A NEWSLETTER FROM THE DESK OF

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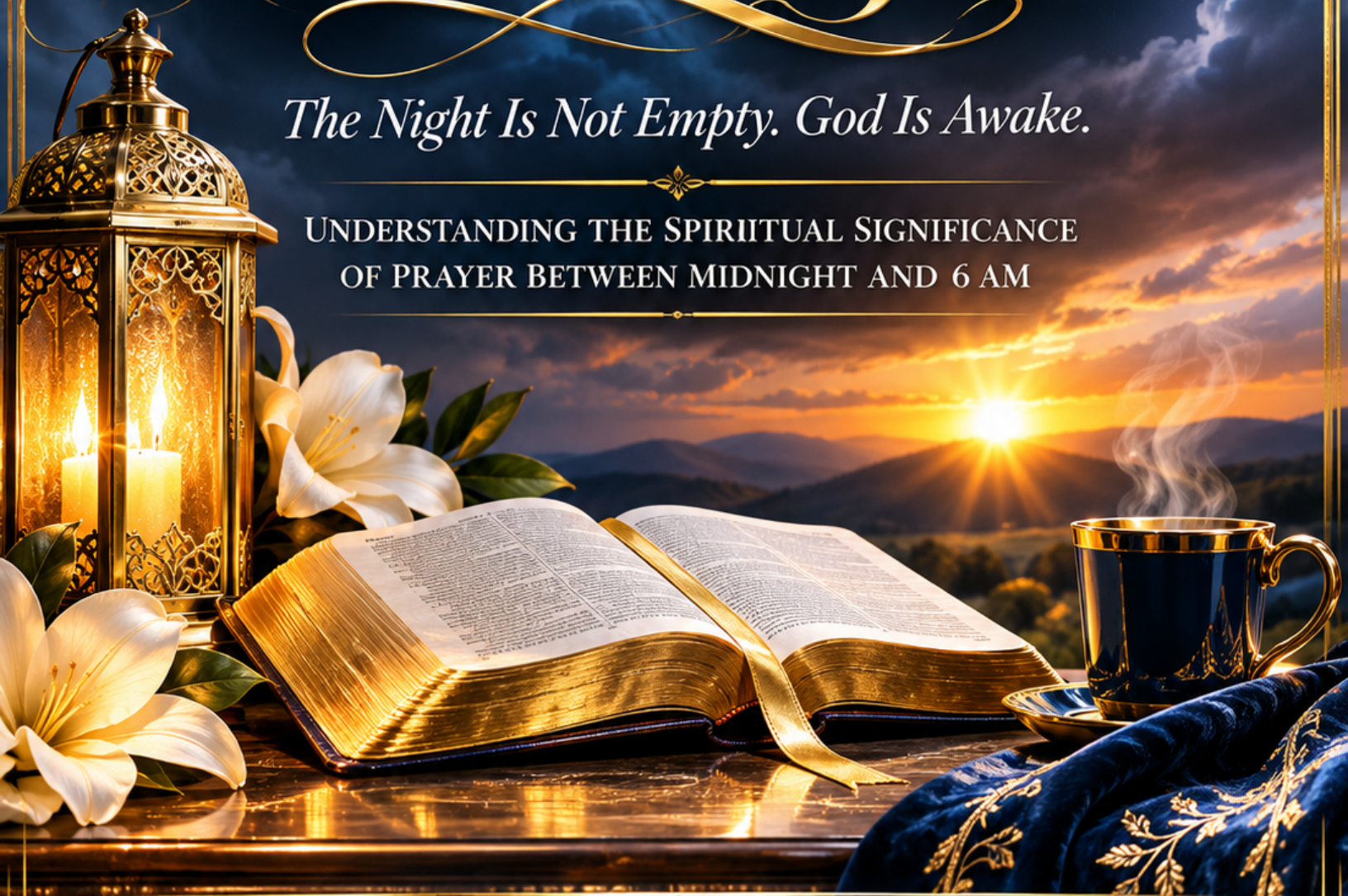
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT

The Night Is Not Empty. God Is Awake.

UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRIITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAYER BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND 6 AM



ENCOURAGING THE WEARY. EQUIPPING THE WATCHMEN. AWAKENING THE INTERCESSORS.

There is something about the stillness of the night that can make everything we are experiencing seem magnified. During the day, we are occupied with our responsibilities. We answer telephone calls, take care of our families, attend meetings, work, minister and concern ourselves with the needs of others. But when the house becomes still, the children are in bed, the dogs are no longer moving around, and the distractions of the day have disappeared, we are left alone with ourselves and everything we are going through.

For many people, that is the hardest part of the day.

It is during those hours that the tears begin to flow. The diagnosis becomes more frightening. The financial situation seems more overwhelming. The absence of a loved one becomes more apparent. The unanswered prayers, the disappointments and the uncertainty of tomorrow begin competing for our attention.

And it is often during these vulnerable moments that the enemy rears his ugly head, attempting to convince us that we are less than, that we will never recover, that we will never accomplish what God has called us to do, and that our circumstances will ultimately destroy us.

But I want to encourage you today, and I want you to understand something that I believe we must teach more extensively within the Body of Christ.

The very hours in which you feel most vulnerable can become some of the most intimate and spiritually significant hours of your prayer life.

What the enemy intends to use as an opportunity to discourage you can become an opportunity for you to draw closer to God, strengthen your faith and engage in powerful intercession.

Before we begin discussing the watches of the night, however, I need you to understand who owns the night.

“The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.”

— Psalm 74:16, KJV

The night belongs to God, too!

We have spent so much time discussing what the enemy does in the darkness that sometimes we fail to recognize what God has done, and continues to do, in those very same hours. His authority does not diminish when the sun goes down. His presence does not disappear

because the house becomes quiet. His ability to intervene in your circumstances is not restricted by the time of day.

God is still God at two o'clock in the morning.

When the Holidays Make the Night Feel Longer

As we enter this holiday season, my heart is especially concerned about those who are hurting. While many people are preparing for family gatherings, celebrations and beautiful moments with loved ones, others are simply trying to find the strength to make it through the season.

There are individuals who will sit at a Thanksgiving table and look at an empty chair. There are mothers and fathers who have not heard from their children. There are grandparents who desperately desire to see their grandchildren. There are people grieving loved ones who have passed away, and there are others grieving people who are still living.

There are individuals who are battling sickness, experiencing financial hardship, struggling in their marriages or privately dealing with circumstances they have never shared with anyone.

And sometimes, the expectation to be joyful during the holidays makes their pain even more difficult to bear.

I want you to know that God sees you. He sees beyond the smile you put on for everybody else. He knows what happens when you close your bedroom door. He knows the prayers you have prayed repeatedly and the tears that have fallen upon your pillow.

You do not have to manufacture happiness to qualify for the presence of God.

I find it particularly significant that when God announced the birth of Jesus Christ, He made that announcement to shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Luke 2:8–9 tells us that the angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

Think about that for a moment. Heaven's announcement of hope came in the darkness. God interrupted an ordinary night with an extraordinary revelation.

Never underestimate what God can reveal to you in a season when everything around you appears dark.

Your circumstances do not have to be perfect for God to minister to you. Your heart does not have to be free from grief for you to experience His presence. You do not have to have all the answers before you can come before Him.

Bring Him everything.

The Divine Partnership: You Are Not Praying Alone

One of the most important things I want to communicate through this newsletter is that when God impresses upon your heart to pray, He does not send you into prayer by yourself.

We must develop a deeper understanding of the intercessory ministry of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Too often, we approach prayer as though the entire responsibility rests upon our shoulders. We become concerned about whether we are praying correctly, whether we have prayed long enough, or whether we possess enough faith.

But Scripture reveals something extraordinary.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

— Hebrews 7:25, KJV

Jesus Christ is actively interceding for us!

His intercessory ministry did not end when He ascended into heaven. Romans 8:34 tells us that He is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.

I want you to understand the significance of that revelation. While you are sitting in your bedroom at midnight, struggling to find the words to express what you are experiencing, you have an Intercessor in heaven.

While you are praying for your children, your grandchildren, your health, your marriage or your future, Jesus Christ is interceding for you.

And when you reach the point where you do not even know what to pray, the Holy Spirit becomes actively involved.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

— Romans 8:26, KJV

This is divine partnership.

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. He understands what we cannot articulate. He intercedes according to the will of God, bringing our prayers into alignment with the purposes of the Father.

There are times when I believe God draws us into prayer because He desires for us to participate in something greater than our immediate circumstances. What begins as a prayer concerning our personal situation may develop into intercession for our family, our church, our community or someone we have never met.

This is why we must become sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God does not merely invite us to pray. Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, He helps us pray, intercedes for us and strengthens us as we participate in His purposes.

Understanding Spiritual Warfare and the Heavenly Realms

As an Apostle and intercessor, I believe it is imperative that we understand that prayer has spiritual significance beyond what we can perceive with our natural eyes.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

There is a spiritual dimension to the battles we encounter. This is why discernment is so important. We cannot afford to spend all our time fighting people while neglecting our spiritual responsibility to pray.

In prophetic and intercessory teaching, we often refer to the realm of spiritual opposition as the second heaven. Although Scripture does not explicitly define its boundaries, we find remarkable insight into spiritual conflict in Daniel chapter 10.

Daniel had been praying and seeking understanding from God. When the heavenly messenger finally arrived, he said something that every intercessor needs to understand.

"Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words."

— Daniel 10:12, KJV

From the first day!

Daniel had not yet received the answer, but heaven had already heard his prayer. The following verse reveals that spiritual opposition had occurred before the messenger reached him.

This is an important distinction. The absence of a visible manifestation does not necessarily mean that nothing is happening. The fact that you have not received an immediate answer does not mean that God has ignored your prayers.

When I speak about pushing through in prayer and disturbing the camp of the enemy, I am speaking about standing persistently in faith, exercising our authority in Christ and refusing to surrender our confidence in God because of what we see in the natural realm.

We must understand that our prayers are not merely words spoken into the atmosphere. Scripture teaches us that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much (James 5:16).

However, spiritual authority must always remain submitted to the sovereignty of God. Not every delayed answer is the result of spiritual opposition, and prayer is not a mechanism through which we control God's timing.

Our responsibility is to remain faithful, obedient and sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

God's responsibility is to accomplish His will.

The Power of Watchmen Praying in Unity

Imagine for a moment what is happening across the earth while you are awake praying.

Somewhere across your city, another intercessor is praying. Somewhere across this nation, another watchman is standing in the gap. Across continents and time zones, men and women are lifting their voices before the same Heavenly Father.

There is tremendous spiritual significance in unified intercession.

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night.”

— Isaiah 62:6, KJV

The responsibility of a watchman was to remain attentive, recognize approaching danger and alert those within the city. Spiritually, this provides a powerful illustration of the responsibility of intercessors.

We are called to be attentive, discerning, compassionate and obedient.

When intercessors come into agreement with the Word and the will of God, they participate in something greater than themselves.

Consider Acts chapter 12. Peter was imprisoned, but the church was praying. While Peter was being held under guard, believers were gathered together, making prayer unto God on his behalf.

The church could not physically release Peter, but the church could intercede.

And God intervened.

I believe we need to rediscover the significance of corporate intercession within our churches, our families and our communities. We need to spend less time discussing the problems and more time bringing those problems before God.

What would happen if we became as committed to praying for our communities as we are to discussing what is wrong with them?

What would happen if we began praying intentionally for our children, our grandchildren, our spiritual leaders, our marriages and our neighborhoods?

Intercessors, we must understand our responsibility. When God impresses someone upon your heart, pray for them. You may never know the circumstances they are experiencing or the significance of your obedience.

Your assignment is not to know everything.

Your assignment is to pray.

Understanding the Watches of the Night

In biblical times, the night was divided into watches. These were designated periods during which guards remained alert while others slept.

The New Testament reflects the Roman system of four night watches. Jesus Himself references these divisions in Mark 13:35.

