ISSUE ELEVEN, JULY/AUGUST 2013

# PRAYERCONNECT Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

Learning from the Prayer Life of Jesus

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#### Carol Madison

Prayer Connect Submissions 4300 West 98th St. | Bloomington, MN 55437 editor@prayerconnect.net

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### Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

There are a number of gifted speakers associated with *Prayer Connect*. Jonathan Graf regularly ministers in churches of varying sizes. Carol Madison is also available to minister in the area of prayer for revival and community transformation. Our parent organizations, Harvest Prayer Ministries and the Church Prayer Leaders Network, have many speakers associated with their ministries. You can find their contact information at the respective emails or websites.

Jonathan Graf | jong@harvestprayer.com Carol Madison | editor@prayerconnect.net

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#### The mission of **PRAYER**CONNECT is

- **1.** To encourage and equip believers toward a deeper walk with Jesus Christ through prayer—our experiential connection to God.
- 2. To resource prayer leaders and pastors with tools to help them motivate, disciple, and mobilize believers in churches to be a part of an army that seeks to pray the purposes of God for churches, communities, and the nations.
- **3.** To be a unifying force between prayer ministries, community transformation groups, and churches.

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Jonathan Graf jong@harvestprayer.com

Editor Carol Madison editor@prayerconnect.net

> Art Director J. Bridget Rennie

**Editorial Assistants** Joyce Ellis Joan Sherman

Contributing Writer Kim Butts

Subscriptions/Orders Joanne Telle

#### Previously in Prayer Connect

"Living in the upper room" means being devoted to creating a "culture of prayer" in your church. The early believers used



God-encountering prayer in the upper room as the launching pad for their world-changing mission. The May/June 2013 issue offers the perspectives of several pastors who are actively engaged in establishing prayer cultures in their churches.

# PUBLISHER'SNOTE



### The Gospel Will Spread and Flourish

ne of my favorite passages of Scripture to read and to teach on is Acts 12. It is the familiar story of Peter's miraculous "escape" from prison. We love the story of the angel coming to Peter while he is asleep, chained between two guards. The angel tells Peter to get up, his chains fall off, and they walk outside. But I wonder if we don't miss some important aspects of this story other than the "Yay, God" for the feel-good miracle.



As the story opens, King Herod is beginning to seriously persecute the Church. He arrests and executes James, which must have been a huge blow to the early Church and must have delivered a strong message to believers. Herod then goes after Peter and has him arrested. The believers must have assumed Peter would be executed, too.

So what do they do? Get a lawyer and take Herod to court? Whine on Facebook about how bad things are getting for believers in Jerusalem and that the government should be more fair? Storm the prison? Nope. Verse 5 tells us "the church was earnestly praying to God for [Peter]."

That verse hints at two things: 1) This was strong, desperate, corporate prayer. People weren't allowed to take the request sheet home in hopes they would remember Peter. They came together, realizing they needed a supernatural solution. 2) I suspect the prayer meeting was focused only on Peter and the growing problem of persecution. It was a vertically focused prayer time, not horizontally focused. By that I mean it was not focused on the needs of the people in attendance, as most of our Western church prayer times are. It was focused upward—on God and His purposes.

I am also fascinated by the results. Consider this: Those who were praying didn't even have much faith! Remember what happened when Peter showed up at the door? The servant girl excitedly ran back into the house (without letting Peter in) and told the crowd Peter was at the door.

"You're crazy," the people responded. That couldn't possibly be! God answered with a miracle even though it appears they were still expecting Peter to go to trial. They were not expecting God to do something that immediate and miraculous. This gives me great faith because often, when I am praying, I can't seem to drum up a lot of expectation.

There is a second major result most people miss. I missed it for years. God not only rescued Peter—the immediate answer to their prayers—but He changed the situation by removing Herod. The king died shortly thereafter. And "the word of God continued to spread and flourish" (Acts 12:24).

God used those frightened believers' agreement in prayer to release a powerful miracle, remove a major obstacle, and further His Kingdom.

I think there is a powerful message in this story for churches. If we will begin to pray together—in a vertical way, not a horizontal one—things will change in the life of our churches. Obstacles will be removed, miracles will happen, and the ministry of our churches will "spread and flourish." It baffles me why so many pastors, elders, and church leaders in the West today do not get this simple truth—and act accordingly. —Jonathan Graf

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#### Leaders Discuss America's Spiritual Condition

ational Christian leaders from a wide range of ministries joined with the Awakening America Alliance—an alliance formed six years ago from a broad coalition of evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic ministries—at an historic leadership summit in Jacksonville, FL, April 9–11, 2013. With a growing sense of urgency about



prayer for national spiritual awakening, the leaders at the summit focused on American history while evaluating and engaging the future with regard to awakening. The group agreed to develop clear strategies to pursue awakening Christ's Church throughout the nation in the three main arenas of cities, campuses, and churches.

Billy Wilson, outgoing executive director of Awakening America Alliance, said, "As we become engaged in Kingdom opportunities, embrace fresh strategies within the church, and experience a personal urgency to pray and act, we will see a difference. One thing is certain: our best hope toward witnessing a dramatic spiritual shift in the United States is for us to stand together in unity."

As a backdrop for the Leadership Summit, the participants visited Mayport, FL, where in 1562 (near the mouth of the St. Johns River) Jean Ribault and the Huguenot believers prayed the first known Protestant prayer on America's shores. The Leadership Summit was a time of sober evaluation of today's American Church, the escalating cultural pressure it is enduring, and potential ways to turn the spiritual tide.

Jarvis Ward with Mission America Coalition, expressed

his excitement about the summit this way: "Wow! God powerfully spoke to me . . . with a gentle and clear reminder (and rebuke) that I and other servants of Jesus Christ must walk, must live before Him and each other in ever-increasing humility, purity, faith, and love with our eyes fixed on Jesus. . . . Do I live a life of humility and purity? Let the akening start with me!"

awakening start with me!"

Jeremy Story with Campus Renewal Ministries observed, "College campuses have historically been at the heart of revival and awakening in our nation revival in our nation's history has found its roots among college students. The entire foreign missions effort from North America can be traced back to five students praying at Williams College in 1806 and through the sending out of 20,000 missionaries through the student volunteer movement starting in the late 1800s. Where college campuses go today, our nation will go tomorrow."

The Awakening America Alliance, with strong conviction that America is experiencing devastating spiritual decline, calls for every county in the nation to unite in prayer on September 11, 2013. Cry Out America will feature sacred assemblies across denominational lines and every political persuasion to stand in the public square and say that Jesus is the only answer for America.



Leaders pray for a spiritual shift in the U.S.

Dave Butts, chairman of the National Prayer Committee, said, "In the midst of our crises as a nation, there is one voice beginning to rise up: 'We must have another great spiritual awakening as a nation.' The Awakening America Alliance is being used by God to help issue that cry."

