

Pray for the Nation

Why Pray?

1. **We have needs.** (*Matthew 6:32*) Our needs are both physical (food, clothing, shelter, health, oppression, etc.) and spiritual (rising of our enemies, despair, loneliness, guilt, fear, etc.).
2. **We are generally helpless** and powerless to meet those needs.
3. **God**, on the other hand, **is powerful** and capable of meeting any of our needs, so we need God.
4. **God wants to bless us** and He will answer our prayers faithfully. (*Matthew 7:11; 1 John 5:14, 15*)
5. **God tells us to pray.** (*1 Peter 5:6-7*)
6. **The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person accomplishes much.** (*James 5:16*)

Why Pray for Our Nation?

1. **Paul exhorts us** to do so.
2. **Government can establish an environment** which
 - a. Allows us to lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and reverence, and which
 - b. Facilitates the preaching of the gospel. (Ever imagine trying to preach in a place like China or North Korea against government opposition?)
3. **This is good** and acceptable to God. (*1 Timothy 2:1-2*)
4. **The authorities** that exist are appointed by God and **are God's ministers.** (*Romans 13:1, 4, 6*)
5. **Righteousness exalts a nation**, but sin is a disgrace to any people. (*Proverbs 14:34*) (Think of state-sponsored abortion, government-approved homosexual "marriages," rampant and public drunkenness, sexual immorality, uncleanness, profanity, etc.)
6. **God raises up nations:**
 - a. Egypt (under Joseph, *Genesis 37-50*)
 - b. Israel (under Egyptian guardianship, then under Moses, *Exodus 1*)
 - c. Tyre (*Ezekiel 28:14*)
 - d. Assyria (*Isaiah 19:25*)
 - e. Babylon (*Daniel 2:37-38*)
7. **God destroys nations:**
See above list (Daniel 2:21, so by extension, every nation that has ever risen or fallen)
8. **Struggles occur in heavenly places** concerning the rise and fall of kingdoms. (*Daniel 10*)

How Can We Make Our Prayers More Fervent?

1. We must lift up "**holy hands**, without wrath and doubting." (*1 Timothy 2:8*)
2. We must ask **in faith**, with no doubting. (*James 1:6*) Compare the example of Daniel's three friends. They had no doubt in *God's power*, although they could not, of course, know what *God's answer* would be. (*Daniel 3:16-18*)
3. We must **avoid** making purely **selfish requests.** (*James 4:3*)
4. **Fasting** can help your voice be heard on high (*Isaiah 58:3-5*) because
 - a. Fasting is **one way to humble ourselves.** (*Psalms 69:10; Joel 2:12-13*) Examples include
 - i. The Day of Atonement (*Leviticus 23:26-32*, "afflict your souls," three times; compare *Zechariah 7:5*)
 - ii. Moses, because of the people's sins (*Deuteronomy 9:18*)
 - iii. David, when praying for his child (*2 Samuel 12:16*)
 - iv. Ninevites, seeking to avoid God's wrath (*Jonah 3:5*)
 - v. Ezra and company, seeking God's protection (*Ezra 8:21-23*)
 - b. **Jesus** practiced fasting, apparently **in preparation for temptation.** (*Matthew 4:1-11*)
 - c. Other **godly individuals** practiced fasting
 - i. Nehemiah (*Nehemiah 1:4*)
 - ii. Daniel (*Daniel 9:3*)
 - iii. Anna (*Luke 2:37*)
 - iv. John's disciples (*Matthew 9:14*)
 - v. Cornelius, a non-Jew (*Acts 10:30*, KJV, NKJV)
 - d. **Jesus instructed us** about fasting. (*Matthew 6:15-18; 9:15; 17:21*, NKJV, ESV)
 - e. **Paul instructed us** about fasting under certain circumstances. (*1 Corinthians 7:5*)
 - f. **The early church** – or at least some key individuals – practiced fasting (when sending out Barnabas and Saul, *Acts 13:2-3*; when appointing elders, *Acts 14:23*)

May our prayers for this nation be as fervent as possible.

Gary Copeland, October 2008