Prayer Watch	Approximate Hours	Biblical Designation
First Watch	6 PM–9 PM	Evening
Second Watch	9 PM–12 AM	Midnight
Third Watch	12 AM–3 AM	Cockcrow
Fourth Watch	3 AM–6 AM	Morning

Although God hears our prayers at any hour, there are significant biblical events associated with the third and fourth watches that provide valuable instruction for intercessors.

These are the two watches I particularly want to address.

THE THIRD WATCH

Midnight to 3 AM

Perseverance • Praise • Deliverance • Spiritual Breakthrough

The third watch is particularly significant in intercessory teaching because of the biblical accounts associated with midnight, persistence, spiritual testing and deliverance.

Paul and Silas: Praise Before the Breakthrough

Acts 16:25–26 records that at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. They had been beaten, imprisoned and placed in stocks, yet they made a conscious decision to worship.

What I find particularly significant is that they did not wait until their circumstances changed before they began praising God.

They praised Him while they were still in prison. They praised Him while their bodies were still hurting. They praised Him while their feet were still restrained.

And the other prisoners heard them.

Suddenly, there was an earthquake. The foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors opened and everyone's bands were loosed.

Their experience was not simply about their personal deliverance. Their worship became a testimony to those around them, and the events that followed ultimately led to the salvation of the jailer and his household.

Sometimes, what God brings you through becomes the very thing He uses to minister to somebody else.

Do not underestimate the significance of your praise in the middle of your pain.

Israel: Deliverance at Midnight

Exodus chapter 12 records the solemn events surrounding the Passover and Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

After generations of oppression, God demonstrated His sovereignty over Pharaoh and the Egyptian empire.

What had appeared permanent was not permanent. What had existed for generations was not beyond the authority of God.

I want you to apply that principle to your own circumstances.

Do not confuse the longevity of a situation with its permanence. Just because something has existed for years does not mean it must define the remainder of your life.

God is not intimidated by the history of your circumstances.

Samson: Removing What Was Intended to Contain Him

Judges 16:3 records that Samson arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the city gate and carried them away.

The very structure intended to contain him became something he removed.

Although Samson's life also teaches us important lessons about obedience, accountability and the consequences of our decisions, this particular account reminds us that circumstances intended to restrict us are not necessarily beyond God's power.

The Friend at Midnight: Persistent Prayer

In Luke 11:5–13, Jesus teaches through the illustration of a man who goes to his friend's house at midnight seeking bread.

Through this account, Jesus emphasizes persistence in prayer and the goodness of our Heavenly Father.

There are people reading this newsletter who have become discouraged because they have been praying about the same situation for years.

I want to encourage you not to abandon your relationship with God because the answer has not manifested in the manner or within the timeframe you expected.

Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking.

But understand that persistent prayer is rooted in relationship, not desperation. You are approaching a Father who loves you, not attempting to persuade a stranger to care about you.

Peter: Failure Is Not the End of Your Assignment

Before the rooster crowed, Peter denied Jesus three times. Yet before Peter ever failed, Jesus had already prayed for him.

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

— Luke 22:32, KJV

Jesus knew Peter would experience failure, but He also knew Peter would experience restoration.

He saw beyond Peter's mistake. He saw beyond his shame. He saw beyond his tears and spoke concerning his future assignment.

Somebody needs to receive that revelation.

Your failure does not have to become your identity. Your mistake does not have to become your permanent residence. There is restoration beyond the place where you fell.

Prayer Focus for the Third Watch

When you feel led to pray between midnight and 3 AM, consider focusing your intercession on:

- Breaking agreement with fear, condemnation and discouragement.
- Deliverance from destructive patterns, spiritual bondage and generational cycles.
- Restoration of families, marriages and relationships.
- Protection over your children and grandchildren.
- Spiritual discernment, wisdom and divine direction.
- Strength for those experiencing sickness, grief and emotional distress.
- Persistent intercession concerning circumstances that appear impossible.
- Worship and thanksgiving before the manifestation of the answer.

Remember, the power is not in the hour itself. The power is in the God to whom you are praying.

THE FOURTH WATCH

3 AM to 6 AM

Divine Intervention • Protection • Preparation • A New Day Dawning

The fourth watch is the final portion of the night before morning. Throughout Scripture, we find remarkable accounts of divine intervention associated with the morning watch.

