

# KINGDOM ADVANCING PRAYER

*Mark: 1:35 & Matt: 11: 11-12*

*From the desk of Elder Michael Scantlebury*

## Commitment

Jesus Christ calls for the Church to be a family of committed people. If He has called us to be this, then inevitably, operating with such an attitude will bring certain benefits - but how does this work out in real life?

I vividly remember an incident that occurred a number of years ago, where I was able to observe first hand; a stone wall being stolen. How was this possible? A whole wall cannot be stolen, but if the mortar holding the stones together is loosened then the task becomes much easier. It then becomes possible to remove the stones individually. What a powerful image of what happens when joining is not based on the "cement" of commitment! In a wall made of living stones however, some support each other, others are cut to fit; all join to make a wall that will not be broken. This is the picture of commitment to a church that the Lord God has planned for us, not an uncommitted floating between churches or just hanging around because of some unbiblical reason. The stones in the wall do not choose where they are placed, but rather they are positioned by the master builder.

Commitment means taking up a responsibility which restricts personal action and preference in favour of the Kingdom of God. This must involve a loss of independence and a corresponding gain of interdependence.

One of the things that we must realize is this - our commitment to the Lord and the church must result in the letting go of our personal fears or preferences in favour of obeying God's Word. As this is done there is what we call a symbiotic release. This in turn frees us to receive the support of those to whom He has joined us, blessing us with an interdependence which achieves more than we ever could achieve on our own.

Let us review the following passage - 1 Kings 19:19-21

“So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed over unto him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again; for what have I done to thee? And he returned from following him, and took the yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.” - ASV

We must realize that commitment may cost, but if it is real then there will be no turning back. For example, Elisha rejected his status as a landowner and farmer to follow Elijah. Elisha demonstrated his commitment to Elijah, completely turning aside from his former life.

Acts 5:1-14

“But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold some property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back some of the money for himself and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. Peter asked, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the money you got for the land? As long as it remained unsold, wasn't it your own? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? So how could you have conceived such a thing in your heart? You did not lie to men but to God!" When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized everyone who heard about it. The young men got up, wrapped him up, carried him outside, and buried him. After an interval of about three hours, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. So Peter asked her, "Tell me, did you sell the land for that price?" She answered, "Yes, that was the price." Then Peter said to her, "How could you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you outside as well." She instantly fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in, they found her dead. So they carried her out and buried her next to her husband. And great fear seized the whole church and everyone else who heard about this. Now many signs and wonders were continuously being performed by the apostles among the people. And they were all together in Solomon's Colonnade. None of the other people dared to join them, although the people continued to hold them in high regard. Nevertheless, still more believers, a vast number of both men and women, were being added to the Lord.” - ISV

The preceding passage reveals that a sense of joining goes beyond superficial actions and relies instead on trusting the Lord God to do His part. Ananias and Sapphira did not die because they did not give enough, but because they gave out of a wrong motivation. They were concerned with looking generous before the apostles while saving money for their own needs. This can happen with anything, not necessarily money only. These selfish desires prevented them from being fully joined to the church. Acts also goes on to show that true joining is not an easy process. Despite the awful and very public consequences of Ananias and Sapphira's actions, the church grew. People dared not join the church when they saw the magnitude of what this meant, but nevertheless, many were added by the Lord. The thing with that incident is that if you were merely looking in from the outside, you would not see the other side of the story and think that the apostles were unfair or unjust; but remember that there is always another side to every story.

This kind of joining is a call to live in the practice of the Lord's design, not just the potential. For this to become a reality, commitment must come from every member of the group.

There can be no passengers, only crew members, if there is to be an apostolic/prophetic thrust.

**In Hebrews 13:17** we read – “Yield to those leading you, and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.”

Here we are reminded of the role of leadership in this whole issue of commitment. Those in authority will be called upon to give account for their flock. In order to do this it is essential that they know who the members of the flock are – those who are committed to the vision, leadership and direction of the church. If those they lead also accept this authority and submit to it, a relationship of genuine commitment benefits the group.

A crucial part of this is the corporate experience in the Holy Spirit. If we are fused together in the Holy Spirit we become an apostolic/prophetic people. There is no room in this for a 'Lone Ranger' mentality, as anyone with a self-serving attitude will never be fully committed to the group, and any joining without commitment distracts from what the Lord has given us to do. The parts of a body are interrelated - when someone stands on our toe, our mouth or hand will protest. If we trust a part of our body to fulfill an action and it cannot, the task we set out to do risks failure. Only when the parts of the body share the same experience can we expect to release the benefits of commitment.

