

The Lifestyle OF A Watchman

A 21-DAY JOURNEY TO BECOMING A GUARDIAN IN PRAYER

JAMES W. GOLL

FOREWORD BY BENI JOHNSON



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With honor and gratitude in my heart, I dedicate this book to two people who are well known before the throne of God. They are both living legends of the message that history belongs to the intercessors. I would not be in the place of stature I am today without the shadows of these two diverse giants of the secret place touching my life: first, Dick Simmons of Men for Nations, based in Washington, D.C.; and second, Elizabeth (Beth) Alves of Increase International in Bulverde, Texas. Thank you for inspiring my life.

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Foreword

Many years ago I had a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. From that encounter, a deep hunger was birthed, and I fell in love with the Holy Spirit. I felt I could not get enough of Him. When my family left in the mornings, I turned on a worship CD and spent hours in His presence. I had been overtaken with the love of heaven.

In those times of worship, I began to experience prayer as I had never experienced it before. It took place in a deep place in my heart, and it felt as if my prayers were coming right from heaven, and all I did was agree with what heaven wanted to do.

It is in this intimate place with God, I learned, that we receive His heart, obtain His strategies and become His watchmen.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is 2 Samuel 18:24–27:

While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. The watchman called out to the king and reported it.

The king said, “If he is alone, he must have good news.” And the runner came closer and closer.

Then the watchman saw another runner, and he called down to the gatekeeper, “Look, another man running alone!”

The king said, “He must be bringing good news, too.”

The watchman said, “It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok.”

“He’s a good man,” the king said. “He comes with good news.”

What intrigues me about this passage is that the watchman had a seeing ability, and a very good one at that. He was able to discern who a man was just by the way he was running. That is impressive!

What an honor to be able to come before the Lord in prayer and to be able to see accurately with spirit eyes what God is doing, while having Him reveal to us how to pray. As watchmen, you and I can be in partnership with the King, just as the watchman on the wall was with King David.

As you read *The Lifestyle of a Watchman*, which James has written beautifully, know that there will be keys for you to implement. I pray that this book revolutionizes and refreshes your prayer walk with the Lord.

Beni Johnson, author, *Healthy and Free*
and *The Happy Intercessor*

Acknowledgments

First, I offer my thanks to the editorial and marketing teams of Chosen Books, with whom I have had the honor of working for close to twenty years now. Jane Campbell saw potential in my lump of clay when I did not. She helped me discover my voice and taught me how to reach my audience. I will always be grateful for Jane's imprint upon my life.

Next, I thank the Lord for my excellent assistant, Kathy Deering, who has helped me develop my teachings with a smooth and timeless devotional style. Oh, I am so grateful for Kathy's coming to my aid, time and time again.

I also thank the Lord for all of the mentors who have poured into my life over the years so that I could do a better job of bringing forth equipping materials that can further God's unfolding purposes throughout the earth.

Continuing on the wall,
James W. Goll

Introduction

I am inviting you to go on a journey with me. This book is your personal invitation from my heart and life to yours.

Imagine with me for a moment that you are in a cozy cabin in the mountains, nestled on a comfy couch next to the fireplace with a steaming mug of your favorite drink next to you. You notice a book on the table and think, *I wonder what that is?* You pick it up and read the title. It is this book, *The Lifestyle of a Watchman: A 21-Day Journey to Becoming a Guardian in Prayer*.

The idea of becoming a guardian in prayer appeals to you. You have long wanted to increase your devotion to God in prayer, and this book's 21-day approach makes that desire feel within reach. But then you wonder, *What is a watchman, actually? And how does it relate to my devotional prayer life or to intercessory prayer or to what some believers call spiritual warfare?*

You are about to find out.

But wait, your mind counters further. *I am so tired of boring prayer meetings that get off course and seem to go nowhere or everywhere. I don't want any more of those. Can I stay true to*

my personal time of communion with God and still become a watchman?

I assure you that you can. The emphasis of this book is less on prayer tips and more on creating a lifestyle, one in which prayer is mingled with worship and you are able to hear from the Lord and respond accordingly.

As you will see, a watchman is someone (male or female, of course) who has responded to God's invitation to intercede in prayer for particular types of needs. The lifestyle of a watchman is fairly hidden—even for a watchman who stands in plain sight on the “walls” of whatever he or she is guarding in prayer. Nobody but God sees the nights spent in watchful prayer, and only other watchmen can appreciate the joyful sacrifice of such a lifestyle.

The call to be a watchman is a call into grand adventures. It is laced with the quiet satisfaction of knowing the pleasure of the Lord, and it is underscored by the revelation that history belongs to the intercessors, the ones who watch faithfully. We are called to be co-laborers with Christ. What better way to do that than doing what Jesus does?

