

“These chapter reviews from Iverna’s book, God and I, have appeared on the Lion Cubs page of the ITM website during 2005. They are timeless insights and divine revelation that add up to truth.”

God and I: Answers to all the questions you’ve ever asked about prayer. 1978

Insights from Iverna #1

Iverna discusses the definition and purpose of prayer in Chapter 1. Prayer is not a process, and not an end in itself. *It is a means to an end.* Our goal should not just be to pray, but to receive results of prayer – that indescribable fellowship with our Beloved One in the Holy Place. In other words, put more simply, ***prayer is the means to fellowship with God.***

Prayer should not be only a way of presenting God with a list of our wants and needs. It is to be a *dialogue* with Him – a two-way conversation. Too often we jabber away, caught up in our situations and all of the things that are on our minds, and we don’t even think that He may just have something to say. It always is worthwhile waiting for Him to speak. We may hear it as a “script” – He said—I said – or we may have a fresh “knowing” in our spirits that He has brought revelation or enlightenment in certain areas. They may be things we have been considering or something He wants us to consider.

When we make our hearts’ desires known to Him, or present Him with other people for whom we are interceding, it ***gives God the moral right to act*** in the situations we bring before Him. It’s His invitation from us to intervene (“*Thy Kingdom come, Lord, Your rulership, right here in my life!*”) and a powerful tool in the hands of believers.

We learn to pray by praying – not reading books on prayer or going to prayer seminars and listening to sermons on the subject. We can also learn by listening to others pray, but not for the purpose of imitating how they pray, or for memorizing what we’ve heard. Our prayers should be personal and meaningful to us. One of the best ways of learning to pray is to literally ***pray the Word.*** When we find something that relates to where we are, we pray it back to the Father. The Psalms are a great place to employ this.

When you comprehend ***the purpose of prayer is to spend time with the Lord,*** you will also learn to establish a specific time to pray every day. One of the best ways to begin that time is to tell the Lord, “*I want to hear what You’re saying to me for today, and then I want to make my needs known to You.*” We can adopt any posture in prayer and we can pray quietly or aloud. The Scripture says to cry out, to pour out your heart, or to fall on your face before Him. We can pray in English with all of our understanding, or in the Spirit, which, by the way, is not always in other tongues, but we know that He knows exactly what needs to be covered in prayer (Rom.8:26,27).

Insights from Iverna #2

In Chapter 2 of this wonderful and insightful book, Iverna discusses How to Pray. Here we find down-to-earth, practical admonitions for our own prayer lives: Follow Jesus’ example: He had authority, and was powerful and effective in prayer. We should ***be honest and sincere*** in prayer, not with lofty vocabularies, phoniness, or pretense. Most important of all is to get to a place of having a right relationship with Jesus, not based on anything but our ***humble and contrite approach*** to Him, but it is as bonafide children of God, we come.

Iverna reminds us to ***be specific*** in **confession** and **repentance**, as well as in **making our requests known** to God. Finally, she instructs us to ***expect a return*** to specific prayer. Generalized requests will yield generalized results. We need to pray with as much fervency in prayer during those times when we are not as aware of needs – in the “good times.” When we are in crises, we think we know exactly how to pray, but there also needs to be growing prayer every day.

In Chapter 3, Iverna teaches from the prayer of Jabez, 1 Chronicles 4:10. Remember, this was written in 1978, prior to the present awareness and teaching on Jabez. When Jabez asked for God's blessing, ("*Bless me indeed*"), we should understand there are basically **three kinds of blessings**: the blessings OF the Lord, the blessings FROM the Lord, and the blessings received as we bless others.

The **blessing OF the Lord** refers to that incredible blessing of being aware of His spiritual and temporal presence. Let's recall that Moses said to God, "*If Your presence doesn't go with me, I'm not going!*" (Ex.33:15). We're not talking about just feeling good about God and other things; we're looking for that real life-flow from God. The blessing OF God.

The **blessing FROM God** can be thought of as His gifts. They can be spiritual giftings like the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the power of God working through His gifts in our lives producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:22,23). Or, they can be any of the temporal blessings we have simply because we belong to Him. There is a basic and vital question we must entertain: Do we want to be seen, recognized, and lauded for the power of God flowing through us, or do we truly want His presence?

Thirdly, the **blessing of "being a blessing."** "*Lord, make me a blessing*" is like saying, "*produce Your life in me so I will produce that life in others.*" It is not being important or recognized for His power, but being effective in ministry in the lives of others. There is a focus of difference. The focus is always on Him. But it is the **blessing of "usefulness."** We must spend time with God in prayer filling up before we can allow what we have of Him to flow out through our lives. God prepares His vessels to receive His promised blessings, and to be able to contain them. Jacob struggled with the angel of the Lord all night to get a blessing from God; and we want to pray for about 5 minutes to get the same thing. Jacob thought he was fighting to get what he wanted, but it was actually God who prevailed – getting Jacob to the place where He *could* bless him.

