

Praying for the Holy Spirit

On January 7, 2007, after learning about (or having viewed) a 2006 fictional, Hollywood movie about the antichrist, the idea was conceived by one church member to have our denomination do something special in the Spring of 2007.

In that worldly film, the goal was to achieve a variety of sinister effects by 6-6-06 (June 6, 2006). Based on that, one of our denominational pastors got the idea that, beginning May 18, Advent believers throughout the world should pray a specific amount time each day (40 minutes), all the while focusing on the urgent prayer that the Holy Spirit be poured out upon the entire church with Pentecostal power on 7-7-07 (July 7, 2007).

(On February 24, the pastor originating this idea decided that the heads of households in his church should have their eyes anointed with water, in order to better fulfill their duties. At a special church meeting, he had his members simultaneously pray for one another as they touched their eyes with water. Lacking any Biblical support, this new idea will not be discussed in this paper. Only the Pentecostals pray in groups simultaneously with one another.)

This present study will provide you with Bible and Spirit of Prophecy insights on this very important subject.

Should we pray to the Holy Spirit?—No, we are told to pray to God, and we are also told we can pray to Jesus. But we are never told to pray to the Holy Spirit. This is because it is His work to move on our hearts to repent, pray to God, and seek guidance, help, and answers to specific needs and emergencies.

Should we pray for the Holy Spirit?—Yes, we earnestly need to pray for help from the Holy Spirit! But it is urgent that we pray in the proper way, in a manner which agrees with God's Inspired Writings—or we could encounter serious problems.

Praying the wrong way—As we read in the first two paragraphs in this study, it is claimed that if we will pray for the Holy Spirit many days, great power will come into our lives and into the church. —*But little is mentioned about putting away sin in our lives and in the church!* Praying for power, while we remain in our sins, may bring us an infilling of the wrong spirit.

In addition, at the end of that lengthy period of 40 days, when the power is not received on the day that the prayer group has specified for it to arrive,—many will feel less like praying afterward. They will have experienced a big let-down. The problem was that they were date-setting. Tragically, some who take part will be less

impressible by the Spirit afterward.

Our prayers should be combined with earnest efforts—God's plan is for us to unite our earnest prayers, every day, with decided efforts to cooperate with God in answering those prayers. We are told to "pray and work, and work and pray" (2SM 37). We are to "work and pray, putting our trust in Him who will never fail" (6T 340). "We must work and pray and believe" (ChS 280).

"By the exercise of living faith today, we are to conquer the enemy. We must today seek God, and be determined that we will not rest satisfied without His presence. We should watch and work and pray as though this were the last day that would be granted us. If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today."—*Faith I Live By*, 249.

Our day-by-day cooperation with God gives a sense of specific—and immediate—purpose to our prayers. Our prayers should be for specific needs. We are to pray for guidance in our work, and in the study of God's Word. We are to pray for personal help in time of need, for protection, and enabling strength to reach souls with the truth. We are to pray each day that we will be guided to those we need to talk to.

Little Willy—Have I told you the story of little Willy Briniger? Glen Coon told about how Little Willy was impressed by the Lord that he should colporteur. So he wrote to the conference office to send him some books. Knowing little Willy, they hesitated. Yet because he kept asking, they sent him a colporteur case, a receipt book, and some books.

"Oh, little Willy!" they said, when he sent them some receipts for sales completed. "Little Willy does not know what he is doing. He says he is making sales!" So they decided to send a man down to see Willy.

Upon arriving, little Willy motioned for him to accompany him, and down the street they went. Just before arriving at a home, little Willy went under a tree, knelt down and, weeping, pled with God for help.

The colporteur agent could not understand little Willy's words, yet he was deeply impressed by them.

Arising, little Willy went to the first home. At the door, the lady of the home could not understand what little Willy was talking about either, for he had a serious speech impediment. But she went in and got the money and bought the book.

Down the road they headed. But as they neared the next house, Willie crawled under another tree and once again pled with Heaven for help.