Intercession, you see, is Jesus' personal assignment, and we have the privilege of joining Him in it. Paul tells us, “Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). As intercessors, we get to watch with Him. There is no other way to do it.

The Format of This Book

I have divided our exploration of the watchman lifestyle into three sections: the lifestyle of *intimate intercession*, highlighting the story of Abraham; the lifestyle of *sacrifice*, focused on a widow named Anna; and the lifestyle of *consecration*,

exemplified by Daniel, the prophet in exile. I have brought together these three distinct elements, as I have found them necessary for anyone who wishes to be an effective watchman in prayer.

This book contains 21 daily readings. At the end of each day's reading, you will find a closing prayer and questions for your review, which can be used personally or in a group study. Each reading develops one aspect of the watchman theme, and by the end of your three-week journey, my hope is that you will be able to see how these concepts fit together. I further hope you will find yourself confirmed in your own personal intercessory assignment.

Also, after the first chapter in each section, the remaining daily readings in the sections conclude with stories of real-life people who exemplify certain aspects of being a watchman or prayer guardian. Some of them are biblical characters. Others' stories have been entered into the history books. A good number of them are current-day watchmen. These stories give you a chance to be encouraged by the cloud of witnesses called to this work. You also will see through these stories that this lifestyle has a variety of expressions.

This book is similar in format to my book *The Lifestyle of a Prophet: A 21-Day Journey to Embracing Your Calling*, published in 2013. Each of these books stands alone, addressing different subjects, but there is some overlap.

The Intention of This Book

Let me be clear about one thing. This book is not just about the making of great watchmen or great intercessors or a great company of priestly prayer warriors. It is, first and foremost, about being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to be a wholehearted follower of Jesus, conformed into His image (see

Romans 8:29). If you share that desire, this book was written for you. On this 21-day journey to becoming a guardian in prayer, the Lord Himself is our goal.

I am inviting you into my personal pilgrimage as an intercessory prayer warrior with this book. On this journey, one concept has made a huge difference for me in recent years. I do not know how I missed it when I was first learning the principles of prayer. It is the truth the New Testament reveals that can be stated as follows: “We are not working *toward* victory; we are working *from* victory.” Where intercessory prayer is concerned, that statement becomes “We are not praying *for* victory; we are praying *from* victory.”

This perspective alters a lot of things, and I am still in the process of letting it change my approach to watching in prayer. But more and more, everything I do and pray comes from my rock-solid faith that Jesus has won, once and for all, the victory. This brings a smile to my face and a dance to my step. I want to invite you into the same lifestyle.

God’s watchmen are joyful, prayerful men and women. They are not agitated. They do not moan or complain about the state of affairs. They enjoy what they do, even when it is difficult. As the psalmist says, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD’” (Psalm 122:1 NASB). When you realize you have an invitation to partner with God—not just to pray *to* Him but to pray *with* Him—it changes everything for the better.

So come along with me now. Learn what the lifestyle of a watchman includes. This book may help you discover your personal calling in God. I sure hope so! I know firsthand that being one of the Lord’s watchmen on the walls is a wonderful calling, and I would love to have your company.



SECTION 1

The Lifestyle of Intimate Intercession

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

John 15:14–16 NKJV

READING FOR DAY 1

Abraham: Confident Friendship with God

The dramatic high points of the life story of the patriarch Abraham are familiar to most people. The account of his life takes up a good portion of the book of Genesis (from 11:26 to 25:10), chronicling his movement from his native city of Ur to the land of Harran, until eventually he reached the land of Canaan. It was an epic journey in every way, and his guidance came from God's direct call:

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.

Genesis 12:1–4

Although God had promised to make Abraham into “a great nation,” Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were unable to have children. Then one day, the Lord told Abraham in a vision that he and Sarah would, in fact, have a son (see Genesis 15:4–6), and, to make the crazy story short, they did. Sarah became pregnant in her extreme old age and bore Isaac. Amazing!

Within a few years, though, God spoke again, telling Abraham to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice. What? Kill the miracle child, the one upon whose life the future depended? But Abraham was willing because God had asked for it. At the last minute, God provided a ram for sacrifice instead, and Isaac’s life was spared.

Many sermons have been preached about Abraham’s phenomenal faith in the face of such desperate requirements. His faith was the key to the fulfillment of every one of God’s original promises. Abraham walked more closely with God than anyone knew was possible. What a heritage to leave behind. What a lineage!

