

Lifting up Those Who Are Suffering

By Sandra Higley and Danielle Schofield



Suffering comes in all shapes and sizes: chronic illness, persecution, relational heartaches, loss of a loved one, senseless tragedy, stresses of many kinds. We all face suffering at one time or another. In addition to praying for specifics centered on individual circumstances, here are a few ways to pray, based on what Scripture says about suffering.

Kingdom Warfare

Father, this child of Yours has gone through unspeakable distress. Help those who are suffering to worship You in the midst of circumstances they don't understand. Lift them out of the hurtful details of what is happening so they get the bigger picture of its Kingdom impact. Help them trust You and hold on to the end, knowing You have a plan in mind for them. May they know You in a deeper, more meaningful way as a result of this circumstance (Job 1–2; 42:1–6, 10–16; Ps. 71:20).

God's Glory

Father, if this suffering is intended to bring You glory, let

it be so! Give Your suffering children the strength and joy to honor You during this difficult time. Deepen their understanding of the inheritance issues at stake when they share in Christ's sufferings. Help them to recognize that what they are going through is no comparison to the glory that will be revealed in them; help them wait for it with eager expectation. As they run the race through this trial, help them resist confusion and instead manifest the fruit of the Spirit (John 11:4; Rom. 8:17–19; Gal. 5:7–8, 22–23).

God's Grace

Lord God, help Your servants embrace Your no as well as Your yes. Assure them that You see and hear them. Enable them to see Your power at work through these difficult circumstances. Show Yourself strong through their fragile state. Thank You that in spite of everything they are not crushed, driven to despair, or abandoned by You. Help them get up when circumstances knock them down so that Jesus' life shines through them (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

Identification with Christ

Jesus, help Your beloved to see that this hatred they are experiencing is visible proof they belong to You and not the world. Encourage them to take a humble view of this identity as they continue to obey Your teaching and walk in love. Help them to fully know You and the power of Your resurrection, even as this situation causes them to become more and more like You. Let every act of unjust suffering commend them to God (Isa. 43:1; John 15:18–21; Phil. 3:10; 1 Peter 2:18–20).

Faithful Friends

Heavenly Father, give Your suffering children true friends who seek to lighten their load rather than cause additional heartache. Give friends and family empathy for what the sufferers are going through; help them resist the urge to judge or assume they would handle things differently if put in the same situation. Help friends and loved ones to look for ways to encourage rather than chastising, condemning, or minimizing these overwhelming situations. Hold accountable those who profess to speak for You. Help sufferers to forgive and pray for any who allow the enemy to use them as unjust accusers. Help those afflicted to bless and not curse (Job 42:7–10; Luke 6:28).

Proper Discernment

Father, give these dear ones a proper understanding of what is going on through this trial. Give them wisdom and courage to ask the right questions about fears, concerns, and needs. While it is commendable to suffer without cause, show Your children if there are other reasons this suffering has come to them. Without guilt or condemnation, help them to recognize any sin in their lives that needs to be dealt with according to Your Word. Help them to find a trustworthy person to come alongside them in prayer and confession if needed—someone in right relationship with You (Rom. 8:1; James 5:13–16; 1 Peter 2:18–20).

Forbearance to Wait on the Lord

Father God, give Your hurting child the forbearance to wait on You, knowing we go through various seasons and each one has its purpose. Thank You that while weeping lasts for a night, You bring joy when the night is past. Turn their mourning to dancing! (Ps. 30:5, 11; Eccl. 3:1–3).

—SANDRA HIGLEY is an author and the editor of *Real Life Downloaded* (Youth Edition), an online Sunday school curriculum supplement that is free of charge. Download the free Real Life Downloaded app. She co-authored this article with her daughter, who has a debilitating (sometimes fatal) disease with no known cure.

This prayer guide is from Prayer Connect magazine. To
Subscribe

In the Crosshairs

Prayer in the Time of War

By Kie Bowman

You have probably never heard anyone describe war as heaven. In fact, it is the exact opposite.

Unfortunately, war is a fact of life in the 21st century. The Geneva Academy recognizes more than 110 armed conflicts in the world today.¹ We almost expect the horrors of war in our world, since in the last 3,400 years there have been only 268 years when war was not active somewhere in the world.²

From a political perspective, there is little you can do to stop terrorism or drone attacks against our Navy or illegal missile tests by the world's most dangerous actors. But in the spiritual realm there is a lot you can do. You make an impact beyond measure when you pray.