Insights from Iverna #3

In between discussing the phrases from the Jabez context (1Chron.4:10), Iverna inserts a chapter (#4) to consider a very important question: "Who Shall Stand?" It comes from Psalm 24. "*Who can ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His Holy Place?*" (Ps.24:3). Is this not needed as we come to Him in prayer – to be able to stand in His presence?

Iverna comments that this is talking about **abiding in His presence**. It is about *being there* with God. Who can stay in His presence? The Bible gives clear keys to remaining in the Kingdom of God – represented by the "*hill*" in our psalm. We must know how to go there, how we ascend into His presence, so we can go again. This also takes an acknowledgement that most of us do not stay there 24/7 no matter how much we wish we could.

In the book, Iverna points out that God takes us into His presence by the power of His Spirit but it is we who *descend* because of our inability to stay. When we try to climb back up His holy hill in our own strength, we fail. There are some things about our lives that only God can accomplish.

Psalm 24:4 answers the question of verse 3: "*He who hath clean hands, and a pure heart...*" The verse goes on, but Iverna pauses to consider what this means. **Clean hands**. She poses rather accurately that we have "*clean hands*" if we do what is right, and refrain from doing what is wrong. Hands would be representative of our "doings" and are not limited to just our "spiritual" lives, but all of our doings including "ministry." "*Clean hands*" then becomes the first qualification for ascending the hill of God. May we define that further as "*continual blessing of the Lord?* And we want to remain there.

Secondly, a "*pure heart.*" "Pure" means "empty" – empty of self, empty of our own problems, empty of everything else so that we can be filled to capacity with God. We could press that and include devoid of pretense, insincerity or falsehood as we approach God. He would see through all of that anyway, even if we deceive our own hearts.

Clean hands, purity of outward actions, reflect that inward holiness of attitudes, a pure heart. Both are a work of God's grace. We do have a part to play in this grace, however. Deliberate disobedience to God's Word will, of course, prevent us from standing in His presence or even from ascending the hill. How we should thank God for the gift of repentance! (Rom.2:4) And for the fact that the Holy Spirit prays for us and through us exactly what we need! (Rom.8:26,27).

Psalms 24 continues, revealing to us that **it is the "seekers" who will receive from God** (vv. 5,6). It's not the number of hours, not the amount of time spent in prayer, in His presence. What matters to God is the **quality of time** we spend with Him. Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. *His* righteousness because we have none of our own, and the world is totally lacking any.

It all boils down to **holiness**, a concept many of us recoil from because of the excesses in certain denominational interpretations of that in the past. But we *need* holy living to return to our ranks! No matter what life's circumstances present to us, positive or negative-to-the-point-of-miserable, we must learn to handle it all with holiness. **Handling life God's way.** Becoming more and more like Jesus every day (Rom.8:28,29). God will use every detail of our lives to answer our prayers for spiritual growth. We need only to submit them to Him in faith and trust.

Insights from Iverna #4

In Chapter 5, Iverna returns to a consideration of the prayer Jabez prayed. The second phrase reads, "*enlarge my coast.*" "Coast" refers to boundary, territory, or area. And the word "enlarge" means to "increase in every respect." Iverna declares that God begins with the enlargement of our hearts. "Heart" in the Hebrew concept includes the will, intellect, and emotions or feelings.

One thing that always seems to surprise us is that, **for God, cleansing must precede enlargement.** That involves bringing one's level of living, of appropriating what we know from His Word, up to our level of head knowledge. It means we must really walk according to His ways. And that usually requires us changing some things. God confronts prejudices, fears, and all other negatives in our actions and attitudes and moves to remove them from us. The reason for complete removal is that they tend to clog the flow of His Spirit through us to others.

God uses many means or methods to enlarge His children, including pulling back the rug of "success." When we have been successful in just about anything, we tend to rely on our great strategies for further accomplishments in similar situations. What "used to work" doesn't seem to produce the same wonderful results any longer. **God is determined that the old ways must pass away to make room for the enlarging.**

One of the "best" prayers we can repeat, often, is: "*Lord, increase in me a greater awareness of who You are, and who I am in You. Make me able to contain more of You and realize (truly) that I can do nothing without Your intervention.*" That is a good beginning upon which to build.