To learn more about the nationwide 9/11 prayer movement, Cry Out America, go to *awakeningamerica.us*.





### NEWS&EVENTS

#### UNITE Prayer Event Calls Students to "Reset"

ULSE, a movement reaching the millennial generation with a message of hope, hosted the third annual UNITE National Day of Prayer (NDOP) event at the University of Minnesota on May 2.

The event is targeted toward students but includes participation across generations. Nick Hall, founder and lead communicator for PULSE, challenged students to "reset" their lives by eliminating sin and harmful behaviors—instead, seeking hope in Jesus Christ. Hall spoke of historical revivals and called on the audience to cry out for God to once again send a great spiritual awakening to the nation.

This is the third year that the Mariucci hockey arena on the U of M campus has been the site of UNITE NDOP, a prayer gathering for campuses and churches in the Minneapolis/St. Paul region. PULSE Events Director Jay Anderson estimated the audience was more than 2,000 people. The event featured music by nationally known Matthew West as well as the United Twin Cities Worship Band, a group of Christian worship leaders from various churches who came together specifically for this event.

The UNITE gathering linked up live with the national OneCry (*onecry.com*) radio broadcast that originated from the studios of the Moody Radio Network in Chicago and was aired on 500 radio stations around the country. Hall challenged the UNITE crowd and the broader listening audience to pray for the awakening of a young generation with a "supernatural reset" to come back to God and live out His purposes for their lives.

PULSE also announced a nationwide movement called RESET, which calls for prayer for the largest student and young people initiative in America's history. "We're sticking a stake in the ground," said Hall, "and saying 'America is Jesus country, we're here for Him, and we're going to lift high the name of Jesus.""



The RESET movement (*resetmovement. com*) plans to go to 200 cities in three years and reach 2.5 million people, culminating with a historic gathering of students and other young people in 2015.

PULSE is the largest student-led prayer and outreach effort in America today and has one of the youngest and most highly trained ministry teams in the world. The ministry concept was inspired by a paper Hall wrote on evangelism for his English class at North Dakota State University. Hall subsequently founded PULSE in 2006. For more information, go to *pulsemovement.com*.

#### Other Nations Join in Prayer and Fasting for USA

he National Day of Prayer and Fasting in Australia called for 72 hours of prayer and fasting for the USA from April 30–May 2, 2013 (the annual U.S. National Day of Prayer). The call was for Australia, New Zealand, and the nations of the world to stand with the USA in their hour of need, with a focus on prayer to help turn the tide of family breakdown, crippling addictions, increasing immorality, and random acts of horrific violence.

According to organizers, "The reality is that it was American men who shed their blood that saved Australia from invasion from the Japanese during the Second World War. The battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942 sank many Japanese ships and troop carriers at great cost to American life. Even though that battle was lost, the war was won as a result. Many nations of the world have much to thank the USA for because of their past and present sacrifices for freedom."

A prayer written by David Rowsome reads in part, "And so America, we thank God for you and pray for the healing of your wounds, the mending of your divisions, and the restoration of your foundations. We pray that God will prosper you and bless you so that you may continue to fulfill your destiny as a blessing to the nations of the earth.

"America, through all your sufferings, may you never cease to hope and trust in God! America, in these desperate days, may you always look to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as your Redeemer!

"America, when this time of testing has passed, may you, by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, come forth as gold, even much pure gold! And when God heals and restores you, will you pray for us as Job 'prayed for his friends' (Job 42:10)? Please forgive us, America, for our indifference and apathy to your suffering and our failure to pray for you as we ought. Pray for us that we too will fulfill our destinies as nations under God as together we trust in Him. And we will sing with you songs of the blessing of God."

To learn more about this prayer initiative, go to *nationaldayofprayer.com.au/ america*.





#### International Awakening Revival Institute Launches

or years Christian leaders have prayed about and discussed the need for a center for teaching and equipping men and women regarding the nature and importance of biblical revival. This has also been the lifelong burden of Richard Owen Roberts, a name respected and identified by many of these same lead-

ers as an authority on this vital subject. Roberts was a successor to the late Dr. J. Edwin Orr as president of the Oxford Association of Research in Revival.

Now, in collaboration with various members of the National Revival Network, the vision of leaders like Orr and

Roberts for an Institute on Revival will be realized with an opening conference at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, IL, on October 21–22, 2013. Roberts will be a featured speaker.

Leaders of the conference hope to prepare participants to "promote and steward these gracious visitations of the Lord." Brad Bush, director of the Institute, says, "It's truly exciting to see in the providence of God the convergence of persons, passion, and resources dedicated to establishing this Institute on Revival. In light of the burgeoning global movement of prayer, and especially prayer for revival, you sense a rising tide of expectation that the Lord is about to pour out His Spirit in extraordinary ways."

#### **Preparing for Revival**

The International Awakening Revival Institute will utilize all forms of media for academic study in addition to personal mentoring and supervised ministry projects—in both small- and large-group settings across the country. The Institute is committed to cultivating hearts and informing the minds of men and women who share a passion to see the Church alive to the glory of Jesus Christ. Because revival is both a personal and a corporate experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Revival Institute will

seek to achieve its purpose by addressing these two aspects of the Spirit's work by



Richard Owen Roberts

spects of the Spirit's work by offering tracks that include a three-year certificate, elective study, revival seminars, and a "Rekindle the Flame" denominational track. It will also sponsor renewal retreats, conferences, and the J. Edwin Orr Project (the republication and

redistribution of Orr's works on revival). According to Bush, "Learning about

revival is not the same as experiencing

revival, but historically it has been a catalyst to pray and prepare for revival." The Institute is an opportunity to study and network with

other followers of the Lord Jesus in anticipation and preparation for the outpouring of His Spirit in revival.

To register for the October 21–22 conference or learn more about the Institute programs, go to *internationalawakening.org* or email *info@internationalawakening.org*. (The conference is not a function of Wheaton College.) Both evangelical in doctrine and interdenominational in scope, the International Awakening Revival Institute is a division of International Awakening Ministries, Inc.

## START THE DISCUSSION

**INTERNATIONAL** 

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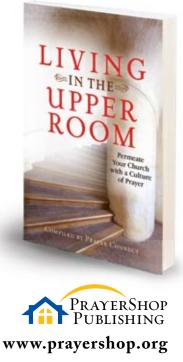
#### Developing a Culture of Prayer in Your Church

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#### NEWS&EVENTS

### Worldwide Call for Fasting, Prayer, and Repentance

e now together call the world to join with us in 40 days of prayer, fasting, and repentance from 6 August to 14 September 2013, culminating in an International Day of Prayer, Fasting, and Repentance on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2013 (Yom Kippur)."

This call to prayer was the result of an historic teleconference call held June 1 and led by Warwick Marsh, head of the National Day of Prayer in Australia. Seventeen prayer leaders from six different countries were on the call, but these prayer leaders are in direct contact with leaders from more than 100 nations. The resulting prayer initiative, called "Billion Souls Revival Prayer Call," is a call to the Church around the world to unify for 40 days of prayer.