At this next home, the lady invited them in and

purchased the book, although without understanding what little Willy was talking about. Before leaving, the colporteur agent asked her why she had purchased the book, and she said that she was impressed that she needed what was in it.

—*There is nothing as powerful as sensing your inefficiency—and pleading with Heaven for help; and then setting out to work for God!*

If you want to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, witness to someone about Christ!

The Christian life can be a happy life. As in prayer, dedicating all you have and are to God, you go out and work for Him, praying as you go,—you experience deep peace of heart. The Holy Spirit is working with you.

You can pray while you walk, while you drive, and while you go about your daily duties. Nehemiah sent up a prayer to God before answering the king's question. You can do the same, all through the day.

Another special purpose of prayer—A very special need is to pray that we might recognize our faults and sins, and receive enabling strength to put them away. Prayers of repentance, confession, and entire surrender are needed. We need to pray for overcoming power in the daily battle with temptation.

As individuals and as a church, we need to search our hearts, and confess and forsake our sins,—and return to obedience to God! Our beliefs, standards, and way of life should be in accordance with God's Word.

We certainly do need prayer! All of us! And lots of it. It is easy to be “too busy working for the Lord,” and not taking time to pray for guidance at each step. Many just mumble a few sentences and call that prayer. But it is not uncertain prayers that are needed, but prayers focused on immediate needs in our own lives and in the lives of others. Arising from our knees, we set to work, cooperating with the angels and the Holy Spirit in fulfilling those prayers!

The Holy Spirit is given to the degree that He can use us. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is actually Christian living on a higher plane of prayer, study, and working to help and encourage those around us.

“Let us not love in word,” the apostle writes, “but in deed and in truth.” The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within. It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 551.*

Such prayer leads to praise and singing. It produces rejoicing and testimonies.

Living on this level brings us very close to Paul's admonition to “pray without ceasing.” Each day becomes a prayerful experience, as we live to draw closer to God and to minister to the needs of other people.

“You may have a deep and abiding sense of eternal things and that love for humanity which Christ

has shown in His life. A close connection with heaven will give the right tone to your fidelity and will be the ground of your success. Your feeling of dependence will drive you to prayer, and your sense of duty summon you to effort. Prayer and effort, effort and prayer, will be the business of your life. You must pray as though the efficiency and praise were all due to God, and labor as though duty were all your own.”—*4 Testimonies, 538.*

Should we set a definite time for the Holy Spirit to come?—This call for 40 days of prayer requires that the Holy Spirit be poured out upon us *on a day that WE have selected to receive it.* But this is totally improper. We are not to give the orders for our heavenly Father to obey. Nor are we to set times for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

“We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.”—*Evangelism, 221.*

When Ellen White arrived for a church business meeting, it was suggested that several days should first be spent in prayer. But she knew that praying and working, earnest working and earnest praying was the practical solution.

“Some have said that they thought that at this meeting several days ought to be spent in prayer to God for the Holy Spirit, as at the day of Pentecost. I wish to say to you that the business which may be carried on at this meeting is just as much a part of the service of God as is prayer. The business meeting is to be just as much under the dictation of the Spirit as the prayer meeting. There is danger of our getting a sentimental, impulsive religion . . . Every line of business carried on here is to be in accordance with the principles of heaven.”—*3 Selected Messages, 336.*

“Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come. There are persons in the church who are not converted, and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. We must pray more, and talk less.”—*1 Selected Messages, 122.*

An experience in praying for the Holy Spirit—In the late 1950s, a group of Adventist believers in southern California decided to pray until they received the power of the Holy Spirit. An Advent believer who had dropped in and prayed with them one day told me about what he discovered there.

Unlike this present group, that earlier one had not made any special demands for the power to be bestowed on them on a certain day. But they got into trouble anyway.

One day, my friend stopped in and talked with them. He learned that they had started out with a very sincere desire. At first, they asked God for the Holy Spirit. One day turned into another. By this time, several weeks had elapsed.