The History of War in Scripture

Joshua was a general (Josh. 11:1–23). David “killed his tens of thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). Jesus prophetically described the grisly scene of invading armies coming against Jerusalem (Matt. 24:7–22). The Book of Revelation predicts the final battle will be fought in Israel in the Valley of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14–16).

The Bible takes war seriously. In a sense, human “war” started as armed conflict when Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4:8), and it will end when Jesus defeats an international army after the 1,000-year reign (Rev. 20:7–10).

In these days of international terrorism, armed conflict, and the world holding its collective breath with fear and uncertainty, what principles can we learn from the prayer ministries of the biblical heroes who walked a familiar path? How can we pray in the crosshairs of war?

Pray for Peace

The early Church had no political influence. Soon after Pentecost, the church leaders were arrested and imprisoned (Acts 4:1–20). In fact, the Book of Acts is a history of apostolic imprisonments (Acts 5:17–42, 12:5, 16:16–40, 18:12–17, 19:24–41, 21:27ff). Leonard Ravenhill once said, “The early Church had so little influence with men they couldn’t stay out of jail, but they had so much influence with God no jail could hold them.”

While the early Church had almost none of the advantages the American Church takes for granted, they had something we desperately need. They knew how to pray. In fact, “Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him” (Acts 12:5).

In the worst conditions, the Church was, first and foremost, a

praying Church. Their lack of social standing meant they were always at risk of running afoul of some Roman leader or decree. Paul understood that keeping the infant Church out of the “line of fire” politically and socially was a way of protecting the viability of the ministry. This outlook could be the motivation behind Paul’s advice: “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

While they were not in a war zone when Paul wrote to Timothy, the apostle had spent enough time in jail and had been the victim of unprovoked violence often enough to know how dangerous preaching the gospel could be in the Roman Empire. So, he urged the Church to pray so they could live in peace and continue their ministry.

No matter how bad the situation becomes, no matter how many drones fly overhead, or how many tyrants wage senseless wars, believers are called to pray for peace.

Pray with Conviction

The overwhelming majority of Americans believe morals are in a free fall in our country. Almost 80 percent of us think it is bad and getting worse.³

In the face of our moral decay, Scripture describes the results of standing boldly for God, even when a culture is corrupt. Unfortunately, in a morally decadent culture, godliness becomes marginalized—and the evil majority persecutes the faithful. Peter warned us when he said, “They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you” (1 Peter 4:4).

When we see the sexual intemperance, the cruelty and violence, the political corruption, the drug abuse and crime in our

cities, and failures among the clergy, we are forced to ponder the question: “Is Western culture too far gone already?”

For instance, in December 2022, Isabel Vaughn-Spruce was arrested in Birmingham, England, for praying silently in public across the street from an abortion clinic. The charges were eventually dropped a few months later. Apologies followed, but the message sent by the original arrest is blatant.⁴ The British pro-life advocate, arrested for silent prayer, was a victim of the culture wars.

Imagine the pressure you might experience if your prayers are ever outlawed during a full-scale military action. It is happening in parts of the world already. What would you do if it happened to you?

More than 2,600 years ago, Daniel rose to political power in a godless nation. But we cannot forget he was there as a prisoner of war (Dan. 1:1–6). God’s hand was on Daniel as he overcame the challenges of serving under five kings and the Babylonian and Persian wars that upended national security. In one of those battles, a new Persian king, Darius the Mede, overthrew Belshazzar the Chaldean (Daniel 5:29–31). In other words, a new country, new culture, new customs, and a completely different kingdom seized power.

Following his ascension to the throne, Darius passed a law that no one could pray to any god except to King Darius himself. To do so would be an act of treason, punishable by death (Dan. 6:6–9). In other words, prayer was viewed as a war crime.

What happened next was one of the most defiant, courageous, and inspiring acts in the Bible. Daniel waged a counteroffensive against the hot war aimed at his prayer life.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened

toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before (Dan. 6:10).

What do we learn from Daniel's response to the war against prayer? For one thing, his testimony reminds us that prayer can give us a steel backbone, eager to stand for God in the face of overwhelming circumstances and impossible odds.

The man or woman who dares to believe that prayer is an act of defiance against the raging wars around them is a person of deep conviction. And remember, conviction is not a belief you hold; conviction is a belief that holds you.

Prayer as a Sacrifice

Pastor and author Craig Groeschel has often said, "We sacrifice what we love for what we love more." As a culture, we do not know much about sacrifice.

In seasons of intense conflict, however, we start to learn the hard way. We know instinctively that if we love something or someone enough, we ignore the price tag. We voluntarily sacrifice what we love for what we love more. We find this principle illustrated in the Book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's opening chapter introduces the conflict—will the privileged courtier find a reason to sacrifice for the suffering people of God? Nehemiah is a comfortable civil servant confronted with the terrible news of the devastated condition of his "hometown." There are Jewish refugees and escapees living in the shadows of poverty and terror, and Nehemiah had ignored his responsibility for too long. So, he prayed (Neh. 1:1–11).

Nehemiah actually had a dream job. He worked in the palace with daily access to the royal family. He ate well, wanted for little, and could have lived the rest of his life surrounded by comforts barely imaginable to the general population. But

when he repented, fasted, and wept in prayer for days, God did something new in his heart.

Nehemiah was led to leave his service in the Persian Empire and travel to war-torn Jerusalem—hundreds of miles west across the desert—to lead his people to rebuild the wall as a security system around the battle-plundered city. God led him to sacrifice the known for the unknown—the security of the palace for the unpredictability of a city in ruins, ravaged by war.

Nehemiah walked away from guarantees and stepped into a life of faith. He found his resolve in the secret place with God, where a man of the palace and privilege became a man of prayer. A nation devastated by the evils of war decades earlier got a second chance through the sacrifice of one man who prayed.

John Bunyan once said, “Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.” We may not see the results Nehemiah saw because we never enter the sacrifice phase of prayer. We pray only when it is convenient and then only briefly.

Nehemiah, on the other hand, prayed in pain for days. His sacrifice in prayer led to the renewal of the Jewish people.

Even though he had to keep his sword handy while he constructed the wall (Neh. 4:17), Nehemiah lived not in the midst of war but in its aftermath. The city without a wall did not know it needed a man to lead it—one who had been to the depths of personal sacrifice in prayer.

A New Kind of Leader

Broken cultures rarely realize that their greatest need is spiritual rather than material. The aftermath of war calls for

a new kind of leader—one stripped of self-interest and who has plunged to uncharted depths in prayer.

Jesus warned of “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). But Alex and Stephen Kendrick were right about God’s plan for the world when they said, “When prayer becomes your immediate reflex instead of your last resort, the whole battlefield begins to tilt in your direction.”⁵

¹“Middle East and North Africa: More than 45 Armed Conflicts,” GENEVA ACADEMY, <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/gallies/today-s-armed-conflicts/>.

² Chris Hedges, “What Every Person Should Know About War,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/books/chapters/what-every-person-should-know-about-war.html/>.

³ Megan Brennan and Nicole Willcoxson, “Record-High 50% of Americans Rate U.S. Moral Values as ‘Poor,’” GALLUP, June 6, 2022, <https://www.news.gallop.com/poll/393659/record-high-americans-rate-moral-values-poor.aspx/>.

⁴Caroline Downey, “Charges Dropped against British Woman for Praying Outside Abortion Clinic,” *National Review*, February 3, 2023, <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/charges-dropped-against-british-woman-arrested-for-praying-outside-abortion-clinic/>.

⁵Stephen and Alex Kendrick, *The Battle Plan for Prayer*, B&H Publishing Group, 2015.

KIE BOWMAN is senior pastor emeritus of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, TX, and is currently the National Director of Prayer for the Southern Baptist Convention. He is the

author of *Evangelistic Prayer* and the coauthor of *City of Prayer*.

Compassion and Outrage

By Bob Bakke

While I was writing this article, Hamas unleashed 1,500 terrorists from Gaza into the south of Israel. They murdered, abused, raped, and kidnapped unarmed Jewish revelers and the residents of nearby kibbutzim—raining thousands of missiles on civilian neighborhoods. Hardened Israeli soldiers and first responders could not believe the grotesque slaughter in Hamas' wake. So many dead. So many are yet to die.