Many believe this initiative is very much of God because of how quickly it came together. Prayer leaders in multiple nations began getting a sense that the world Church needs to be called to repent and pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit for revival and spiritual awakening.

Each nation will put its own twist on the event, but all will especially unify by focusing on four points:

- 1. Pray for a worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit for revival and transformation of the nations of the world.
- 2. Pray for a billion people to find Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- 3. Pray for an end to abortion and for God to turn back the tide of death and immorality that is sweeping the nations of the world.
- 4. Pray for a multiplication of prayer, praise, and worship of Jesus Christ across the world as never before, to bring great glory to God.

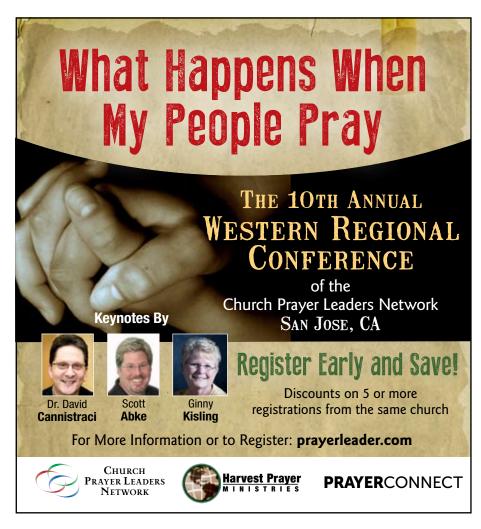
"God seems to be up to something,"

said prayer leader Dave Butts, chairman of America's National Prayer Committee. "Within the U.S. church, leaders are sensing the need to join this profound event, but that we need to focus particularly on repentance. August needs to be a time for deep repentance in the Church in America."

Butts noted several major repentance events are already scheduled within this time period. On August 12, Mission America has called for a Solemn Assembly for spiritual leaders to be held in Chicago. The Awakening America Alliance is again holding Cry Out America—a day of prayer and repentance on September 11—as it has done for the last several years. And a relatively new prayer event called Ten Days of Prayer, Fasting, and Worship will be held in multiple communities across the U.S. for the ten days between the Day of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement (Sept. 4–14; *10days.net*).

"I believe the Spirit of God is calling the Church to humble itself and pray in repentance," said Butts. "Whatever is coming to America, it is best handled on our knees. This is such a recent development that all I can tell you is to pray and keep watching the websites for *Prayer Connect* and America's National Prayer Committee (*nationalprayercommittee.com*)."

A daily prayer guide for the 40 days will be posted at *prayerconnect.net*.



#### Learning from the Prayer Life of Jesus

here are many places in Scripture where I particularly identify with the disciples. It's usually when they excelled at being human in their responses. I know I would have been terrified in the midst of a fierce

storm on a lake. I'm sure I would have been completely perplexed as to how a little bit of food was going to feed a huge crowd. And I'm afraid I might have made myself scarce when Jesus was arrested and taken away.

But I confess I've felt a bit smug in the past about how I thought I would have responded to Jesus' request for prayer during His darkest moments in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32– 42). He asked Peter, James, and John to keep watch and pray as He faced His impending death. Twice He implored them to stay awake, even for just an hour, as He poured out His heart before His heavenly Father.

Yet three times they fell asleep—on the hard ground, no less. *Really*? I used to think. *How difficult could it have been to stay awake for an hour when Jesus needed you*?

My smugness quickly turned toward humility one night when I was compelled to get out of bed about 2:00 a.m. to pray about a crisis in the life of someone close to me.

I knelt on the floor of my bedroom, with my face in the carpet. I prayed fervently. I cried out to God with great emotion.

And then I woke up about 30 minutes later.

I had no feeling in either of my legs. They were also "asleep." As I rolled over on my side and tried to drag myself to bed, I feared I had paralyzed myself from the waist down! The pain and tingling that steadily increases when the blood starts flowing back into "deadened" legs, was a dreadful and agonizing reminder of how easy it is to sleep at critical moments.

INTERCESSOR

Yet, my prayers that night were answered. I realized that even while I slept, Jesus was still praying alongside me at the right hand of our heavenly Father. It was the Spirit of Christ prompting me to pray in the first place—and I'm thankful the prayers of Christ continued on while I dozed. In my weakness, it is a comfort to be partnered with Jesus.

#### Keep Watch with Jesus

Jesus demonstrated a truly devoted prayer life. There were times when the disciples got to listen in on His prayers, but often He prayed alone. He prayed in crisis but always gave praise and glory to His Father. He explained persistence in prayer by using the example of an annoying widow who wouldn't take no for an answer—and encouraged the disciples to pray in the same way (Luke 18:1–8). His prayer life inspired His followers to learn more (Luke 11:1).

But, as Dave Butts points out in this issue, Jesus didn't pray just to provide a great model for us. He prayed because He was *compelled* to do so for the Kingdom's sake. Lou Shirey writes that some of Jesus' prayers were dangerous and edgy because He prayed for God's will over His own. And we learn through Brenda Poinsett's article that Jesus' prayer life continues on today. He is our Great Intercessor.

We live in urgent, critical days. I want to learn how to keep watch with our Lord and stay awake—joining Him in prayer for this desperate world.

CAROL MADISON is editor of Prayer Connect.

# **BY DAVE BUTTS**

will never forget the question, even though 20 years have passed since I heard it. I had just settled into an easy chair in the living room of a pastor friend to discuss the possibility of his church supporting our new prayer venture, Harvest Prayer Ministries. Before I could begin my appeal, he startled me by saying, "So you're starting a prayer ministry. What is your personal prayer life like?"

It was a valid question. If you are going to teach about prayer, you had better be praying!

That's why it is so encouraging to look at the prayer life of Jesus. He didn't just talk about it. He prayed. Throughout His life, He wove prayer into both action and teaching. If we are going to dig deep and truly understand prayer, we need to examine the prayer life of Jesus and all He taught on the subject.

continued on page 14

# Did He Really Need to Pray?



#### Jesus Gets It

Jesus has a unique perspective on prayer. He is the only one who "gets" prayer from both sides. Not only does He pray to His Father, He is also the God who is prayed to. He both *offers* prayers and *hears* prayers. And He certainly has something to say to us about this subject.

Even a cursory reading of the Gospels shows us the priority Jesus gave to prayer in His own life. Consider these occurrences:

- Matthew 4:1–11: Jesus prayed during 40 days of fasting in the desert.
- Mark 1:35: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."
- Luke 5:16: "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."
- Luke 6:12–13: "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles."
- Mark 6:46: "After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray."
- Luke 9:28: "About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray."
- Luke 10:21–22: Jesus prayed after the 72 disciples returned from ministering in surrounding towns.
- Matthew 11:25–27: Jesus gave praise to the Father.
- Matthew 14:23: "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray."
- John 17:1–16: The entire chapter is Jesus' most lengthy recorded prayer, and He prayed for *us*.
- Luke 22:41–44: Jesus prayed in Gethsemane before His death.
- Luke 23:34: Jesus prayed from the cross.