But one of the key things I want us to notice about Abraham’s life, at least as it relates to our purposes in this book, is that he demonstrated an intercessor’s heart before God that was rooted in extreme intimacy. In fact, he is the first person in the Old Testament who is called God’s *friend* (see 2 Chronicles 20:7 and Isaiah 41:8). This kind of relationship with a deity was unheard of. How did Abraham learn to relate to God with the kind of give-and-take that only close friends share?

Scripturally, it corresponds to *righteousness*:

And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.

James 2:23 NKJV

Abraham obeyed God, but he was never subservient like a slave. When God told him to do something, Abraham felt free to

ask questions. He even suggested things as one friend to another. This unusual relational style was based in Abraham's security of being in right standing with God. Faith, righteousness and friendship are distinct ingredients that combined to create an intimate intercession.

Over the decades, Abraham learned to recognize God's voice, and he knew he could reason with God. He trusted God as a friend. Intimate friendship with God—that was Abraham's key to his extraordinary faith and his bold work of intimate intercession.

A Bold Friendship

The story about Abraham's courageous bargaining with God over the fate of the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is a prime example of his intercessor's heart and shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that Abraham deserved his unique nickname, "the friend of God." Always remember, communication is a two-way street, and watchful intercession involves a relational interaction.

This is where Abraham demonstrated the quality of his relationship with God. He knew he was debating the fate of the city with his sovereign Creator, not an earthly ruler. He knew he was subject to God's will. Yet he dared to stand in God's way, holding up his hand to say, "Wait a minute!" and taking time to prevail upon God's goodness and sense of justice.

We see here their interactive relationship:

"Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the LORD asked. "For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised."

So the LORD told Abraham, “I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.”

The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham. Abraham approached him and said, “Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? Surely you wouldn’t do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn’t do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”

Genesis 18:17–25 NLT

The rest of the story is sordid. You can read about it in the nineteenth chapter of Genesis. As it turned out, God did not find even ten righteous people in the whole place. When angels disguised as men tried to warn Abraham’s nephew, Lot, to escape Sodom with his small family before it was too late, depraved citizens tried to waylay them and commit sexual acts with them that have since become known by the name of the doomed city (sodomy).

Before the fire and brimstone fell and incinerated Sodom, imagine Abraham standing there, earnestly bargaining with his God. He did not hesitate to risk God’s wrath as he appealed to God’s sense of compassion and fairness. Even though it put his nephew’s family in jeopardy, Abraham could have acquiesced to God’s decision. He knew how wicked those people were; they deserved to be wiped off the face of the earth.

Abraham did not appeal to God because of his relatives in the city, nor on the basis of his own righteousness. Despite his wealth and status, Abraham knew his track record was spotty. I have skipped over most of the other stories that have come

out of Abraham's life, some of which show his human side all too well (see, for example, Genesis 12:10–20 and chapter 20).

No, he appealed to God on the basis of *God's* perfect righteousness, and he knew this would help his petitions meet with approval. He also trusted God's mercy to cover him if his bartering seemed impertinent.

Thus Abraham, a mere mortal, dared to stand in the gap between the wrath of God and the wicked citizens of Sodom. He was willing to sacrifice himself, if necessary. He became a man like the intercessor God sought to find years later, speaking through the prophet Ezekiel: "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one" (Ezekiel 22:30 NASB).

Like you and me, Abraham was not born with a supernatural gift of friendship with God; he came to know God's nature and character over time. The relationship was initiated by God when the future patriarch was still known as Abram (see Genesis 12:1–3). Through all the ups and downs of the years, Abraham learned about God's faithfulness. Whenever he took matters into his own hands (as he did when he lied twice about his wife, Sarah), he suffered rebukes. His circumstances did not always seem to line up with the amazing promises. He was promised a son. He was promised influence that would impact the world. He carried a lot of responsibility, and he found it challenging to manage everything. Yet Abraham kept pressing on. He kept choosing to follow the Lord of life. Our choices matter in a similar way.

The Power of Trust

Abraham trusted God, and that was viewed by the Lord as righteousness: "And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD

counted him as righteous because of his faith” (Genesis 15:6 NLT). Abraham’s trust in God made him the ideal intercessor.

We, too, can stand in the gap because of our trust in Jesus’ righteousness. Our motives will never be pure enough and our words will always be inadequate, but by the cleansing power of the shed blood of Jesus, we can stand up in the teeth of the storm of God’s withering judgment and plead for His mercy.

We must operate by a different kind of economy, one that is based on the currency of Jesus’ righteousness. Paul connects the dots for us:

Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God’s way. For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.”

When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.

Romans 4:1–5 NLT

Of course, we can misplace our trust. We can be forced to wade through setbacks and disastrous events. Our trust and faith, by themselves, do not guarantee success.