Walking with the Lord involves growing, and we resist that. We prefer comfort and things familiar. But God cannot enlarge anything about us if we remain planted in one place. Abraham just kept walking. And wherever there was no water, he dug a well. We don't do that. We look for the easy way, trying to find someone else's old well. We forget that the Holy Spirit in us **is** a well, a river (Jn.7:37-39). We contain Him and only have to uncap Him in our lives and allow the blessing to flow out to others. Praise is the beginning.

As we minister God's Word, that activates our well and enlarges our territory. When we add prayer to praise and begin to abide more in the Word, we will be astonished to watch springs of living water flow out through our own mouths. **So, what's next?** Keep on walking – appropriating, believing, accepting,

hearing, doing, listening, being. The enlarging of our coasts is a continuing reality only when we are looking to God to supply the enlargement, even where it looks impossible.

If we find ourselves in the desert – in a barren place – perhaps God is enlarging us by challenging us to cause the barren place to become fertile. God wants to enlarge us, we need to unclog the well.

Insights from Iverna #5

In chapter 6, Iverna returns to the discussion of Jabez's prayer found in 1 Chronicles 4:10. The third phrase is "*that thine hand might be with me.*" The Hebrew word is /yad/ and refers to an open palm. We may think of it as a giving hand.

When we pray for the hand of God to be with us, Iverna suggests there are four specific things we are requesting. **First, we are asking for His power and authority.** We can think of the authority that one received when he possessed the signet ring of the king. Such a person was authorized to speak for the king. In Acts 1:8, Jesus instructs His followers to wait until they have been endued with the Power of the Holy Spirit, and *then* they will become His witnesses to all the earth. Further, we can think of the authority we have to pray in the Name of Jesus (Jn.14:13,14). And, we are reminded that the one within us is greater than any other power that exists (1 Jn.4:4).

Secondly, we are asking for God's protection. If we are serving the Lord, reading the Word, being obedient, and covered by the Blood of Jesus, we can expect divine protection. Let us remember that "protection" can also mean "correction" if and when that is needed. The key to all this is in that humbling moment of relinquishment when we **honestly surrender** all we are and all we have to His control. "*Lord, I give to You my life, my possessions, my will, my mind, not having my own way. Come Lord, purge me, cleanse, me, purify me, transform me. Therein we shall find security, confidence, joy, and peace.*"

Third – there is provision in His hand. When we allow Him to be Lord, when we allow Him to choose the hows and whens of life, we can live in the truth of Psalm 104:28 – "*thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good.*"

And **finally**, when we ask for God to keep His hand on us, we **are asking for divine guidance**. Psalm 139:10 says, "*Even there shall thy hand lead me.*" Hard times or easy, God leads us. Ours is to check on our attitudes – do we want God's way or ours? Can we confidently pray, "*Change my desires if they do not line up with your will.*" As believers, we have the mind of Christ (Phil.2:5), but we must renew it (Rom.12:2) by being in the Word. What we want is to have a heart to embrace what we are reading – to become God-directed and Christ-centered. That **requires a teachable spirit**.

So, what is His desire for us? How can we become candidates for His hand to be upon us? We need to commit to Him *daily*, every detail of our lives. Our faith is stirred *daily* as we ingest His Word. We are to rejoice in all things, pray without ceasing, give thanks in everything – "*for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*" (1Thes.5:16-18). We ought not ask Him to show us His way and then continue in our own way!

Just as Jesus was to ascend to heaven, He blessed His disciples standing there in His presence (Lk.24:50). He lifted His hands as **He blessed them, and gave them power and authority, provisions and security, protection and guidance, knowledge and understanding.** May we stand in His presence every day, looking to Him for all things, expecting to receive as our faith expands.

Insights from Iverna #6

In Chapter 7, Iverna discusses the fourth phrase of the prayer of Jabez (1 Chron.4:10): "*keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!*" "Grieve" means "to carve up, to cause to worry, pain, or anger; to spoil by

breaking in pieces.” Basically, Jabez is saying, “*God, I don’t want to stray from You, that would fill me with grief! So, keep me from evil.*”

Most of the angers and resentments that cause us to walk in guilt and worry are the result of our sinning against ourselves. And it is hard to forgive ourselves. It is usually easier to forgive someone else! **Forgiveness.** We need to learn to extend it to others for part of our ability to forgive ourselves is tied into learning to grant it to others.

When we ask God to enlarge our hearts, and He does, we also need to ask Him to keep us from breaking. **Three things may cause us “to break.”** First, when He enlarges our hearts, we take on the compassion of Jesus for the sufferings of others. It is a heavy responsibility we assume when we carry others in our compassion – we have fragile bodies and can result in various physical illnesses, nervous breakdowns, mental and/or spiritual distresses of a variety of definitions. We must have Him close to carry that. And **there is a distinction between working *for* the Lord and working *with* Him.**

Secondly, we could break when we shoulder burdens the Lord never intended for us to bear. There are times we are tempted to take on responsibilities that are not ours, and we must be discerning. God may give another a burden He never intends you to carry, and vice a versa.

