

Provoked to Prayer

Acts 17: 16-33

1. **THINK:** As we talk of being provoked to prayer, comment on verse 30 from our text. "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man who he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." When you look around those in your workplace, neighborhood, family, coffee shop, etc., do you really see them as commanded by God to repent? **DO:** Commit to praying specifically for each one of these people on a regular basis? Do you think that might help you see them the way God sees them? How do you think praying for them cultivates a heart for them?

2. **THINK:** Think back over your life as a believer? What are some ways God has provoked your heart in the past? What are some ways you have seen your desire for God and prayers be fanned into flame? (For example: trials, stories of martyrs and missionaries, Scripture, etc. What else?) **DO:** Make a list of things in 2014 you want to use to fill your heart with vision for others that will result in praying for them, serving them and speaking truth to them? How do you want God to impart His heart to you this year?

3. **THINK:** You may find yourself numb or not provoked to pray for anything. Think through the list below and as the **DO** portion, circle or underline the issues that add to the numbing of your heart and steal the desire to pray from you.
 - Pre-Occupation with self: your needs, your wants, your desires, your food, your clothing, etc.
 - Dependency on yourself: you can handle it, you can meet your own needs. Remember that prayerlessness is a proclamation of independence from God
 - Focus more on social and political issues than spiritual issues
 - Sin in your heart that you have not dealt with
 - Personal disappointment, loss, trials, hardship and your struggle to believe God
 - Love of the world and its pleasures
 - Your time is more given to work and maintaining your own life than bringing life to others
 - You spend more time pumping darkness into your life (entertainment, gaming, worldly friends, provisions for the flesh, etc.) than you spending pumping light into your life (worship, personal devotional and prayer time, small group, ministry, etc.)
 - You don't believe God to meet your own needs, why would you pray for the needs of others
 - You do not lead a lifestyle of seeking God, but rather lead a lifestyle of complaining to God
 - You are weary of ministry, weary of seeking God, weary of trusting Him and tired of the waiting.
 - What other reasons might there be? _____

4. **THINK:** Are you afraid to wait upon the Lord and wait for His answers? What part might that play in your reluctance to pray or whether you are provoked and moved to prayer or

not? **DO:** Spend some time searching the Scriptures that address waiting on the Lord, praying to the Lord and the timing of the Lord. Do these encourage you to pray, knowing that seeking and waiting go hand in hand?

5. **THINK:** What do you want your prayer life to look like this year? A year from now, what do you want to be able to say about being provoked to pray? **DO:** See some suggestions below and incorporate the ones that ring true to you:
- I want to pray for my family on a daily basis
 - I want to pray for my neighbors, co-workers and extended family on a weekly or regular basis and tell them I am praying for them and even ask them for prayer requests
 - I want to pray for an unreached people group every day this year (see Joshua Project, Unreached People Group of the Day for a daily email)
 - I want to pray and focus on one of CPC's missionary families every week
 - I want to pray for my own walk with the Lord, for my soul and for my sanctification regularly
 - I want to seek the Lord regarding His intentions of why He has me in Indianapolis, my neighborhood, my workplace and at College Park. What would He want to do in me and through me this year?
6. **THINK:** Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, says Romans 10:17. If you know that a greater faith in your heart will produce a greater provoking to prayer, what do you desire in terms of your time in the Word and God filling your heart and mind with the water of His Word? **DO:** Write some goals regarding you and the Word. Write some goals concerning praying the Word back to God, memorizing His Word and other avenues of getting truth and light pumped into your life. Here are some suggestions:
- Pick a verse a week or a verse a month that you want to commit to memory, believe and live out in 2014
 - Find a couple biographies of martyrs, missionaries or other Christian leaders that will encourage you and that God might use to provoke you to grow and pray
 - Commit to attending special prayer times like the First Wednesdays at CPC, Fresh Encounter, First Friday Missions Prayer times and events during prayer week
 - Where is your theology weak? Find a book that CPC pastors endorse that will help you grow in this area
 - Go through the Growing and Connecting brochure and find opportunities that you can grow in your walk and also engage with others growing alongside you
 - Sign up for THINK|14 (do this very quickly as it will fill up fast)
 - Schedule several half days of prayer and seeking the Lord
 - Schedule a weekend retreat or two this year just to go and seek the Lord
 - How much of the Bible do you want to get through this year: the whole thing, just the New Testament or just the Old Testament. Commit and plan out what you will do

“You are no Christian if you do not pray. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. You have no inheritance among the people of God if you have never struggled with that Covenant Angel and come off the conqueror. Prayer is the indispensable mark of the true child of God.”

“The condition of the church may be very accurately gauged by its prayer meetings. So is the prayer meeting a grace-ometer, and from it we may judge the amount of divine working among a people. If God be near a church, it must pray. And if he be not there, one of the first tokens of his absence will be slothfulness in prayer.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon