but so that they would first and foremost see Jesus Christ as the source of their blessing.
- Pray that God would bless whatever work efforts they’ve

been striving in so that it would begin to produce profitable results.

- Pray that God would so bless their work that they would end up being a blessing to others.

This prayer is really great because you not only get to see them come to saving faith in Christ, but you actually get to see them prospering, and doing well in life!

Fourth, pray for/about any **PROBLEMS** they might be facing.

PROBLEMS:

Hopefully, you are in regular contact with the people you're praying for? I say so because proximity allows you to have the most current, up to date information on them. So in this case, what worries or concerns have they shared with you? What problems weighing them down have you observed?

James 5:13 says, "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise." On Psalm 18:6, the Psalmist says, "In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears."

The fact of the matter is that through faith in Christ, you (as a follower of Jesus Christ) have all-access pass to the throne room of God (Hebrews 4:15-16); a pass which non-Christians do not have. When you pray on behalf of your friends or family members who are far from God, you could very well be the **ONLY** person in their lives who has ever spoken to God on their behalf.

In the book of Acts 9, in the story we looked at earlier about Ananias praying for Paul, it says in verse 18 that, "Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized!" You and I have no idea what spiritual obstacles or scales keep people's eyes blinded from seeing Christ as He is. But when you intercede in prayer on their behalf, that picture of scales falling off is exactly what God does so that they may see how truly caring and loving a Father He really is.

Pray for the people, passions, possessions, problems, and lastly, pray for their **PURPOSE** in life to become crystal clear.

PURPOSE:

Pray that they would discover God's purpose for their lives and serve

Him in their calling with all due diligence.

Concerning one's ultimate purpose in life, the New Testament would make a strong case that God's number one purpose is that He, "...wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4). So in your prayers on their behalf, one of the things you want to ask is that all roads they set out on would lead to a saving faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Pray that, in Christ, they would find their calling and purpose in life. Pray that the natural gifts, spiritual gifts, talents, skills, and abilities that have long laid dormant in their lives would be called forth by Christ and that God would provide them with opportunities where those gifting can be used. In some cases, you might even feel led to pray that like the apostle Paul, God would call and commission some of them to serve Him full time in professional ministry.

**PEOPLE, PASSION,
POSSESSIONS, PROBLEMS, AND
PURPOSE.**

Now here's something else very practical you can do. If you haven't yet developed the habit of daily prayer, praying these five points for everyone you desire to see get saved

FAITHFUL TO FIVE THAT ALL MAY COME TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST

**LORD JESUS,
DRAW THESE
FIVE
PEOPLE
TO YOURSELF**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

"FINALLY, DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WE ASK YOU TO PRAY FOR US. PRAY THAT THE LORD'S MESSAGE WILL SPREAD RAPIDLY AND BE HONORED WHEREVER IT GOES, JUST AS WHEN IT CAME TO YOU."

**2 THESSALONIANS
3:1**

can immediately feel overwhelming, here's something practical you can do.

Think of five names of people in your life who are far from God. I understand that you probably have more than five and desire to see many more than five get saved. But for now, just write down five names, (you can print out the page

with the FAITHFUL TO FIVE IMAGE, and write their names there). Having these five names helps you stay focused in prayer. When they get saved, you can take their names off your list and focus on the next five.

So, you got your five? Okay, next, divvy up those five names by assigning each weekday to each name. So, you would pray for person #1 on Monday, pray for person #2 on Tuesday, and so forth. If you do this consistently, and long enough, it will become second nature, so that when you get to Thursday, you naturally know that Thursday is “Tony’s” day. Make sense.

Here’s something else very practical you can do, after two weeks of consistently praying for these names, when you run into them and have the opportunity to actually get in a conversation, tell them that you were praying for them. In fact, depending on how comfortable you are in the relationship, **SHARE WITH THEM EXACTLY HOW YOU PRAYED FOR THEM.**

Think about it, how encouraging is it if in the middle of a conversation with you, I perk up and say, “He I forgot to tell you, but I was praying for you this past Wednesday around 3:30pm. Yeah, remember that situation you told me about, I was praying that God would _____”? Cool, right?

Listen, if any of this scares you, keep in mind that **GOD IS MORE PASSIONATE ABOUT CALLING THEM TO FAITH IN CHRIST THAN YOU ARE ABOUT PRAYING FOR, OR EVEN TALKING TO THEM.** Your role in their life is to intercede, (INVEST) in prayer on their behalf, and INVITE them to come experience the hope and faith you’ve found in Christ.

It’s God’s job to save them and renew their hearts, it’s yours to invest and invite. **“Pray that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you.” 2 Thessalonians 3:1**

LOVE JESUS CHRIST. SERVE HIS CHURCH. CARE FOR PEOPLE FAR FROM GOD.

=====
A BLOG
SHEGZNSTUFF

DOTCOM