In the past number of years, my faith has been pressed to the limit as I have been through trial after trial, including the loss of my dear wife, Michal Ann, to cancer and enduring cancer myself three times over a nine-year period. But I will never stop trusting the Lord with all my heart, and I will keep choosing not to lean on my own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5). I will continue to live as a man of faith. I am tempted to put my trust in my feelings, my circumstances, the medical profession or

even other people, but the only kind of faith with a guarantee attached to it is faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Our prayers count. They may be the only reason God lessens or delays His judgments. As I wrote in my book *The Prophetic Intercessor*, “We can use our intercessory capital to purchase seasons of mercy.”¹ This is true even for ourselves and our families.

Others have modeled it for us. I think of good King Hezekiah. After some setbacks, he contracted a fatal illness. The prophet Isaiah paid him a visit and told him to get his house in order because God had decided that he should die. Hezekiah broke down in tears. He was too young to die; he had much more to accomplish for the sake of his people in Israel. He pleaded with God to let him live. Defying the odds, he recovered fully and lived another fifteen years. (See 2 Kings 20:1–11.) Hezekiah contended with God for his life, and God, in His mercy, acted on his behalf.

Do not get the idea that we should use this kind of prayer only in life-threatening situations, though. Look how Jesus’ mother, Mary, contended with God’s will over a seemingly minor matter—the wine supply at a village wedding. (See John 2:1–11.) Jesus and His disciples were there when the wine ran out. He had not yet begun His public ministry, and He was not inclined to demonstrate His supernatural power just yet. But Mary insisted He do something to help out.

“Do whatever He tells you,” she instructed the servants, even though He had just told her He did not want to do anything. “Woman, why do you involve Me?” He had said to her. “My hour has not yet come.”

But because His mother persisted, He followed through, changing jugs of water into fine wine and saving the celebration—and thus launching His ministry earlier than He might have wanted to.

This is the Lord we serve. Our God is someone who has all the power in the universe and upon whom we depend for every breath we take, yet He is also someone we can approach without trepidation to argue our case. He could snuff us out instantly if He wanted to, but He loves us too much to do that. His ears and His heart are open to us. He loves it when we lean toward Him in confidence. He loves when we approach Him as a friend.

A Greater Promise

God's promises to Abraham were amazing and powerful, yet Jesus has brought us *greater* blessings than those Old Testament ones. The writer of the book of Hebrews lists all of the Law-guaranteed blessings and privileges of the Old Testament priests yet goes on to say, "But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6).

When Abraham was a childless, elderly nomad—by no means a patriarch yet—God promised him a heritage he could hardly imagine, let alone believe. And to the endless benefit of generations of his descendants (both physical and spiritual), he suspended his natural incredulity and said yes. He had no guarantees. He simply moved forward, relating to God as he went, taking one step at a time. We can do that, too.

Abraham took hold of the words God had spoken to him without even having the benefit of having the Scriptures, and especially the words of Jesus, as we do. For instance, we know that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4 NKJV). We live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. God has spoken. God is speaking. God will continue to speak to His friends.

Remember, confident friendship with God is based in communication. Intimate intercession is a two-way street. God speaks, we listen and we respond. We speak, God listens and God responds.

As we start our 21-day journey together, I am pointing us toward the father of our faith and to the first man the Bible ever called the friend of God. But friendship with God is not a special gift of the Holy Spirit available only to an elite few. It is available to each and every person who follows Jesus, as He said:

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

John 15:14–15 NKJV

Years ago, I was challenged by a penetrating statement made by a man who had walked with God. He stated, “You are just as close to God as you want to be!” That statement has marked my life. My lifestyle as a watchman starts and is maintained by my personal communion with my Master and Friend. So is yours.

PRAYER

Father God, You hold the universe in Your hands, and yet You call us Your friends. I want to understand that more deeply, and I want to love You more and more. You may never present me with as many important decisions as You did Abraham, but I want to lean in to hear Your voice so I can both obey You and sometimes ask You questions. Teach me what it means to fear You, but help me to grow in the intimacy of friendship with You at the same

time. May I be ready and willing if You need somebody to stand in the gap. May my eyes and heart be wide open to You at all times. Because of Your Son, Jesus, Amen.

DAY 1

EMBRACING YOUR CALLING

1. How would you describe what it means to be God's friend? In what ways have you experienced that kind of friendship with God?
2. Have you ever bargained with God like Abraham, Hezekiah or Mary did? What were the results?
3. What promises has God given you? Can you say you believe those promises are as sure as their Promiser?
4. When you get discouraged in your faith, review how God has worked with other believers. Remember that everyone gets discouraged at times, even the ones we know as giants of the faith. How can you renew your faith? How can you acquire holy tenacity?