Thirdly, there are false burdens laid on us when other people demand more than we have to give. They want our time, energy, attention, counsel – and God never sent them to us, nor equipped us to carry their load. When other people become dependent on us, we must learn to wean them and turn them to the Lord for themselves. We can love, encourage, and exhort, but not carry them.

The enemy is always looking for opportunities to break us and our faith. If I’m “broken” (in the wrong way), I am *useless*. Jabez is praying, “*God, don’t let me become useless to You.*” But there are situations of our own making that also may cause God to cease using us. First, **we just need to grow up.** We tend to blame the enemy for everything “wrong” when the truth may be that God stops using us because of our own sins of the flesh, the manifestations of our carnal natures.

Another situation is when our faith is watered down because we have been listening to “garbage” – other people’s ramblings about what is *not* working in their lives. We need to pray for them the things we know work – God’s ways. In that way we minister *life* to them and to our own hearing. **We have the life of Jesus in us and can impart that to others.**

Further, we may feel *useless* to God because of our inherited negative traits, or characteristics learned through our negative life experiences. Truth is – **we are *not* trapped** by “*that’s just the way I am.*” We can help it. We can break any curses of generational traits. Hear Jabez: “*God, help me. Keep me from the evil that would break me. Deliver me from what does not glorify Your Name. Deliver me from everything that would hinder my usefulness to You.*”

We have been created in the image of Jesus; all things have become as new. We are new creations in Him (2Cor.5:17). God works in us to *will* before He works in us to *do* (Phil.2:13). We must stop resisting Him, demanding Him to answer our prayers the way we want. Our *wants* are not always what is *best* for us, but God knows it all.

Insights from Iverna #7

The final phrase in Jabez’s prayer is “*And God granted him that which he requested.*” What a testimony! The word “granted” in the original language indicates a progressive, continuing process. It was an answer that continued to unfold over a period of time.

Let’s review briefly. Jabez basically is praying: “*Bless me, Lord, because without the blessing of the Lord, I’m rendered useless. Enlarge my coast, Lord. Break down the walls, the prejudices, the barriers,*

and the hindrances in me and around me. Let God be increased and enlarged within me. Let my ministry to others be increased and enlarged without. O God, keep Your hand upon me. Let me know Your authority and Your protection, Your guidance and Your provision – and Your chastening too. Keep me from being handicapped by the things other persons and circumstances have put into my life. Let me have the name and the nature of the Lordship of Jesus Christ so that I might be preserved in wholeness, united with the Body of Christ.”

God does hear and answer our prayers. Sometimes we wait for answers as Daniel did (Dan.9). Sometimes we receive immediate answers; sometimes He answers before we call. What is important as we pray, whenever we pray, is to **maintain an attitude of expectancy toward Him**. Lack of that reveals a lack of faith. Sometimes we have to meet specific conditions for receiving from God, or, He may need time to set up the proper circumstances or events for the answer to come. Sometimes, He may say, “No” – but He will never ignore our prayers.

What may prevent answers from coming, or prayers being heard?

Iverna relates ten such problem areas as defined in the Word:

1) **Disobedience** or rebellion will block the channel to God. In John 9:31, it says, “*God heareth not sinners, but a worshipper He hears.*” Old Testament scriptures directly say He will not hear the rebellious (Deut.1:45; 1Sam.14:37;28:6). It takes repentance, forgiveness, and a fresh commitment to obey to clear up such situations.

2) **Secret sin** also blocks our communication to God. Psalm 66:18 – “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*” These are “hidden” sins that others may not see, but God knows – and we know. We must uproot such sin ourselves.

3) **Indifference** hinders. James 5:16 – it is the “*fervent prayer*” that is effective. We need to care enough to be specific, pray fervently, and expect an answer.

4) **Unmercifulness**. Proverbs 21:13 – “*whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall also cry himself, but shall not be heard.*” If we want mercy, we need to grant it, or our prayers are a waste of time and breath. “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*” (Mt.5:7).

5) **Instability**. James 1:6,7 – We are to ask in faith, not wavering, or we “*shall not receive anything of the Lord.*” A person who wavers is not in position to receive. He doesn’t know what he wants. God can’t answer our vague requests.

6) **Self-indulgence**. When we have selfish motives in prayer, James says we “*ask amiss*” and do not receive for we would “*consume it upon our lusts*” (Jas.4:3). There must be a heart-changing work that would precede God’s answering.