My friend prayed with them for a couple hours. By

their prayers, he sensed that the group was beginning to feel desperate. What I was next told, I shall never forget: He said they were demanding that the Holy Spirit be given, and some were praying, “Give us something; give us anything!”

Something was given. A little later on, they received a spirit manifestation—of evil spirits.

What was the problem here?

First, they were not praying for specific needs for themselves and others. It is all right to pray for generalities, but when men only pray day after day for something that they-knew-not-what it is; theirs is not a Heaven-indicted prayer. It is not Biblical.

Second, They only prayed.

But, someone will ask, “Is not that is what they did in the first chapter of Acts—just pray for ten days?”

No, it is not. After hearing the above story, in the early 1960s, I did some thoughtful checking into this subject. Here is what I discovered:

The experience in Acts 1—First, the disciples did not pray for 40 days. In fact, they did not pray steadily for 10 days! They did not even pray together, steadily, for a full 12 hours at a time!

The Lord was guiding them, and they prayed in a balanced manner. The way they prayed is a lesson for us today.

They had definite times for prayer, a variety of purposes they were praying for, and they took definite breaks for conversation with one another, study of God’s Word,—and witnessing outside of the Upper Room. *Here is what the Bible tells us:*

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”—*Luke 24:49-52.*

But do not stop there! Read the next verse,—the last verse in the book of Luke:

“And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”—*Luke 24:53.*

They were doing that during those ten days! Jesus told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the fuller measure of the Holy Spirit’s guidance. We know that they received it ten days later. —But throughout those ten days, they spent a significant part of the time in the Temple praising God and witnessing to the people! This was balanced praying! It was “pray and work, work and pray,” just as we today are to do.

Christ’s command was that they remain in Jerusalem, not that they had to pray incessantly.

“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John

truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”—*Acts 1:4-5.*

And Christ specifically said they were not to know how long they were to wait. *It was not for them to set a date for the Spirit to arrive.*

“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”—*Acts 1:7.*

And what would be the primary object of this greatly increased spiritual help? It was to share the truth about godly, obedient living through the enabling grace of Christ.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”—*Acts 1:8.*

Upon returning to Jerusalem, the men made their temporary home in the Upper Room (*Acts 1:12-13*). Several godly women would join them during each day, and, when not witnessing in the city, they would earnestly pray together.

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”—*Luke 1:14.*

But, in addition to prayer, they recalled the words and commands earlier given by Christ, and, we know they took time out from praying to discuss an important organizational matter (*Acts 1:15-26*).

Later, after receiving the Holy Spirit, just as they had done during those initial ten days, they continued witnessing throughout the city (*Acts 2:46-47; 5:42*).

Does the Spirit of Prophecy confirm my presentation here of what happened during that ten-day waiting period? Yes, it does.

“In obedience to Christ’s command, they waited in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father—the outpouring of the Spirit. They did not wait in idleness. The record says that they were ‘continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.’ *Luke 24:53.* They also met together to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 35.*

What else did they do during those ten days? They prayed with several purposes in mind. In the above passage, it says that they “met together to present their requests.” They prayed for definite help and guidance. We are told what they prayed for in *Acts of the Apostles, 35-37. Here are several key points:*

Hitherto they had asked nothing, but now they asked for more and more (*pp. 35-36*). They humbled their hearts in repentance and confessed their unbelief. They recalled the words of Jesus (*p. 36*). They pled for greater ability to witness and bring souls to Christ. They drew nearer and nearer to God. Deeper and deeper was their heart searching. Their burden for

souls kept increasing. They also prayed for the gift of the Holy Spirit (p. 37).

What does God not give us?—In answer to earnest prayer, God gives us forgiveness, guidance in our daily duties, and greater efficiency in witnessing for Him. But He does not give us *innate power, wisdom, and might*. It is only as we continue clinging to Him, moment by moment, that God can use us in His work. As soon as a man thinks he is capable of himself, he becomes satisfied and conceit begins. He then becomes useless. God cannot use a proud man.

Another error to guard against: We are repeatedly told that the Holy Spirit is to use us; we are not to think that we use Him. We do not decide what we will do. We do not set dates for when He is to work in and through us. We do not dictate terms to God.