The camera lens made us eyewitnesses to revolting images. Global tensions are thick. By the time you read this, who knows what evil will have played out. World war? Maybe Jesus will have returned.

Prayer Clues from Jesus

When humankind degrades itself, how should we pray? Does Jesus give us clues? What about revival? Personally, Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus in John 11 helps me.

The town of Bethany was grim when Jesus arrived. Lazarus was dead. Jesus' enemies were conspiring to kill him. Lazarus' sisters met Jesus with such pathetic and brokenhearted disappointment that Jesus Himself wept.

John tells us that Jesus was “deeply moved in the spirit” (vs. 33). “Deeply moved” is the verb *embrimaomai*, describing fervent anger. It's combined with *pneumati*, “in spirit”—or “to

the core of His being.”

Jesus was also “troubled,” John writes. Raymond Brown translates this “shuddered.” Jesus was so angry that He trembled. But there’s more. The Greek indicates that Jesus was stirring Himself up to this anger—a conscious gathering up of divine potency and holy indignation.

In his book, *The Dust of Death*, Os Guinness argues that Christians need these two things:

1. the compassion of Christ, and
2. the outrage of Christ.

Guinness points to John 11: “John [states ‘deeply troubled’] twice in his account of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. This deep emotion is usually interpreted in relation to the verse ‘Jesus wept.’ . . . Weeping, or sorrow [however], does not exhaust what is meant by Jesus being ‘deeply moved,’ for Jesus knew that Lazarus would be alive and standing beside Him in a matter of moments. Where is the sorrow in that? . . . the root meaning of *embrimaomai* is to ‘snort in the spirit.’

“It was used by Aeschylus to describe Greek stallions before battle, rearing up on their hind legs, pawing the air and snorting before they charged. Similarly, Jesus ‘snorted in the spirit’: He was moved deeply in the sense of a furious inner anger. Entering His Father’s world as the Son of God, He found not order, beauty, harmony, and fulfillment, but fractured disorder, raw ugliness, complete disarray—everywhere the abortion of God’s original plan.

“Standing at the graveside, He came face to face with a death that symbolized and summarized the accumulation of evil, pain, sorrow, suffering, injustice, cruelty, and despair. Thus, while He was moved to tears for his friends in sorrow, He was also deeply moved by the outrageous abnormality of death” (pg. 385).

Outrage to Prayer

What did Jesus do with His outrage? He channeled it into prayer. He lifted His head and hands and prayed for everyone to hear. Then, with three thunderous words—"Lazarus, come out!"—Jesus cried out. Revival came. Death was transformed. Unspeakable love led to divine outrage funneled into prayer and answered by Triune power bestowing life and glory.

Jesus so loves the world that He is outraged by our ruin. Whether it's news from Gaza, catastrophic earthquakes in Afghanistan, hundreds of churches burned in India, or the trafficking of children, our love should produce praying that eclipses the serene and beatific and, instead, looks and sounds like war—a gritty, furious, passionate battle to conquer evil and to save the dying—flowing from the heart of Christ.

For the Next Generation

This is how we intend to pray on February 29—the Collegiate Day of Prayer. The broadcast, hosted at Baylor University in Waco, TX, will lead millions of us in crying out to God for 22 million students and 4,300 college campuses across America.

Many campuses are spiritual war zones where the godless conspire against Christ; where faith is assaulted and truth is mocked. Millions of students are casualties.

We cannot be unmoved by this. Grieved by how Gen Z is abandoning Christianity and compelled by the love of Jesus and His readiness to revive that which is dead, let's answer the call. We are raising up an army to respond.

Let's get ready for battle. Come fight for this generation. Come pray.

ONECRY (*onecry.com*), is a nationwide cry for revival and spiritual awakening. Bob Bakke is a producer of Collegiate Day of Prayer and missions strategist/media producer for OneCry.

Lord, Help Me!

The Prayer of a Desperate Mother

Matthew 15:25

No one on earth has the power to break your heart like your own child. Seeing them hurt and watching them struggle is a gut-wrenching, soul-shaking experience. You feel their pain. They have the power in a split second to bring tears to your eyes. When they make you proud, joy explodes in your heart that cannot be contained. When they disappoint you, it is like a knife jabbed deep into your heart. When they are treated unjustly, righteous indignation overwhelms your common sense. And when they hurt, you would do anything you could to take their place.

Cathy and I have three adult sons. From the hospital to the awards banquet to the church platform, to the police station, to the prom, to the emergency room, to the courtroom, to the ICU, Cathy and I have ridden the emotional roller coaster of parenting. We have cried, laughed, prayed, worried, lost sleep, and made more sacrifices as a parent than in any other role in our lives. Yet today they all love Jesus and their families and serve the Lord.

Among the many prayers I pray as a dad have been "Give me wisdom," "Give me success," and "Strengthen my hands." I have asked God to protect my children, bless them, grow them, and use them. But as parents sometimes the need is greater than our resources.

In Matthew 15, we find the very special prayer that is the cry

of a desperate parent. As Jesus was resting from His heavy schedule in a non-Jewish region east of the Mediterranean Sea, He encountered a desperate mom.

A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession" Matthew 15:22

There is much we don't fully understand about demonization. We do know that it has ugly, physical results and emotional expressions. We recognize that those dominated by the evil one are in extreme pain. We see that while human medicines may relieve symptoms, they are ineffective to produce lasting cures. We can appreciate the challenge that modern psychology faces in adequately understanding, explaining, or dealing with such a curse.

Most of all, we can confidently affirm that it was overwhelming to this mother to see her daughter experience such anguish of the soul. But when this mother cried out to Jesus for mercy, He did not answer.

"Jesus did not answer a word." Matthew 15:23

As a follower of Jesus, I find it most difficult to deal with the unexplained silences of God. You have been there. You have a legitimate need. You have come to the right source for help. You ask for mercy, but all you get in response is the thundering silence of God. Most people would quit at this point.

This woman, a Canaanite, was used to the unresponsiveness of her gods. This was not new to her. She could have easily marked Jesus down as just as uncaring or impotent.

But she didn't.

"So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.'" Matthew 15:23

Still, she badgered them for help. She kept coming for relief. Her pain was greater than her pride. After she persisted, Jesus answered.

“He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’”
Matthew 15:24

Thanks a lot! He didn’t even speak directly to her. He made this comment to His disciples. It was not what she wanted to hear.

She knew that she had no right to ask a Jewish man to help her. She knew that she had no basis for expecting Him to respond. But she had heard that He was mighty and compassionate. And she was desperate. So she pressed the issue ahead.

“The woman came and knelt before him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said.” Matthew 15:25

Lord, help me.

What a simple prayer! “Lord, help me.” What a powerful prayer!

With all of her faith, all of her emotions, and all of her love for her daughter, she prayed. The weight of her need, every ounce of her hurt, and the totality of her helplessness were embodied in those three little words, “Lord, help me.”

What do you say when you have nothing else to say? What words can better express the burden of the brokenhearted parent? “Lord, help me.”

What is your pressure point of pain today? What about your child’s situation is overwhelming you? What burden is completely beyond your control? Where do you need help?

“Lord, help me.” Say the words slowly. See the suffering soul of your beloved child. See your own empty hands. See the all-sufficient Savior. Bow before Him and speak your heart.

Jesus was moved to act on her behalf.

“He replied, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.’

‘Yes, Lord,’ she said, ‘but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered, ‘Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.” Matthew 15:26–28

Read verse 28 again. First, Jesus commends her faith. Then He promises that her request is granted. Her little prayer had produced a big answer, and her daughter was healed.

Making It Personal

What can we learn from this desperate mom?

Prayer needs all the faith we have.

Jesus said, “Woman, you have great faith!” A look back through this passage gives us some insights into the type of faith she displayed. As a Canaanite, non-Jew, and not yet a devoted follower of Jesus, she had great faith. Her faith was great for the little amount of truth and light she had been given. She had not had the privilege of growing up hearing about the powerful love of the God of the Bible. This was a new venture for her. She had to turn from pagan deities in order to trust in Jesus to help her. She was way out of her comfort zone. Coming to Jesus, persistently asking and not giving up until she was helped, took all of the faith she had.

1. **Prayer needs faith that refuses to quit.** We don’t fully understand the ways of God. We do know that sometimes God holds off answers in order to allow our faith to blossom fully. This desperate mother did not give up, even when she initially got no answer. She did not quit asking until the disciples again asked Jesus to do something. She continued asking even after He said “No.”