It is important to consider why Jesus prayed. I often hear people say that Jesus prayed as an example for us. While He is certainly a good example, His prayer life goes way beyond that. If He had prayed merely as an example, He would not have made so many attempts to withdraw from others and pray in secret.

No, Jesus prayed, not just as a model, but because He *had* to pray.

#### Just Ask Me

salm 2:7–8 gives us insight into the "why" of Jesus' prayer life. In this amazing passage, we are privileged to hear a conversation between the Father and the Son: "He [the Father] said to me, 'You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.""

The Father promises to give the Son planet earth as a result of Jesus' willingness to take on human flesh and fulfill the plan of redemption. But, because Jesus is also fully human, He is under the constraints of God's plan—that one must ask in order to receive. "You do not have because you do not ask God" (James 4:2). Even Jesus had to ask in order to receive.

Prayer was an essential part of Jesus' ministry. That makes perfect sense. It was both His plan and His Father's plan to get things done on earth through prayer. Jesus often withdrew to quiet places to be alone with His Father and to understand what He must do. Jesus said of Himself, "The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing" (John 5:19).

#### **Teach Us to Pray**

The personal prayer life of Jesus was so central to His ministry and so obvious that His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Nowhere does Scripture record that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them anything other than prayer. But as they watched the amazing life and ministry of Jesus, they correctly made the connection to His prayer life. If they were to follow Jesus, they needed to learn to pray like Jesus.

So much has been written about what we often call the Lord's Prayer that I hesitate to add anything (Luke 11:2–4). I would simply suggest this model prayer is God centered and Kingdom focused. Although Jesus certainly gives us permission in it to pray about personal matters such as daily bread and dealing with temptation, He also teaches us to focus on His Father's agenda in prayer.

As I pray the Lord's Prayer, I find that after I have worshiped the Holy One and have poured myself into praying for His Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven—any bit of energy or time I have left is then given to personal issues of prayer. But my prayers focus primarily on the greater things of the Kingdom, as Jesus taught us.

#### "Overpromising" Prayer?

Some of the most difficult teachings of Jesus on prayer are found in John 14–16. It almost sounds as though, if it were possible, Jesus was overpromising when He taught these prayer principles:

- John 14:13: "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."
- John 14:14: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."
- John 15:7: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."
- John 15:16: "Whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."
  John 16:23: "Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."
- John 16:24: "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

There is a tendency to try to spiritualize these teachings away—or to simply believe that Jesus was talking in generalities. But what if Jesus meant exactly what He said? Did He really intend to say, "Ask me for anything in my name and I will do it"?

If all true prayer is initiated by God and is all about accomplishing His agenda on earth, then suddenly these promises seem very practical and doable. It doesn't seem like overpromising at all!

Ultimately, these promises have more to do with relationship than our desire to receive something in prayer. In this same section of Scripture (John 15:1–8), Jesus teaches us that He is the vine and we are the branches. We are not separate, but connected. The only thing that flows through the branches is whatever originates in the vine. When we remain in Him, then the things that are in Himthose things that He desires—become possible for us when we ask.

t's the same for us as it was for Jesus in His fleshly form. He said He only did those things He saw His Father doing. He spoke only those things He heard from the Father. Prayer for us becomes that connectedness through the Spirit with the Father and the Son, so that what they desire might be accomplished on earth through the praying Christian. This is what it means to pray, "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

#### **Jesus Gets Ticked Off**

Prayer was so much a part of Jesus' life when He walked this earth that we should not be surprised at how upset He became when He cleansed the temple. The Father had declared that His house was to be a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17). Jesus recognized that His people were failing to live up to the name and intent of the Father's house.

It is important to recognize we are dealing with something of supernatural significance here. Jesus' reaction to the lack of prayer in the temple demonstrated that something powerful was going on. When He saw something totally opposed to His and the Father's plan, He could only respond in godly anger.

Mark's account of the cleansing of the temple opens the door to a deeper understanding of this. In Mark 11:11 we read, "Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve."

The next day Jesus came back with purpose, cleansing the temple of the merchants who were defiling the place

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# WHAT IS JESUS PRAYING?

criptures tell us that Jesus is ever living to intercede for us. As I have thought about this, I have wondered, *what is Jesus praying for us?* I wonder, if in some way, we can get a picture of what He is praying now if we look at the ways He prayed while on earth.

In the Gospels, 45 times it says something like "Early in the morning, Jesus went off by himself to pray" or "Jesus went to a solitary place to pray." We are not privy to Jesus' prayers in these times, but if we look at what Jesus did before and after the time of prayer, we find clues about what He prayed. I see four areas on which Jesus focused His prayers.

He prayed for direction. The night before He narrowed the number of followers to the 12 disciples, He went off to pray. "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles" (Luke 6:12–16). I wonder if He and the Father went name by name through the list until Jesus knew which ones His Father wanted Him to select.

On another occasion, Mark records, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!' Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons" (Mark 1:35–39). Note that Jesus ignored a perfectly good ministry opportunity to go in a new direction. The disciples came looking for Jesus because a crowd was gathering and waiting for Him. Jesus said, "No, we have to go elsewhere." He got new marching orders.

I wonder if Jesus is praying for direction for us—that we will understand and be willing to obey whatever God wants us to do.

> He prayed for God's strength to overcome temptation. After the feeding of the 5,000, Matthew records: "Immediately Jesus made the

disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray " (Matt. 14:22–23).

What did He need to pray about? John's Gospel gives us a hint. "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself" (John 6:15). Being a leader is heady stuff. People wanted Him to become king (which He was ultimately meant to do—but in a different way). I think Jesus went away with the Father to pray about His true ministry and regain perspective. He prayed for victory over the temptations coming His way.

I think Jesus is praying that we will be kept from the evil one and given strength to overcome temptation—and not think more of ourselves than we ought (Rom. 12:3).

He prayed about overcoming His own will. We all know the garden prayer on the night Jesus was betrayed: "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). But three days earlier it was clear He was wrestling with what was to come: "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" (John 12:27–28).

Surrendering our wills is one of our most difficult struggles. I believe Jesus is continually praying that we will submit to the Father in complete surrender.

He interceded for others. "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31–32). While our tendency is to pray, "Lord, get them out of this," or "Please fix this mess," Jesus never prays that way for Peter. I suspect He is right now at the right hand of the Father praying on our behalf: "Strengthen their faith through this situation."

It is comforting that Jesus is perhaps praying these things for us. But it should also challenge us in how we pray for ourselves and others—as Jesus would pray.

-JONATHAN GRAF is publisher of Prayer Connect.

of prayer. Could it be that He and the Father had a long talk the night before about what was happening in their house? Rather than a spur-of-the-moment flare up, I believe Jesus' action was a carefully considered move that the Father directed.