It is a sincere objective to want to pray for 40 days till July 7, so that the church will be enabled to give the final message to the world. But we are told that the method for fulfilling the glorious fulfillment of that objective is old-fashioned “faith, prayer, and work.”

“Were every one of you a living missionary, the message for this time would speedily be proclaimed in all countries, to every people and nation and tongue. This is the work that must be done before Christ shall come in power and great glory. I call upon the church to pray earnestly that you may understand your responsibilities. Are you individually laborers together with God? If not, why not? When do you mean to do your heaven-appointed work? For all who are disheartened there is but one remedy,—faith, prayer, and work.”—*6 Testimonies*, 438.

Here are additional guidelines from God's Inspired Writings which will help direct our steps as we seek to for a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit, to use us more effectively in these last days.

There are so many which could be quoted, but here are a number of high points which will help guide you to better understand the work He wants to do in your life:

The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives—In preparation for this study, I came across these important passages. Here are principles we should know and things we should pray for, as we seek for the promised blessing of the Spirit:

God will never turn away prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance (*MB 132*), for God's people need the special guidance of the Holy Spirit (*LS 438*). We are, by constant prayer, to seek for that guidance (*5T 243*).

The Holy Spirit's presence is given to those who wait humbly upon God (*GW 285*). He strengthens our hope and gives us assurance (*6T 415; PK 660*). He is given as our counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness

(*AA 49*). He guides us out of our perplexities (*ML 290*). He is given without measure to every follower of Christ, when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling (*MB 21*).

As we pray, the Holy Spirit gives us genuine sorrow for sin (*DA 300*), so we will confess and forsake it. The Holy Spirit is given to keep believers from sinning (*DA 311*). As we cooperate, He is given to enable us to overcome all hereditary and environmental tendencies to evil (*DA 671*). God strengthens His people by the Holy Spirit so they can do His will (*PK 487*). The Holy Spirit works in us so that we may work out our own salvation (*4BC 1167; MYP 147*). He purifies our hearts (*PK 660; 8T 19*). He enables us to control our appetites and passions (*CT 20*). An entire transformation of character may be wrought within us by the Holy Spirit (*6BC 1117*).

God will not hear our prayers if we regard iniquity in our hearts (*PP 584; 1T 214*). It is urgent that the voice of the Holy Spirit be distinguished from the voice of the enemy (*TM 393*). Yet the willful commission of sin silences the voice of the Holy Spirit within us (*GC 472; MYP 114*). A continual refusal to repent is the most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit (*DA 324; 5 BC 1093*).

When we study God's Word, we should pray for the enlightenment of the Spirit (*TM 108*). The Holy Spirit will help us understand the Bible better (*AA 44; 3BC 1152; SC 91*). Those who prayerful study God's Word receive the Holy Spirit to guide them (*COL 36*). The work of the Holy Spirit is always in harmony with the Word of God (*AA 284*).

The Holy Spirit brings God's Word to our remembrance (*CSW 41*), teaches us how to ask for the things we need (*CH 380*), and guides us into all truth (*AA 51*). He transforms hearts and characters (*LS 323*). The Holy Spirit is provided to aid us in giving the Gospel message (*6T 244*), and convict souls of sin (*Ev 283*). As we seek Him, He endows us with special strength for our work (*GW 286*), and helps us in every difficulty (*PK 660; 6T 415*).

The Holy Spirit enables us to present the truth (*AA 51*) and reach men's hearts. He will help us open the treasures of truth to men (*COL 59*). He gives language and utterance to God's servants (*TM 405*).

God does not need any man to direct the work of the Holy Spirit (*TM 484*), and man should not try to do it (*CT 360; FE 436*). Do not seek to bring God into conformity to your wishes (*2T 149*).

Invaluable information is within this brief study, which will help you in the days ahead. With this Scriptural background, you should be better able to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you, day by day. We need it, for we are so near to the end of time. —*vf*