

## **The Only True Stimulus Package** **#1 in a series of 3**

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As the effects of the economy trickle down, certain uneasiness resides in many households. Credit card interest rates sneak their increases into the monthly bills. The house you bought several years ago has not proven to be an investment with greater returns—some might even be sitting on more mortgage than house. Additionally, there is the peril of wide-spread illness and the threat of wars both foreign and domestic. Predictably, these are Biblical pictures. Knowing this to be the outcome of fallen humanity, God still enacts a plan assuring victory over this minefield but not without clear instruction and close relationship with Him every step of the way.

Recently, a friend contacted me about a discipleship group they were forming for the express purpose of praying in the midst of these hardships. She said they are anxious to meet, “since this is an important part that’s missing from our church life.” She wasn’t too keen, however, to sit around in a circle to pray down a list of names and asked for some suggestions.

Therefore, over the next few columns I would like to offer a month’s supply of different prayer ideas to **stimulate** new areas of prayer habits.

1. **Introduce the “new”** - select a different time to pray. Consider a time while others sleep—morning or night watch. Select a new location. Try new prayer postures (kneeling, pacing, standing with hands raised, walking through a neighborhood or from room to room). Read from a new translation of the Bible, a new devotional book, or subscribe to new online devotionals.
2. **Pray the schedule** - Submit last week’s or month’s schedule and ask God’s perspective on your past commitments and activities. Do the same for the day’s schedule and your future plans. Invite Him to help you live with His agenda.
3. **Write a Psalm** - Take a Psalm as a template and write it again from your circumstances. It might be a Lament (Psalm 10), a Pursuit (Psalm 63), a Declaration (Psalm 131), or Praise (Psalm 136). Now pray it back to God.

4. **Pray on the hour** - You may dare to be a Daniel and pray 3 specific times or 5 times as other liturgical groups do (9, 12, 3, after evening meal and at bedtime) and you may use the Prayer Calendar with the Scripture lectionary on the website, offering 4 readings: the Psalms, the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles.
5. **Sharpen your senses** - Ask God to enhance your spiritual taste (Ps. 34:8), sight (Ps. 199: 18), hearing (Mark 4:9), smell (2 Cor. 2: 14-16) and touch (Acts 17: 27). Next insert these senses into a Gospel story, imagining your own experience in these stories. Take note of how these heightened senses change the way you meet God and pray with immediacy.
6. **Praise exclusive** - Focus on adoration through the singing of a hymn that stirred your heart about God's character. Use your songbook or other collection of hymns. Locate these characteristics of God in Scripture, reinforcing the song of our dogma. Then worship in silence as God sings over you (Zeph. 3: 17)
7. **"Natural" worship** - Nothing speaks louder of the Creator than nature. Consider God's detailed abilities of balance and beauty—through a park, a beach, a scenic photographic book or DVD. He did not have to create this way but He did in His extravagance! What does it reveal about God? Tell Him.
8. **Journal your prayers** - Use an inexpensive notebook so that you are not afraid to write in it. By writing down requests we are able to navigate the unfolding answers to our prayers. These documents will give you a ledger of God's activity and will become a record of His tangible presence—the intricate details of His involvement in your life. It is also something you can show others of how you have prayed for them, extending the love of Christ as we care in prayer.