Her love for her daughter and her confidence in Jesus' ability to heal would not let her give up.

2. **Prayer needs faith that is humbly dependent.** Her faith was great because it was not based on her sense of worth but on her conviction that Jesus must eventually respond to those in need. If a master would give crumbs to dogs, then Jesus must surely answer the prayer of a Canaanite.
3. **Prayer works.**

Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Matthew 15:28

Her prayer worked. God heard her heart, saw persistent faith, honored her humble dependence, and touched her daughter. I can only imagine the joy that exploded in her heart. I bet she danced all the way home. She probably had a huge smile on her face for years to come.

It is a wonderful thing when God answers the prayers of desperate parents. And all parents get desperate at one time or another. Among many painful concerns, we wonder if they are well physically, who they are involved with, what college they will choose, or will choose them, and what career they will pursue.

Desperation takes over when children begin to take the path of prodigal living. One of my good friends and a fantastic worship leader, Andy Bullard, is the son of a dear pastor and his wife. In college, Andy went through a period of prodigal living. This is his story of how his father's love and prayer helped him realize that living for God is the only way.

I grew up in a pastor's home. My parents loved God with all their hearts and were great parents! During the last two years of high school and the first two years of college, I slowly fell into a bad lifestyle of ignoring the Holy Spirit's conviction in my heart. I chose to get heavily involved with

alcohol and partying.

One lonely night when I was twenty years old, I had been drinking and hanging out at a party. Someone came in and told me my dad was outside. It was about 2 a.m. I immediately felt this huge lump in my throat, and I walked outside. Ashamed, I approached my father, who calmly looked at me and said, "Son, the Holy Spirit woke me up a little while ago and I felt Him telling me to go take a drive. He told me, 'Your son is in trouble and needs you.' That's how I found you here. Andy, I believe God has a plan and design for your life and wants to use you for His glory, but if you keep on living like this, you're going to miss out on all of it. I love you—I'll see you at home."

That same weekend I was on my face before God, weeping and repenting for the way I had been living. I felt so dirty inside and decided, from that moment on, I would acknowledge God's greatness. I would fear Him and let Him change my life. By God's glory, I have not lived that kind of lifestyle since then. I know that God used my father and my mother and their prayers, love, and loving rebuke to draw me back to the Lord! I am so thankful for honest, praying and loving parents! 1

I recently spoke at a missionary training conference and had a wonderful time of fellowship with these pioneer servants of God. A mom who had heard me speak in previous years stopped me after my second day of teaching. The year before, she had told me of the difficult transition her children were having upon returning to the States from the mission field.

Then she said, "The first time we heard you speak, we were convicted to fast and pray for our children one day a week. But we did not do it. They had a very frustrating year that year. The next year we made a commitment to fast and pray for them one day a week. My husband and I would pray together over lunch. It was not easy," she said, pausing, with tears welling up in her eyes, "but it sure made a difference."

God loves our kids because He is their Father. He wants to

give us all the help He can in raising them.

As I write this, my three teenage sons are all in high school at the same time. None of them is a shrinking violet or wallflower. They all seem to be gifted at getting themselves in a variety of complex situations. Like all pastors' kids and second- or third-generation Christians, they struggle to find their own faith relationship with God. As very human young men, they are not immune to temptation, trials, or troubles. Parenting three teenagers, while often a great deal of fun, is also very challenging. Parenting "just ain't easy." Almost daily I pray the prayer of the desperate woman, "Lord, help me."

If you are a parent, this chapter has probably resonated with you on several levels. Learn to pray the prayer of the desperate mother for her daughter, "Lord, help me." If you do not yet have children, begin now to pray for the children that you may have in your future. Ask God to help you. Or pray for your nieces and nephews. Ask God to help them and their parents.

If you are past the point of having children, that's all right. Pray for Cathy, me, and our three boys. We need all the prayer we can get.

Notes

1. Used by permission of Andy Bullard.

—Dr. Dave Earley from *The 21 Most Effective Prayers in the Bible* (PrayerShop Publishing 2023). Hundreds of churches and thousands of believers will be using this book as they pray through The 21 Days of Prayer Event, January 1-21, 2024. We encourage you to join them.