There is a reason all four of the Gospel writers recorded Jesus' temple cleansing. God intended the temple to represent the way God chose to do His work in this world—through the prayers of His people. When the place of prayer is perverted into something different, it arouses the righteous anger of God.

It is clear in Scripture that we, as Christians, both individually and gathered as the church, are called to be a new temple, God's house. And God's house is still called to be a house of prayer for all nations. We have to wonder if the Lord walked through our churches as He did the temple, would He agree that we have been faithful to God's purposes—or would He characterize us more as a "den of thieves"?

#### **Our Role and Partnership**

od (Father, Son, and Spirit) has invested something of great significance in prayer. It is His way of bringing about change on earth and at the same time, bringing His children

to maturity. Understanding His purpose and His ways will not only change our perspective on prayer but also on the purpose and nature of the Church.

Jesus walked upon this earth, modeling the life of prayer that the Father intends for all His children. His prayer focused on the Kingdom and its advance in the world. On a personal level, Jesus demonstrated a balanced prayer life; pri-

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vate and public prayer blended together for maximum impact.

Remember that startling moment when my preacher friend asked me about my own prayer life? I satisfied his curiosity by telling him about my spiritual disciplines and prayer practices at the time.

I would answer that question today by saying, "I'm trying to pray like Jesus." I want to continue to learn and grow as I model and teach others about prayer. Ultimately, I want all my prayers to sound like Jesus: "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."



**DAVE BUTTS** is president of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the chairman of America's National Prayer Committee. He is the author of several books, including his newest d Shaws Un: Essays an Reminal

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# DANGEROUS PRA

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# **BY LOU SHIREY**

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n the classic children's book by C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* the characters meet Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, who tell them about the great lion in the land of Narnia named Aslan (who represents Jesus Christ). One of the young heroes, Susan, asks Mr. and Mrs. Beaver if Aslan is "quite safe."

"'Safe?' said Mr. Beaver. 'Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.'"<sup>1</sup>

Our inclination is to seek out the safe things, to pray in ways that bring comfort and encouragement. We believe prayer is designed to let God know what we need—and in turn allow Him to create a safe place for us to dwell.

Yet, when it came to Kingdom advancement, Jesus

# The Benefit of DANGEROUS PRAYERS BY REBECCA REED SHIREY

wish I always prayed with the hands-off abandon of this prayer that changed my life: "Increase my faith, Lord. And do whatever it takes." I agree completely with the psalmist who said of God, "You are good, and what you do is good" (Psalm 119:68). Yet I sometimes live in a tug-of-war between what I perceive as good—and the good *God* might choose for me.

Jesus modeled the concept of praying with complete trust in God's choice. When the time drew near for Him to go to the cross, He prayed, "Father, glorify your name" (John 12:28). During His night of prayer in Gethsemane, Jesus yielded completely to God's plan to bring salvation to mankind. He declared, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). He chose God's good over His comfort. He chose God's glory over His relief.

O. Hallesby wrote in his book, *Prayer*: "To pray is to let Jesus glorify His name in the midst of our needs." What happens when it is God's glory we crave? When we want only what He wills and when He wills it? When God enters into our prayers, He will bring glory to His name in profound ways—ways in which we benefit.

- We tap into His unlimited resources. Praying human solutions will limit us to human resources. When we rest in God's chosen outcome, the resources of the universe await His command. We can trust Him to bring about an outcome only He can achieve. He will receive glory as a result.
- We enjoy His greater good. We can only see our circumstances from a limited perspective. What seems good to us in the moment might bring disastrous results in the long term. When we rely on His solution, He is constantly at work preparing people, arranging circumstances, and calling on resources to bring about our highest good. He sees how our circumstances fit into the big picture of His purposes and He works toward our best possible solution.
- We enter a deeper place of intimacy. Emptying ourselves of any desire to get our own way brings enrichment, satisfying us beyond imagination. When He receives glory, He will gift us with Himself in greater ways. When we trust God with our circumstances, we encounter a prevailing peace only He can bring. And we experience a greater awe in the ways He will move in the future.

Do these benefits exempt us from suffering and disappointment? No. But we can depend on Him to invade our trouble with His mercy and goodness. We can count on Him to either deliver us from trouble or give us grace to persevere through it. As God helps us in our troubles, we glory in Him. When His glory becomes our chief desire, His choices become our greatest outcome.

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didn't pray safe prayers. He prayed dangerous prayers. He prayed in ways that went against the grain of popular thought about prayer.

Yes, Jesus is good. But His prayer life demonstrates that He is our fearless King.

#### The Secret of Dangerous Praying

The prayers of Jesus contain dangerous statements. Religious leaders of His day cited some of His prayers as proof that He needed to be killed. But Jesus also prayed in a way that revealed His willingness to yield to God's plan for His death.

Jesus knew the secret of dangerous praying. Dangerous prayers are the safest ones. They bring us to a place of completely surrendering to God, trusting Him in everything.

The Bible records words from only a handful of the prayers of Jesus. They are written so that we might learn from the Greatest Intercessor. Scripture tells us of other times Jesus prayed in solitude, sometimes even praying through the night. We read in Mark 1:35, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." We are also told in Luke 6:12: "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God." We don't know the content of those prayers. They remain between Jesus and His Father.

But we can imagine how Jesus' habit of prayer aroused a desire in the disciples to learn more. The disciples heard Jesus teach about life in the Kingdom. They witnessed His miracles. But they didn't hear His prayers during those nights He spent alone. At least one disciple wanted to know how to pray like He did. "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples'" (Luke 11:1). Jesus then gave them a simple, yet powerful and dangerous, prayer: "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation'" (vv. 2–4).

Now, centuries later, this prayer of Jesus has been repeated millions of times—replicated in the same way that Jesus originally taught it to His disciples. Yet we still fail to see the danger in this prayer. Jews did not dare to say the name of God aloud. They would never have casually referred to God in such a personal way as "Father."

Hank Hanegraff, in his book *The Prayer Life of Jesus*, observes that "the first words of the prayer of Jesus must have been nothing short of scandalous."

But that is precisely how Jesus taught His disciples to pray. It was this familiar way of referring to God as His Father that offended the religious leaders, prompting them to plot against Him.

> So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:16–18).

Today we pray this way more easily and freely because Jesus has redeemed us to God—and we can pray to God as our "Father." Perhaps the danger for us lies in losing the awe of that privilege. The God of the universe is our Father. This very prayer that brought Jesus into great danger now signifies our access to our heavenly Father. The most dangerous prayer has become our safest prayer.

#### The Danger of Remaining Here

he Gospel of John records the longest prayer of Jesus in chapter 17. When He started out by praying, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you" (v. 1), Jesus knew His time on earth was short. He continued His lengthy prayer by focusing on His followers: "Holy Father,

protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. . . . My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (vv. 11, 15).