7) **Unforgiveness**. We must meet clear conditions in order to receive from God. In Mark 11:25,26 the instruction is that we are to forgive *before* God forgives us. That context concerns our “trespasses” – not our sin nature. God made provision for that at the Cross. Let’s recall the condition in the Lord’s Prayer (Mt.6). That should drive us to our knees all by itself! We are taught to pray, “*Lord help me forgive the guilty in my life, just as You have forgiven me!*” Unforgiveness in our lives is like a cork, stopping the flow of God.

8) **Unruly tongue**. Our thoughts and words need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit, lest we become involved in prideful boasting, gossip, innuendoes, or an accusing finger pointed at others. (Ps.15:3; Is.58:9).

9) **Dishonesty.** God does not hold our past against us, unless we are lying about it. He knows our hearts. He also does not hold our present against us, but we need to be honest.

10) **Husband-wife relationships.** 1 Peter 3:1,7 – wives are to be in “*subjection*” and husbands are to “*give honor.*” We are heirs together. Not following these admonitions will hinder our prayers. What power there is when families pray together (Mt.18:19).

Insights from Iverna #8

In Chapter 8 of God and I, Iverna discusses “Answered Prayer.” In the previous chapter review, we looked at 10 conditions that would hinder our prayers. She does not leave us in that precarious position, but continues by presenting a list of seven positive conditions that will greatly affect our praying.

- 1) **Confess His Word – to Him.** John 15:7 tells us that if we *abide* in Him, He will abide in us. He is saying that if we bring His Word to Him, He will honor it – “*ask what you will...*” In John 14 He already said that if we asked, He would do it (vs.13). God will keep His part when we keep ours.
- 2) **When we ask and believe, we receive.** Mark 11:24 gives us a very powerful, incredible promise. If we really believed what He says there (“*believe that ye receive then and ye shall have them*”), receiving answers to our requests would be limitless! Iverna suggests that we should ask knowing that as we abide in Him, putting His ways ahead of our own, if our asking is “wrong,” He will change our desire (Ps. 37:4). We are not the Lord of our prayers, He is.
- 3) **When we seek wholeheartedly for what we need, He hears and responds.** Jeremiah 29:13 – we shall find Him when we seek Him with everything that is within us. Some teach to ask once and let it alone. It is hard to find scriptural support for that. Matthew 6:7 does say not to pray with “*vain repetitions.*” That refers to mindless, meaningless recitations of memorized words. Jesus wants us to be focused in prayer, and understand what we are doing. Remember Jacob wrestled with the angel of God and said, “*I will not let You go until You bless me!*” (Gen.32:26).
- 4) **Agree in prayer with someone else concerning a subject.** Matthew 18:19 – “*Where 2 or 3 are gathered... and agree....*” There is always a difference when two agree, rather than a single voice in prayer. That does not mean we should eliminate our time of private prayer in our prayer closets. Both are valid.
- 5) **Be a worshipper, doing His will.** John 9:31 – “*Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.*” We can have “*confidence*” that when we “*ask according to His will,*” God not only hears but grants our petitions (1Jn.5:13,14).
- 6) **Walk in obedience.** Closely related to the above, but here we focus on obedience as a *habitual practice*. 1 John 3:22 declares that “*we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*” On-going, habitual obedience to His Word, walking in conformity to His will. This takes a measure of maturity and trust in God. We need to have an attitude of the “Yes” response to Him regardless of what that may mean.
- 7) **Ask in His Name.** John 14:13 and 14 – “*And whatever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it.*” Jesus is serious here, but we need to meet all the conditions in prayer, not just this one of asking.

Blessings are always there with God, but if we never learn how to **claim them rightly**, they don't do us much good. When we meet the conditions, we can claim the blessings.

Insights from Iverna #9

Chapter 9 of God and I is entitled “Beware!” and with good reason. When one prays this prayer as Jabez did, that person *will* be heard by God and He *will* respond positively – keeping in mind the conditions we have set forth in this exposition and that God looks on the heart, etc. Iverna discusses 6 things the so-blessed person needs to heed.

- 1) **Beware of excessive enthusiasm.** When you begin to walk in this new-found dimension, you can become so thrilled with the evidence of God’s hand on your life you tend to over-do, over-work, and wear out. You could break into pieces. It is wisdom to **allow God to be Lord** of your schedule and calendar realizing if you feel the need to accept every little thing that comes your way, it can be unsundered pride. Pray, “*Teach me, Lord, how to do this.*”
- 2) **Beware of false burdens.** There is a way to know if something is from God or not. If your “new” burden can be released to the Lord in a relatively short time, it’s probably from Him. He says, “*My burden is light*” (Mt.11:30). **If this new burden disrupts your eating, sleeping, life in general, it probably is not one He gave you.** Pray, “*Release me, Lord from whatever is not from You.*” Trust that the Holy Spirit will pass it on to the one He chooses and equips to carry it.
- 3) **Beware of becoming people-pleasers.** This is insidious. If we are serving man, we cannot serve the Lord properly. It is often confusing. What we become involved in or with must line up totally with the Word of God. Study it. Even consider with Him what church you attend. Ask, “*Am I making a difference in this place? Am I demonstrating the free flow of the Spirit here?*” God will open opportunities for us; we must remain sensitive to His direction.
- 4) **Beware of legalism.** When God moves in a place, a church, man usually tries to bring it (Him) under his own control, and that puts them back under the law. Legalism can make us shut out the presence of the Lord who set us free – “*three prophecies and that’s all!*” (1Cor.14:29). It can also cut us off from fellowship with people, believers, who don’t believe exactly as we do. There is also an *inverse legalism* when one tries to do what God has forbidden just because someone else seems to get away with it. Do what God tells *you* to do. He will write His “law” on the hearts of individuals (Jer.31:33; Heb.8:10), and that could be different one from another. Walk with Him everywhere you go. Do nothing in excess (Phil.4:5), be free from the law (Gal.5:1), but do not cause your brother to stumble over your liberty (1Cor.10:24). Find the balance.
- 5) **Beware of criticism.** This concerns your being critical of others, other situations, etc. and speaking such words. You can never retrieve those words. Repentance and forgiveness can and should come, but **the words are out there forever.** Criticism is *not* the same as exhortation. Criticism only points to the negatives and does not result in improvement. Exhortation is for the purpose of edifying another. Criticism delays maturity, exhortation speeds it up. A critical spirit can spoil us, rendering us useless.
- 6) **Beware of discouragement.** In 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, Paul gives us a list of “but God” situations. “*troubled... yet not distressed...*” etc. “Troubled” refers to pressure, so this means we are not put into a place from which we cannot move. There is a way out – it is always Jesus. We must get our eyes off the problem and pray, “*Lord, which is the way out?*” He is the Door (Jn.10:9). Hebrews 13:5 reminds us that God will never leave us nor forsake us. If your circumstances press so that you can no longer feel His presence, it is because you don’t really *believe* He is still there! Jesus wants to find faith” when He returns (Lk.18:8). No matter how many blind alleys or ditches or clogged harbors you get into, back up, turn around, you will know His presence again! One great way to get out of your own “mire” is to minister to someone else. Minister faith and hope in God. Minister His Word to them and listen to it for yourself!

Insights from Iverna #10

“Diversionary Tactics” is the title of Chapter 10. The enemy of our souls sets up all sorts of ways to divert our energies from accomplishing what God sets before us intended for victory. Iverna helps us to understand that we have **positional authority with and from God**. We need to understand just who we are in Him (Eph.1 is a good place to begin!). There is great power in prayer, but too often, our purposes and resolve are diverted. Look at these Scriptures:

Mt.28:18 – Jesus says, “*All power is given to Me ... I give it to you.*”

Jn.14:12 – Jesus again: “*Not only will you do what I do, but greater things will you do.*”

Jn.17 – His prayer for us – wherein He says, “*I give you My Glory.*”

Mk.16:17,18 – There is nothing you cannot do as believers – heal the sick, raise the dead.

Rom.8:37 – We are “*more than conquerors*” through Jesus.

The enemy understands far more than we seem to and has devised various tactics to divert us from God’s full purpose for our lives. Paul warns us to not be ignorant of them (2Cor.2:11), but we are, by and large, very naïve. Some of the things he does to us today are reminiscent of how he tricked Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3).

First, the age old ploy is to get us to **question the Word of God**. “*Hath God said?*” Or, “*Did God really tell you that?*” From there, entertaining that query, it is an easy step to get us to do our own thing instead of God’s.

Second – he gets us to **question our standing with God**. He plants seeds of doubt in our minds so that we wonder if God really gave us a particular gift, or is it our imagination. We can then question everything about our relationship with God including our salvation.

Third – he gets us to **exaggerate our devotion to God** so that it becomes a stumbling block to us and others. We go to church 24/7; we’re always “with the Lord” to the neglect of the home, our work, our families. We don’t get involved in community events because they’re “not of God.” We become separated to the extreme in our own little “bless me” clubs. It is exclusivity and spiritual snobbery. Jesus said we are to be *in the world, not of it* (Jn.17). In the Sermon on the Mount, He called us to be light and salt (Mt.5:13-16). We need a place in our worlds to do and be that.

A fourth diversion is in the form of **interruptions**. When we *intend* to go to prayer, an urgent phone call comes in, or a demanding knock on the door, or another human cry for help. All may be valid needs, but they may not be right for you to minister to at that moment, they may not have been sent by God. Human nature can be fooled but the Spirit of God is never deceived. In Acts 16, we read a story of Paul and Silas, on their way to the House of Prayer. A demonized woman comes along proclaiming what may have *sounded right* in what she said, but that doesn’t mean the situation was right at all. Long story short, the place of prayer for these men was changed. They were imprisoned. *We* would gripe and complain and whine, but they just prayed and praised God! **Their purpose was not diverted but any interruptions of the devil!**

Survival is not God’s goal for our lives. He is producing something in us – He expects fruit (Jn.15). Peter said the “*triumph of our faith is precious*” to God (1Pet.1:7). For Paul and Silas, everything looked negative – except they knew God is greater than the circumstances. When we refuse to be hindered or thwarted or diverted from prayer, real victory is sure to follow! Read the rest of the story in Acts 16. Their prayer of faith gave God the right to act in their cause.

Insights from Iverna #11

“Faith and Intercession.” Chapter 11 addresses this most important of understandings. There is a moment when we come to realize **we can stand on the promises of God**. We *know* He has borne our afflictions (Is.53:4) – we are healed by *His* stripes (Is.53:5) – we don’t have to be sick. We can claim His

Word for divine health (Ex.15:26). But faith is not simply a *feeling* that a thing is so! It's not *how* we feel or the special words we might pray. **Prayer is based on Who He is and what He has promised**, not on our faith or lack of it. We could say the same about answers to prayer. It's not about us. It's about Him.

Faith is not our ability to see an unseen thing and then order God around in Jesus' Name. It is His ability to order us around *because we believe* in what He says. Faith is not presumption. It is not denying the existence of symptoms. It does not come by will power, but by the hearing of the Word of God that our ears have been opened by Him to receive. Faith is not just talking about what God can do, it is appropriating His promises for our lives.

The Greek word, */pistis/*, translated "faith," refers to that quality of **total reliance on the word of another**. Faith grows; it will increase; and it does all that as we are saturating ourselves in the Word (Rom.10:17). Our faith can be shared with another to such a degree that they will take hold of God for themselves in agreement with our faith. When we pray, in faith, we do not have to tell God how to respond, how to answer our prayers. His ways are not our ways (Is.55:8,9), His ways are *better!* **Prayer gives Him the moral right to handle our things His way.**

Sometimes, God delays His answer to our requests because there are things in us that need to come into correction and/or balance. Our repeated prayers reveal our compassion in intercession for another. Colossians 3:12 speaks of "*bowels of mercies.*" That refers to the womb of our being – that part of us which can literally travail and bring forth something. We have lost much of that today, becoming careless, even flippant as we approach God. Faithful intercession must return to the church.

As long as we hold onto any unfounded "right" to be critical of how things are going in the church, as long as we find fault and judge others, **God will delay**. When we see things out of scriptural order in the church, we dare not spread our findings or bear tales, but head for our own prayer closets and talk to God alone. Galatians 6:2 instructs us to "*bear one another's burdens*" and we can do that by praying in English and in the Spirit, *knowing that he knows what we do not!* (Rom.8:27).

When we are living us children of the King, full of the faith that comes from knowing who we are in the Lord, God is able to trust us so much He can actually share His own heart with us, and give us "prayer burdens." Let us be attentive to what He speaks to each one individually, and not try to carry the burdens just because a need arises, or because a brother is fervently carrying what God has given to him. **When God inspires our praying, Father hears and answers.**

Recall the story of Peter in Acts 12. He was in prison; the church was meeting and fervently praying for his release. An angel of the Lord delivered Peter out of the jail, past the guards, into the street, and departed. All the while, Peter thought it was a vision until he came to himself in the city. And there he stood. But **Peter knew he couldn't just stand there in his new-found freedom**, he had to move forward. And that he did. And so must we. He first went to the intercessors to testify of all that happened, and then he departed to another place (vs.17). When we just focus on the goal of prayer (Peter's release) instead of on the One who set the goal, we fail to move on as He would have us do.

Insights from Iverna #12

This is the final chapter in the book, God and I, entitled: "Supplication for Successful Saints." Iverna points out that there are actually few references in the Bible instructing believers to pray for unbelievers. In John 17, even Jesus prays for His "own," not for the world. So, are we to be unconcerned for them? Of course not. We are to ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the harvest (Mt.9:38). But our personal responsibility is to walk in love and kindness toward everyone, *demonstrating* Christ to them. The lost can be saved by God alone, but He uses believers as His hands and love extended to them. It is our "*chaste conversation*" – our behavior – that testifies to the love and power of God most effectively (1Pet.3:1,2).

We are to *pray for one another* – to lift up the hands of holy men everywhere (1Tim.2:8); to get hold of God for one another. We tend to be crisis-oriented, praying for life’s crises: cancer, other serious illnesses, broken marriages, unemployment, children running rampant. But **the truth is, believers not in crisis or laden down with problems also need our prayers** – when things are going well, when they’re successful and prospering, when the Holy Spirit is moving in their lives, when families are all together, when there are no health issues, when they are walking in the Spirit. We can find an excellent example of how Paul prayed for believers in Colossians 1:1-20.

There are 2 Greek words used that are important for us to look at first, /proseuchomai/ means “to supplicate and make petition before God;” and second, /aiteo/ means “to ask for a particular thing to be given.” **Why should we pray in such a manner when people are sold out to God’s purposes?** There comes a greater attack on them than on what we might refer to as “nominal Christians” – born again and headed for heaven, but not exactly making waves here on this earth.

What should we pray? That God protects them – from discouragement. The more separated one is to God, the greater threat he or she is to the enemy’s plan, so the greater attack. In Colossians 1:9, Paul prays that they would “*be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.*” **That is a knowledge superior to the usual kind of knowledge and given by God to guide us daily.** It is beyond what man can comprehend in the natural, a knowledge that exceeds anything we could read in a book or even learn from listening to one of God’s servants.

We should pray that the mind of Christ saturate their minds with His own wisdom (Phil.2:5). We need His wisdom today, more than at any previous time in history. Our questions cannot be answered without having His mind operating in and through us. Recall James 1:5 that declares when we ask of God, He will give us wisdom – liberally. **God will equip us with everything we need to carry out His purposes.**

And we need *insight* - /sunesis/ - **spiritual understanding to know right from wrong.** It’s an operation of discernment and we need to be exercised, trained in discerning (Heb. 5:14; 1Jn.4). The Scripture warns us that even the elect can be deceived by false teachings (Mk.13:22). We should check everything spoken from anyone against what God says in His Word and then it must also be in accord with the witness of His Spirit within the believer. To do that, **we need to be studied** to know what He says (2Tim.2:15). Let us pray for one another that our hearts are open to hear His Truth and to adhere to what He reveals.

Paul continues in Colossians 1, verse 10: “*that ye might walk worthy of the Lord...*” “Walk” means “to order our behavior properly.” The next phrase says, “*unto all pleasing being fruitful...*” What Paul is getting at here is that **how we “walk” – behave – would reflect our love for God.** He’s saying, “*Come on up higher – come to the fullness and completeness we can only find in Jesus. Get rid of what does not please Him.*”

I believe we can press this to indicate that if we want to demonstrate light and power, **we must walk worthy of His entrusting to us.** Knowing His will is not as hard as walking in it consistently. So, we could pray – “*Lord, let everything You have given this person flow out of them to bless Your people.*” It’s a prayer that we will live right, do right, think right, feel right, look right, be right – in the sight of believers as well as the world. In Hebrews 10:24, the writer says we are to “*provoke one another to love and good works.*” That means “to agitate or stir up.” And, we are to “*avoid the appearance of evil*” (1Thes.5:22) and not develop pride because of how good we are.

Paul continues his prayer in Colossians 1:10 – “*increasing in the knowledge of God.*” God never changes (Heb.13:8; 1:11,12) but our concepts do. **Prayer is an invitation to God to intervene in a life** – yours or another’s. God is quite likely to point out something that needs to change in us. This phrase is asking that we would have an increases concept of who God is.

Verse 11: to be “*strengthened with all might...*” Here Paul is asking that they would be empowered with the might of God. **Strength is the inherent power a person has to do a job.** Here the word is /kratos/ - meaning a power which is manifested openly. God within is more than adequate to get the job done.

Then Paul’s phrase, “*...unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.*” We usually think of patience in respect to things, and longsuffering is patience toward people. **Both come from knowing who we are in Christ.** The word /chara/ (“joyfulness”) means “a calm cheerfulness in the face of whatever circumstances come our way.” This is a result of knowing Whom we have believed and being persuaded that he is able to keep this life we have committed to Him (2Tim.1:12). It doesn’t mean we’ll never face negative situations, but we will be able to handle them with joy.

Verse 12: “*Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet (or fit, ready, able, prepared) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*” **A thank-filled life prevents a pride-filled life.** Pride, of course, leads to destruction, and the lack of humility causes a downfall (Pr.16:18). God will reveal what we need to see about ourselves, especially pride, if we will be open and listen. Thus, we should pray for a thankful heart – in ourselves and in others. It will safe-guard against pride.

And finally, let us pray that *GOD* will get the church into divine order with Himself which each one being rightly related to one another. The prayer should begin: “***Lord work in ME to show Jesus to my world.***”