### **Some of The Benefits of Commitment:**

As we express commitment firstly to the Lord Jesus Christ and then to the Church He has placed us in we can expect:

- A developmental care that goes beyond just meeting needs. The church has always been seen as a place where people can receive help, love and care. Yet pastoral care without commitment provides little more than what Government Agencies and the like offer. When we commit ourselves to the leadership of a local church, the channel of God's grace is opened and there is flow which enables the leader to access His power for a given situation. This is not just a palliative care, but an active development of the word personally applied. The following passage speaks to this!

### **Galatians 6: 6-10:**

“The person who is taught the word should share all his goods with his teacher. Stop being deceived; God is not to be ridiculed. A person harvests whatever he plants. For the person who plants in his flesh will harvest decay from the flesh, but the person who plants in the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit. Let us not get tired of doing what is good, for at the right time we will reap a harvest-if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have the opportunity, let us

practice doing good to everyone, especially to the family of faith.” - ISV

- Developments in spiritual growth. There is a greater expectation to hear, receive and be affected by the lives of those around us. Luke 6:38 says 'give and it will be given to you'; the measure we 'give of ourselves' will be the measure we receive. When we 'set down roots', we belong to and own what is happening around us, and we are able to give and receive fully.
- The ability to receive apostolic impartation, and the revelation that flows from this. To fully receive this we must be joined to and be pursuing relationship, remembering that "he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. (Matt 10:41)
- Gaining spiritual protection against erroneous doctrine and devices of Satan - Hebrews 13:7-9 admonishes us to:

“Remember your leaders, those who have spoken God's word to you. Think about the impact of their lives, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today-and forever! Stop being carried away by all kinds of unusual teachings, for it is good that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by food laws that have never helped those who follow them.” - ISV

- Sharing of blessing (and pain) through involvement in family (community) life - Romans 12: 9-21

“Your love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to each other with mutual affection. Excel in showing respect for each other. Never be lazy in showing such devotion. Be on fire with the Spirit. Serve the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in trouble, and persistent in prayer. Supply the needs of the saints. Extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you. Keep on blessing them, and never curse them. Rejoice with those who are rejoicing. Cry with those who are crying. Live in harmony with each other. Do not be arrogant, but associate with humble people. Do not think that you are wiser than you really are. Do not pay anyone back evil for evil, but focus your thoughts on what is right in the sight of all people. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live in peace with all people. Do not take revenge, dear fiends, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me. I will pay them back, declares the Lord." But "if your enemy is hungry, feed

him. For if he is thirsty, give him a drink. If you do this, you will pile burning coals on his head." Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good." - ISV

Remember that Family is God's order - He sets the solitary into a family (Psalm 68:6)

- Ownership - a motivation and forward thrust that turns away from independence. This leads to an increased sense of belonging, just as God intended.

We need to reassess the value of what the Lord God has given us. There is no room for the 'loose canons' who ultimately damage the body with their need for independence. We should seek instead a commitment that will lead to genuine increase. When we are in the special place of belonging that the Lord has for us, we are then free to function as He intends. Only this committed joining will enable us to act as a truly apostolic/prophetic people.

## Prayer Guidelines

- We need to continue praying for that “family spirit” to be strong and operational in Dominion-Life International Ministries.
- Apostle Michael was invited to be a part of the Canadian Coalition of Apostles and will be attending its inaugural meeting March 16, 2006 – Pray for all of God’s will to be done through this. It is being presided over by Apostle Mel Mullen of Word of Life Church in Red Deer, Alberta.
- Keep lifting up Dr. Muqaddam Zia of Pakistan as he continues pressing forward in the purpose of God in his nation. You must be aware of the churches that were burnt down in Pakistan because of the ongoing protest of the cartoons of the prophet Mohammed that was published by a Danish newspaper. Plans are on the way for a visit to that nation in May 2006; do keep this in your prayers!
- Keep South Africa in your prayer as we solidify our position in that nation. Lift up Apostle Bret Wade and also Apostles John Higgins, David Van Der Walt and Glendon Hermanus.

**March 2006**