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First, leaving His followers in the world is dangerous. Knowing what was to come, it would have been easy and safe for Jesus to pray for the Father to remove His disciples from this world. But He didn't. He released His followers—and those to come—into the protection of God.

Second, Jesus did this knowing we are capable of disappointing Him. He entrusted the gospel message to us, fully aware we can make a mess of things.

When I was a youngster, my father would say to me often, "Lou, be careful what you do. You carry my name, and what you do reflects on me and on our name." Jesus knew that we would carry His name and reflect Him in all we do. To pray that we would remain here in His name is a dangerous prayer!

When the church functions at its best, there is no place like it. Within the fellowship of the church we find forgiveness, healing, life, joy, acceptance, unity, love, and grace. But the church can fail to represent Jesus well. At its worst the church is a place of power, manipulation, judging spirits, condemnation, unforgiveness, revenge, and abuse.

Jesus knew that we are capable of smearing His name, but He entrusted His message to us anyway. To me, this amazing prayer reflects Jesus' trust that God will bring about good through us.

#### The Dangerous Will of God

When Jesus finished praying that prayer for all believers, He went to an olive grove across the way from Jerusalem (John 18:1). We know this grove as the Garden of Gethsemane. It is here that in the last few hours before His death, Jesus prayed for God's will to be done in His life.

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. *"Abba*, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. . . . Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come" (Mark 14:35–37, 39–41).

This seems to be the ultimate dangerous prayer of Jesus. Three times He prayed the same thing: "Not what I will, but what you will." He knew His horrible death loomed ahead. Was there any way out?

I have read this passage many times throughout my life—but this time I recognized that He prayed "Not what I will, but what you will" *three times*. It is somehow comforting to me that Jesus needed to pray the same dangerous prayer over and over again. I can be pretty harsh on myself when it comes to prayer and obedience. I can have very high expectations of how quickly I will respond to God.

Jesus demonstrated that dangerous prayers often must be repeated. We know what we desire to do, but it takes time and strategic prayer to move to that place of safety in God's will.

As a follower of Jesus have you prayed a dangerous prayer? If the most dangerous prayers are actually the safest prayers, then why would any of us hold back?

My wife and I prayed such a prayer in 1998. After almost 30 years serving as a U.S. Army chaplain, I retired when I was accepted to the Beeson Pastors Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. The spiritual lives of two pastors in our program deeply impacted us. So we began praying for God to increase our faith in the same way He did for those pastors. I later learned that Rebecca prayed, "Increase my faith, Lord. And do whatever it takes."

That is a dangerous prayer! If I had

known in advance how God would answer our prayers, I am certain I would have been terrified.

After the year-long Beeson program, God spoke clearly through Scripture: "When the cloud moves, you move." So we began a process of moving from place to place, assisting churches and pastors. With our household goods in storage, for five years and in 19 places we followed the "cloud of God" as He directed our lives.

This dangerous prayer led to an exhilarating time in our lives, learning about His faithfulness to us. We learned to hear His voice more clearly and to trust Him to direct us in every move we made. Those years helped form us and created a deeper dependence upon God.

#### Learning to Pray Dangerously

r. Jerry Kirk has been a powerful witness for Christ through decades of ministry and leadership. For years, in a 40-day covenant prayer relationship with thousands of people,

he has prayed a simple prayer for himself and for others. He desires this prayer covenant between prayer partners will become a catalyst for an awakening to Jesus Christ as Lord. He lists nine simple prayers that are all dangerous prayers. Here are a few from the list:

- Wash me clean from every sin.
- Help me love others the way You love me.
- Jesus, be Lord of my life today in new ways, and change me any way You want!
- Fill me with Your Holy Spirit.
- Use me today for Your glory, and to invite others to follow Jesus Christ as Lord.

When God answers these prayers in our lives, it is transformational. God is

calling us to pray that we will be washed clean, changed in any way He desires, and willing to live out His will instead of our own. The dangerous prayers of Jesus—and our own dangerous prayers—lead us to the place of God's perfect will.

And so we echo the words of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver of C. S. Lewis's Narnia. The

dangerous prayers may not always seem safe, but they are always good.



LOU SHIREY is the director of prayer ministry and clergy development for the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. His wife Rebecca travels interna-

tionally as a speaker at conferences and retreats.



# Our Great Intercessor Today



# **BY BRENDA POINSETT**



ad is not doing well. Every minute I have with him is important, plus I am very sick," wrote Candace (name changed). "I am trying to get better, but I just can't get there. I have cried and prayed all I can; I don't know what to think. What is God doing?"

> Her father was dying, and she was experiencing frequent hospitalizations due to her autoimmune disease. The combination was getting her down. Candace couldn't make any sense out of what she was experiencing.

I emailed this reply: "Don't think. I know that sounds like strange advice, but I've found when you are going through something like you are, it is better not to try to figure out what God is doing. Let God be God, and rest in the knowledge that Jesus is praying for you. And someday, when this is long behind you, you will come to an understanding."

Many of us go through times of vulnerability when we feel as if we are losing our grip on the rope of faith. We may feel disconnected, confused, weak, helpless, fearful, defenseless, or even desperate. Peter went through such a time in the midst of his denials of Christ and right before Jesus died. But eventually Peter became a powerful preacher and a leader of the early Church.

What made the difference? Jesus' intercession! Jesus prayed for Peter and for others while He was here on earth. When Satan asked to sift the disciples like wheat (Luke 22:31–32), Jesus prayed in advance for Peter's faith not to fail. It is something He still does—for us.

#### Jesus' Intercessory Role

esus' love and concern for His followers never stopped. His praying continues "in heaven" where He sits "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty" (Heb. 8:1). In this position, the resurrected, ever-living Savior intercedes for us as our high priest. He represents us to

God the Father.

While there are verses relating to this role scattered throughout the New Testament, we learn most about Jesus' intercession in Hebrews. This book was written to Jewish Christians, who, though they were believers of long standing, were declining spiritually and considering returning to their Jewish religious roots. The author urged them to stay true to Christ and not fall away. He understood they had been subject to persecution and reproach. But to help them deal with this, the writer reminded them that Jesus had "endured the cross" and survived "its shame" (12:2). He encouraged them to take heart because Jesus was now serving as their high priest, as someone who could help them in their

time of need (4:14-16, 5:1-5, 12:2-3).

The Hebrews would have raised an eyebrow at the idea of Jesus being a priest. According to Jewish law, the priests were to come from the tribe of Levi and the high priest was to be a descendent of Aaron. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, a tribe that had nothing to do with the priesthood.

Anticipating this question, the author of Hebrews reminded them that a priest didn't always have to come from the tribe of Levi. He took them back to a priest before the law, back to the priest that Abraham honored with his tithes. This priest was Melchizedek (Heb. 7:5–10, Gen. 14:18).