Jesus Came Walking Upon the Water

Matthew 14:25 declares:

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

The disciples had been struggling against contrary winds. They had been battling circumstances that were beyond their ability to control, and then Jesus came walking toward them.

What I want you to recognize is that Jesus was walking upon the very thing that was threatening them.

What was overwhelming to the disciples was beneath the feet of Jesus.

There are circumstances in your life right now that may appear overwhelming to you, but they are not overwhelming to God.

The disciples were initially afraid because they did not recognize Him. Jesus responded by saying:

"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

— Matthew 14:27, KJV

Sometimes we become so accustomed to anticipating another problem that we fail to recognize help when it arrives.

Do not become so acquainted with the storm that you fail to recognize the Savior.

God Fought for Israel During the Morning Watch

Exodus 14:24 records that during the morning watch, God looked upon the Egyptian forces through the pillar of fire and cloud and troubled their host.

Israel was trapped between an approaching army and the Red Sea. They were facing circumstances that could not be resolved through their natural strength.

But Moses had already declared:

"The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

— Exodus 14:14, KJV

There are battles that require your obedience, but there are also battles that require divine intervention.

Israel had to move when God instructed them to move, but Israel did not possess the power to divide the sea.

We must learn to distinguish between what God has assigned us to do and what only God can accomplish.

Stop exhausting yourself trying to divide a sea that only God can divide.

Deliverance Came During the Morning Watch

First Samuel 11:11 records that Saul and his forces came to the assistance of Jabesh Gilead during the morning watch.

A community facing tremendous danger received help.

This account reminds us that circumstances can change even when the situation appears desperate. What seems impossible from our perspective is not beyond God's ability to intervene.

Jesus Rose Before Daybreak to Pray

Mark 1:35 tells us that Jesus arose a great while before day, departed into a solitary place and prayed.

Before the crowds gathered, before the demands of ministry intensified, and before the responsibilities of the day began competing for His attention, Jesus communed with the Father.

There is a valuable lesson here for every believer.

Many of us awaken and immediately begin responding to the demands of the world. We check our telephones, our emails, our messages and our social media accounts before we have taken a moment to seek the presence of God.

What would happen if we became more intentional about seeking God's direction before allowing the demands of the day to consume our attention?

Prayer Focus for the Fourth Watch

When you feel led to pray between 3 AM and 6 AM, consider focusing your intercession on:

- Committing the coming day into the hands of God.
- Seeking divine wisdom and direction.
- Praying for protection over your household.
- Covering your children and grandchildren while they sleep.
- Interceding for churches, spiritual leaders, communities and nations.
- Asking God to reveal opportunities and establish divine connections.
- Praying for provision, restoration and healing.
- Thanking God for His faithfulness and surrendering your plans to His will.

The fourth watch reminds us that morning can be approaching even when we cannot yet see the light.

Scriptures to Strengthen You During the Night

Keep these Scriptures beside your bed. Meditate upon them. Declare them over your life. Allow the Word of God to become louder than the thoughts attempting to discourage you.

When your heart is overwhelmed — Lamentations 2:19

"Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord."

God can handle the entirety of what you are carrying. Pour out your heart before Him.

When you are struggling with your thoughts — Psalm 63:6

"When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."

Redirect your attention toward the character and faithfulness of God.

When you need encouragement — Psalm 42:8

"Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

Even in the darkness, God can give you a song.

When you are tempted to give up — Luke 18:1

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Do not allow discouragement to destroy your confidence in God.

When you feel forgotten — Isaiah 49:15–16

"Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

You are not invisible to your Heavenly Father.

When you are afraid — Psalm 91:5

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day."

The darkness does not diminish God's presence.

When you need to rest Psalm 4:8

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

When you have prayed, release your concerns into the hands of God.

Intercessors, Do Not Forget to Rest

I want to encourage every intercessor, every watchman, every mother, every grandmother, every spiritual leader and every individual who has become weary from carrying the concerns of others.

We must not become so consumed with spiritual warfare that we forget the peace of God. We must not become so focused on what the enemy is doing that we lose sight of what Jesus Christ has already accomplished.

We must also exercise discernment. Not every sleepless night is a spiritual assignment. Sometimes our bodies need attention, our emotions need support, and we need rest or professional care. Seeking help does not contradict our faith.

Even Jesus instructed His disciples to rest.

God never intended for us to carry the weight of the entire world upon our shoulders.

There is a time to pray, a time to stand, a time to act and a time to rest.

Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

> **— Psalm 121:4, KJV**

You do not have to stay awake for God to stay awake.

When you have prayed, trust Him. When you have interceded, trust Him. When you have done everything that you know to do, trust Him.

Your ability to rest can be an expression of your confidence in the One who never sleeps.

A Prayer for Those Who Are Awake Tonight

Heavenly Father, in the precious and mighty name of Jesus Christ, I lift up every individual reading this newsletter.

Father, You know the circumstances they are experiencing. You know the tears they have cried privately, the burdens they have carried silently and the questions they have struggled to answer.

I pray especially for those who are hurting during this holiday season. Minister to those who are grieving, those who are lonely, those who are battling sickness, those who are experiencing financial hardship and those who are struggling to find hope.

Father, let Your presence become greater in their awareness than the circumstances surrounding them.

In the name of Jesus, help them reject every lie that contradicts Your Word. Remind them that they are loved, that they are valuable and that their lives have purpose.

Strengthen the intercessors. Strengthen the watchmen. Restore those who have become weary in well-doing. Give us discernment to recognize Your leading and the wisdom to pray according to Your will.

Unite our hearts in prayer. As intercessors across this city, this nation and this world stand in the gap, let our prayers be motivated by love, obedience, compassion and spiritual understanding.

We lift up our children and our children's children. We lift up our marriages, our families, our churches and our communities.

Father, intervene where circumstances appear impossible. Bring restoration where there has been brokenness, healing where there has been woundedness, wisdom where there has been confusion and hope where there has been despair.

Thank You, Jesus, for Your ongoing ministry of intercession. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for helping us in our weakness and interceding when we do not know what to pray.

Father, teach us how to partner with You in prayer. Strengthen us to stand against spiritual opposition through the authority of Jesus Christ. Let the plans of the enemy be frustrated, and let Your will be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven.

And when we have finished praying, give us the peace to rest, knowing that You remain attentive to our lives.

In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

On the Other Side of Midnight

I want to leave you with this encouragement.

Your midnight is not necessarily the conclusion of your story. Throughout Scripture, we find that God met people in the darkness, delivered people in the darkness, spoke to people in the darkness and demonstrated His faithfulness before the emergence of morning.

If you find yourself awake at midnight, remember Paul and Silas. If you are waiting for an answer, remember Daniel. If you are struggling with the consequences of a mistake, remember Peter. If you feel trapped between impossible circumstances, remember Israel at the Red Sea.

And if you feel as though you have been rowing against the wind all night long, remember Jesus walking toward His disciples during the fourth watch.

Do not allow the enemy to convince you that God has abandoned you simply because you are experiencing a difficult season.

You are not forgotten. You are not without purpose. You are not without hope.

The same God who keeps you during the day keeps you during the night. The same Jesus who interceded for Peter is interceding for you. The same Holy Spirit who helps us in our weakness is available to strengthen you.

When God impresses upon your heart to pray, pray. When He leads you into intercession, stand in the gap. When He gives you a song in the night, sing it.

And when you have prayed, rest in the assurance that God is still God.

The night is not empty. God is awake. And you are not praying alone.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

— Psalm 30:5, KJV

With love and continued prayers,

Apostle Dr. Sheila R. Smith, PhD

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Sheila R. Smith, PhD, is an Apostle, Prophet, Overseer, transformational coach, author, biblical educator and entrepreneur. She is the Founder of Fresh Fire International Ministries, Inc., and Founder and CEO of Sacred Voice Restoration™ and Grandmas in Business™.

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ON THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT

Encouraging the Weary. Equipping the Watchmen. Awakening the Intercessors.

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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV).