

Chosen as a Spiritual Watchman

Keeping Appointments for Day and Night Watches

By James Goll



I have a calendar on which I write down my many diverse appointments. I am a widower, so at the beginning of every new year, the first thing that goes on my calendar is my four adult kids and their birthdays. But the four quickly became eight, as all of them married in a three-year time frame. So now I have eight appointments. Oh, mercy, those eight now have quickly become 14 and counting.

My calendar is so full of special appointments—and I would not miss one of them. These are times to celebrate life. I attempt to be prompt, prepared—and even bring gifts! I approach my appointments on God's calendar in the same manner. I agree with God's Word and declare that I am a chosen watchman! I show up expectant, ever ready, and prepared to pray.

I set apart in my yearly planning many of the prayer rallies across the nation and world. For instance, I reserve the first

Thursday in May every year for the National Day of Prayer—done. It is on my calendar and I will participate. The Day to Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem on the first Sunday in October—check mark. The Global Day of Prayer on the Day of Pentecost—I always set that date aside.

How about the Day of Atonement and Passover? Yes, I observe the major Jewish Feasts in some manner every year. These are hallowed days of worship and prayer unto the Lamb! For me, this too is a form of being a watchman on the walls.

Each of us has been chosen to be a watchman of the Lord in this generation. It is a calling. An assignment. And in whatever ways God calls you to pray, it should be a very strategic appointment on your calendar. We get an indication of the importance of our assignments in this exhortation from Isaiah 62:6–7:

*I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem;
they will never be silent day or night.
You who call on the Lord,
give yourselves no rest,
and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem
and makes her the praise of the earth.*

Our Biblical Mandate

The Greek word for watch is *grégoreó*, which means to be awake or vigilant. Dictionaries bring us a variety of definitions, including “keeping awake in order to guard,” “a close observation,” “to be on the alert,” and “to be alert.”

Over the years, I have heard a lot of teachings on what will

happen in the last days, most of it rather fear-based—such as storing up food, being prepared to protect yourself, and taking your money out of the bank. I rarely hear faith-building, edifying teaching concerning the believer's biblical response to those times. I am not saying that we shouldn't be prepared for difficult times. But I've read in God's Word: "Anything that is not done in faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23, *isv*).

So I continue to seek the Lord and ask to learn His will and His ways. I continue to search for the biblical response of wisdom and faith mingled together. Throughout my journey I have discovered that Jesus had a lot to say about this very subject. In fact, Jesus taught His disciples to "watch and pray."

What did Jesus say about how to live in the last days? Watch! (See Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.) I found that the word watch occurs 11 times in these three Gospels.

Wherever we are on God's timeline, we, as Jesus' disciples, have His command to watch with Him.

The beloved Apostle Paul echoed Jesus' mandate: "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful" (Col. 4:2). One key here is to walk in a sustained state of watching with prayer, even in the late-night shifts. Do it with thanksgiving. Or how about adding a little bit of praise? That will keep us going for sure.

My Personal History

This has been the case in my personal prayer life. For years, the Holy Spirit awakened me at 2:00 a.m. I would get up, go out to my living room, and sit in God's presence for a couple of hours. I did this for 20 straight years. Yes, it was a sacrifice. And yes, it became a delight!

Over the years, people have asked me questions about that time. "What did you do at 2:00 a.m.?" "Did you suffer from

sleep deprivation?”

But I learned that if I do what God wants me to do (watch and pray) then I will be successful in what I want to do (sleep.) Quite frankly, this is how dreams and visions were unfolded to me. Quietness is the incubation bed of revelation. So visions came when I sat quietly with Him, and dreams came when I went back to bed resting in a sweet sleep.

As my understanding and experience grew, I found that I was watching, being on the alert and responding in prayer to whatever the Holy Spirit wanted to reveal to me. Like a nursing mother doing the night feeding, I cared for and nurtured the burden of the Lord. Whatever was on His heart was on my heart. I was carrying His prayer concerns. These became lessons in not just praying to God, but praying with God. After all, Jesus ever lives to make intercession (Heb. 7:25).

Eventually I learned that watching is to sleeping as fasting is to eating. That revelation gave me perspective. It is a sacrifice pleasing to the Lord. So as I continued my study, I found the phrase watch and pray in Matthew 26:41 and Mark 14:38, which both declare, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

That statement is so true. My flesh is so weak and wants to check out! But hold on—as we look further, the benefits far outweigh the costs. Through watching and praying I receive grace to avoid temptation and maintain a pure walk with the Lord throughout the day.

Specific Watches in Scripture

There are 24 hours in a day—and biblical watches were divided into three-hour segments.¹ The following list includes only a few phrases used in the Word of God regarding various watches:

- Exodus 14:24: last watch of the night (the morning

watch)

- Psalm 130:5–6: waiting for the morning
- Matthew 14:25; Mark 6:48: the fourth watch
- Acts 3:1: the hour of prayer; 3:00 p.m.–the ninth hour
- Daniel 6:10: three times daily–Daniel’s custom
- Psalm 55:17: three times daily–David’s prayers (evening, morning, and noon).

We, too, can observe different types of watches in prayer at various times. Could it be that these diverse strategic watches are appointed for specific people to keep?

Yes! And often when people feel called to a prayer watch, each carries a specific theme.

One might be a devotional prayer watch. Another could be a time of revival intercession, reminding God of His promises and appointments not yet fulfilled. Another might be a spiritual warfare watch. Many people feel called to a governmental prayer watch or a crisis-intervention watch. Some people set aside time for prophetic intercession. I always include an Israel prayer watch and one for evangelism when I pray to “the Lord of the harvest . . . to send workers into the harvest field” (Matt. 9:38). And of course youth and young adults, especially, love a worship watch!

God is creative and there is variety in these watches and prayer applications. I love the diversity in the Body of Christ and the way He gives various burdens or assignments to His “watchmen on the walls.” But what are the tasks of these spiritual watchmen?

- Isaiah 62:6–7: to remind the Lord day and night of His promises
- Luke 18:1, 7: to be persistent in prayer to avenge His elect
- Habakkuk 2:1: to watch and see what the Lord will say
- Proverbs 8:34–35: to listen, wait, and watch daily

- 1 Peter 4:7: to be alert and of sober mind
- 1 Peter 5:8: to be vigilant (grégoreó); to be alert to the enemy's schemes
- Revelation 3:2: to bring things from death to life.²

Growth in the Prayer Movement

God seems to be strategically calling His people to prayer watches as never before. A little more than a decade ago there were only a handful of Houses of Prayer in North America. Today, there are more than 10,000 Houses of Prayer that combine worship and distinct prayer themes per watch—including David's Tent in Washington, D.C., and the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, MO. In the United States numerous statewide solemn assemblies of prayer and fasting come under the umbrellas of The Response, Awakening America Alliance, OneCry, National Day of Prayer, Intercessors for America, The Jericho Center with Dick Eastman, and other ministries.

Last year we saw gatherings in both Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. (Azusa Now with Lou Engle and The Call, and Together 2016 with Pulse and hundreds of ministry partners) that gathered the Next Generation in launching millennial movements of prayer and evangelism. Evangelical statesman Franklin Graham hosted prayer rallies in every state capital in the nation, lifting up a cry for crisis intervention and revival in America.

In addition there are national and international prayer networks and scores of local churches where prayer is at the center of everything they do. Ongoing Next Generation prayer movements include The Burn and Fire and Fragrance Schools.

This is good news for prayer warriors! There are new recruits constantly being trained. It is a new day with renewed momentum in the global worship and prayer movement!

A Personal Invitation to Make History

I grew up hearing different versions of this statement: “When God is about to do a mighty new thing, He always sets His people praying” (attributed to Jonathan Edwards and other revivalists). If that is the case, then if we keep seeing growing numbers of watchmen on the walls we might just be on the brink of another Great Awakening.

God is choosing and appointing watchmen to make history before the throne of Almighty God. I don't plan to miss that appointment! I encourage you not to miss your opportunity either.

Surrender to the Lord to be a valiant prayer warrior, seizing your appointment. Write this date in your journal. Decide today that you will enlist—or possibly reenlist—as a spiritual watchman for the purposes of God in your generation. What a destiny and high calling!

¹The first watch is at sunset, 6:00 p.m., the second watch at 9:00 p.m., the third watch at 12:00 a.m. midnight, and the fourth watch at 3:00 a.m.²I expand on these topics through curriculum and in my books: *The Lost Art of Intercession*, *The Prophetic Intercessor*, *Prayer Storm*, *Prayer for Israel's Destiny*, and *The Call to the Elijah Revolution* (encountersnetwork.com).

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The Task of The Watchman

“I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth” (Isaiah 62:6–7).

There is a movement of prayer, firmly rooted in Scripture, taking place all over the planet. It is the call of God to His people to take their places on the walls as watchmen. Whether we look to the Old Testament or the New, we find God is calling us to watch and pray.

Our modern culture does not readily identify with the ancient concept of watchmen on the walls. We need to train ourselves in what it means to be a part of this great company of the “alert.”

It is clear from the Isaiah 62 passage that the job of a watchman is a continual commitment. It is not sporadic. It does not depend upon feelings. Because of the life-or-death nature and constancy of the watchman’s task, it is an assignment for the many, not just the one. Isaiah describes an intensity that must be shared—day and night, never silent, no rest. Groups of committed believers who band together in watchful prayer will be able to stay at their post.

Notice also in this passage that it is God who posts the watchmen. This is a divine assignment, not just the latest prayer fad. To stand on the wall as a watchman, stationed there by the Lord Himself, is a great privilege. We need to receive and obey such a call with gratitude and humility. Perhaps the overwhelming characteristic of watchman prayer is that it is to be done with open eyes. This does not necessarily imply physical eyes (although it certainly can), but we must hold our spiritual eyes wide open.

What Do Watchmen Look For?

What are we, as watchmen looking for as we pray? First, we watch for an enemy attack. Certainly in Old Testament times, this sort of defensive watchfulness was at the heart of the task. The watchman on the wall was always on the alert for any attempt of an enemy to attack or infiltrate the city. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul wrote that we are “not unaware” of the enemy’s schemes. If praying watchmen are not on duty, we often fail to see the enemy’s attempts to disrupt and destroy our churches and cities.

Second, I believe that as watchmen, we are also to keep our eyes open to see and discern moves of God. The watcher should always be asking, “Lord, what are You doing in our church or city this day? Is there something You are calling Your people to do in cooperation with what You are doing?”

What Results Can We Expect?

According to Isaiah, one of the results of the watchmen’s prayers is that we will see the firm establishment of the Kingdom of God. The prophet speaks of the establishment of Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God among His people. In both the Old and the New Covenant, Jerusalem represents God among man. Jesus’ main message was the coming Kingdom, present in Him. Emmanuel—God with us!

Another result of this powerful prayer movement is that the glory of God will be seen among the nations. As we watch and pray, we find ourselves lining up with the prophet Habakkuk and crying out for the glory of God to cover the earth “as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

Prayer warriors, it is time to ascend the walls of your city and begin to fulfill your calling as watchmen of God.

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