- He was without beginning and end.
- He had no genealogy like the Levitical priests.
- He was the one and only priest in his order.
- He was both a king and a priest, and he held these offices directly from God.

Jesus is like Melchizedek. He has no beginning or end. He's the Alpha and Omega. There's no one like Him; He is unique. He is the "King of kings," and most importantly, Jesus was appointed by God and designated as our high priest who lives forever to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:20–22).

#### **Our Sympathetic High Priest**

As the Hebrews considered Christ's credentials, another question might have occurred to them; it would have to me. How could Jesus represent us? Part of a priest's work is to represent people before God, to present their cases. To adequately do this requires sympathy and understanding. Could Jesus, who is "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (Heb. 7:26), really understand what we deal with?

A priest needs to be sensitive to the needs of those on whose behalf he ministers. He has to feel compassion toward them and understand their circumstances. Here, too, Jesus is qualified.

- He was "made like them, fully human in every way" (Heb. 2:17).
- He "suffered when he was tempted" (2:18).
- He is able "to empathize with our weaknesses" (4:15).
- He "has been tempted in every way, just as we are" (4:15).
- He "learned obedience from what he suffered" (5:8).

Jesus sympathizes with us and exercises mercy toward us because He knows what human life is like. He even understands what it means to be subjected to pressures that encourage sinning. Being God's Son may have made His personal victory over sin a foregone conclusion, but that doesn't minimize the reality of His temptations. Jesus experienced temptations just as we do. He understands us. Consequently, we have "a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God" (Heb. 2:17).

As a sympathizing, God-appointed high priest, Jesus serves God, and He serves us. The Bible speaks of Him as an intercessor, a mediator, and an advocate. Personally, I think of Him as my lawyer. Many times, I've explained my side of things to Him and then prayed, "Jesus, plead my case."

What kind of cases does Jesus take to the Father? For what does He ask when He represents us?

#### **His Intercessory Concerns**

While the Bible doesn't give a list of all Jesus intercedes for on our behalf, His intercession seems to revolve around three areas:

**1.** *Our sin and transgressions.* When we sin, our fellowship with God is interrupted. We feel disconnected from Him. Being separated from God is a dreadful feeling. Yet, because Jesus pleads for us, we don't have to worry about a breach in the fellowship being permanent. If we confess our sin, Jesus is "an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1). Fellowship is restored. Jesus makes reconciliation for the sins of His followers; therefore, we can be confident that nothing can ever permanently dissolve our relationship with God.

2. Our faith challenges. In life, we experience difficulties due to our humanity and the nature of this world difficulties like Candace was experiencing. These difficulties weaken our faith because what we experience defies understanding.

We also face challenges in being earnest, effective Christians in a hostile environment. We get discouraged. Our anchor of hope feels less "firm and secure" (Heb. 6:19). Scripture reminds us that when we are up against hardship, troubles, persecution, famine, and danger, Jesus is "interceding for us" (Rom. 8:34).

> herefore, we can count on His prayers when we find ourselves in overwhelming situations, when pent-up tension grips us like a vise, when we can't see light at the end of the tunnel, when we're filled with anger because

progress isn't happening fast enough, when we experience ridicule for our beliefs, or when we are encountering spiritual warfare. There's a limit to our ability to endure. But with Jesus there are no limits. Just as He prayed for Peter's faith not to fail, Jesus will see that our anchor holds when we can't hold on any longer.

**3.** *Our service challenges.* In His high priestly prayer, Jesus interceded for His followers (including us!) the night before His death (John 17:6–26). He prayed for them to be united as a group (17:11), to have the full measure of His joy (17:13), to be protected from the evil one (17:14–15), and to be sanctified with His word of truth (17:17)—all needs that continue for us today as we try to be effective Christians. How thankful we can

be that He still intercedes for us in these glorifying ways.

From these three categories, we can conclude that Jesus' intercession seems to revolve around spiritual concerns, "matters related to God" (Heb. 5:1). In other words, don't count on His praying to help you win the lottery! A Christian should never assume that Jesus' intercession is some kind of insider's advantage to get anything you want because Jesus is on your side.

But we can—and should—count on His intercession to help us stay connected with God, to weather life's challenges, and to serve God effectively. Jesus will pray about these things whether we are aware of it or not because He is a faithful high priest. But our awareness and acknowledgment of His intercessory role

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812 238-5504 www.prayershop.org in our lives increase the benefits—particularly with regard to our own praying.

#### Praying with Jesus

cknowledging Jesus' intercession brings relief. "When you reminded me of Jesus' intercession, I immediately relaxed," Candace told me after her father died. "I hadn't been able to do that since Dad was told he had but a few

weeks to live. I still don't know 'why,' but I stopped feeling as if I *had* to know."

For me, the relief is in not feeling as if the outcome of my prayers for myself or for others is totally up to me. *If I don't pray, then.*...Or, *if I falter, God's not going to answer.*...

If we're honest, sometimes praying can be a burden—as if the result is totally dependent on us. Knowing that Jesus is interceding takes away the loneliness and spreads out the responsibility. This doesn't mean we quit praying or take the attitude of "just let Jesus take care of it." Our prayers are important and have a purpose. Yet there is comfort in knowing we do not pray alone.

The more we acknowledge Jesus' intercession, the more we can "approach the throne of grace with confidence" (Heb. 4:16). Jesus as our high priest makes God more approachable—even when we may feel God would not understand.

That's the way I felt for many years. My father's favorite word was *no*. So I assumed God would be the same way. Until I learned otherwise, I couldn't bring myself to ask God about some things I wanted or needed. I was certain He would say no. But because Jesus "put on skin" and walked around on earth dealing with human circumstances and difficulties, I

#### CAPITOL HILL PRAYER PARTNERS Praying with Knowledge for Our Government



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Thank you and God bless you! Protecting the Nation through Prayer Since 1994 learned I could count on Him to understand and to plead my case.

I also knew Jesus would interpret my need in accordance with God's will because He perfectly knows the mind of God. We don't always have the spiritual discernment we need when we pray for ourselves or for others. Our perspective is limited; what we want may not be best in light of God's long-range plan. What we consider God's will, may not be God's will. Jesus knows, though, and argues our case accordingly. This frees us to be ourselves when we pray. We don't need to worry about whether we're expressing ourselves appropriately or seeing all the possible ramifications to our requests.

#### **Still a Mystery**

Now, exactly *how* Jesus intercedes, I don't know. His intercession is not necessarily expressed in words, the way we often pray or expect others to pray. Neither is it with strong crying and tears such as He prayed on earth (Heb. 5:7). Rather, He prays with kingly sovereignty. Perhaps in some way—known only to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—divine communication takes place.

However the intercession occurs, the process is mindboggling. That Jesus intercedes for believers around the world is something that truly deserves the description of *awesome*. This realization increases my praise and worship, prompting me to say, "Thank You, Lord, for Your prayers. Thank You for interceding for me and for others."

I marvel at being the recipient of such love and mercy. You mean me? You mean with millions of others to care about, Jesus prays for me?

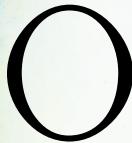


**BRENDA POINSETT** is a speaker and author of several books, including *Reaching Heaven: Discovering the Cornerstones of Jesus' Prayer Life* (available at *prayershop.org*).

Her website is brendapoinsett.com.

# A Bible Study BY SANDRA HIGLEY

**Note:** This Bible study is formatted for small group open discussion. If you use this study by yourself, we suggest that you journal your answers to the discussion questions. Also, please use suggested translations where indicated. Biblegateway.com is an excellent source for translations you may not have on hand.



ne of the most exciting, risky things I've experienced is a prayer journey to Yogyakarta and Bali during a 10/40 Window campaign. An intercessor friend and I felt the Lord leading us to go, and for six months prior to leav-

PRAYER LIFE OF

ing, He had us prepare in some extreme ways—from a specific diet to an intense study of the history and culture of the people we would encounter. But the most intriguing and—gulp!—dangerous thing was going with no itinerary, making no arrangements for hotel or travel accommodations. We had no cell phones, no contact with our families stateside, and no idea where He would lead us. We knew a missionary family in the area, but they believed they could not be involved in what we were doing because it might "blow their cover" in this predominantly Muslim nation.

As two 40-something women alone in a strange country thousands of miles from home, we were thrilled and overwhelmed with this assignment. It truly was a "pray-like-Jesus-prayed" mission: complete reliance on where the Holy Spirit would direct us next. Thinking back on the things we were allowed to do and the opportunities we were given in the spirit realm still brings feelings of awe! Oh, how I wish I operated in that same level of do-nothing-except-what-the-Fathertells-you prayer on a minute-by-minute basis.

And then I wonder: Why don't I?

#### **Discussion Questions**

Praying like Jesus prayed is a dangerous and thrilling proposition! Lou Shirey writes, "Our inclination is to seek out the safe things, to pray in ways that bring comfort and encouragement. We believe prayer is designed to let God know what we need—and in turn allow Him to create a safe place for us to dwell. Yet, when it came to Kingdom advancement, Jesus didn't pray safe prayers. He prayed dangerous prayers."

Think about your current prayer list. Which prayers would you call "safe" and which would you call "dangerous"? Why? In a seemingly topsy-turvy Kingdom where being last makes you first, losing your life is the only way to find it, and foolish things confound the wise (Matt. 10:39, 19:30; 1 Cor. 1:27), Jesus taught that these principles were actually the secret to living God's way. Shirey says, "Dangerous prayers are the safest ones. They bring us to a place of completely surrendering to God, trusting Him in everything. . . . As a follower of Jesus have you prayed a dangerous prayer? If the most dangerous prayers are actually the safest prayers, then why would any of us hold back?"

What key phrases in the following Scriptures indicate that complete surrender and trust in God is a critically important prayer posture? (2 Kings 18:5–6; Ps. 9:10; 20:6–8; 31:13–15; 44:5–7; 49:5–7, 12–14; 118:8–9; Isa. 2:22; Rom. 15:13)

Rebecca Shirey explains that when we follow Jesus' example of praying with complete trust in God's choice, we benefit in profound ways:

- We tap into His unlimited resources (praying human solutions will limit us to human resources; trusting Him brings about an outcome only He can achieve).
- We enjoy His greater good (praying from our perspective might bring disastrous results in the long term; His solution taps into means that bring our highest good).
- We enter a deeper place of intimacy (emptying ourselves of any desire to get our own way brings satisfaction beyond imagination).

What evidence (positive and negative) of these truths have you seen in your own life?

Dave Butts asks us to consider why Jesus prayed. "Jesus prayed, not just as a model, but because He *had* to pray." What insights do the following passages give into why Jesus prayed? (Ps. 2:7–8; John 5:19; James 4:2) How do John 15:1–8 and Matthew 6:10 show that we are to continue to pray the John 5:19 model?

According to Brenda Poinsett, as Jesus continues to pray for us in His eternal role as intercessor, at least some of His prayer concerns revolve around three areas. Look up the following passages to find why she believes these areas are central to His intercessory concerns:

Our sin and transgressions (1 John 2:1)

Our faith challenges (Luke 22:32; Rom. 8:34)

Our service challenges (John 17:6–26)

Poinsett remarks, "Knowing that Jesus is interceding takes away the loneliness and spreads out the responsibility." Comment on her statement based on Hebrews 4:14–16.

How does knowing that "Jesus 'put on skin' and walked around on earth dealing with human circumstances and difficulties," affect your perspective of His ability to plead your case in heaven?

#### **Action Steps**

Read the following Scriptures: Matthew 4:1–11; 11:25–27; 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12–13; 9:28; 10:21–22; 22:41–44; 23:34. Based on the priority Jesus gave to prayer in His own life, what new or renewed perspective do you have regarding the necessity of prayer?

What will you do in response to what the Holy Spirit is speaking to you?

**SANDRA HIGLEY** is the author of several Scripture prayer guides that come in bookmark form, including *Prayers of Repentance, Partnering with God in the Struggle over Sin*, and *Life-Giving Prayers for Your Church.* 

# The God of Learn,

By Sandy Mayle

ore and more, I believe in the God of long answers. In fact, the reason I do is a long answer in itself.

Lean, and Wait

As a young adult, I wanted to learn to improvise on the piano—to add

unwritten notes to the music I played in church, and to segue smoothly from one song to another. With some years of piano study behind me, a bit of instruction was all I needed. So I shared my aspirations with a local graduate of Eastman School of Music. She agreed to teach me.

"But I think we ought to start with some studies in theory and keys and chord structure," she said after assessing my level of expertise. (I'd been taught more *hows* than *whys*.) "That will give you the foundation needed to play as you want to." I reluctantly agreed, and we dug in. To my dismay, however, long stretches went by without any mention of my goal. Month after month I dutifully repeated Hanon piano exercises and labored over Glover theory workbooks while *wanting* to soulfully embellish "How Great Thou Art."

Inwardly, I began to wonder if she even remembered my initial request. Was she stringing me along for the money? Did she just enjoy an adult pupil after hours with restless youngsters? My skills were definitely improving, though, so I persevered.

As you can guess, I eventually learned that she had not forgotten my goal. We had indeed been working toward just that, having the more advanced workbooks at hand and ready to produce when I mastered the all-important basics.

Although today I am no virtuoso, I *can* improvise at the piano, based on the foundation built during long stretches of silence and diligent—if sometimes doubtful—obedience.

#### Long Time Coming

Sometimes when I pray, things happen quickly. It's as though God has His reply teetering on the edge of heaven: "Quick, ask! Here comes the answer!"

More often, it seems, that answer is a long time coming. From all indications, God has forgotten my request. But I'm learning that more is going on during those long stretches of silence and apparent inactivity than I thought.

After five years of marriage, my husband Dave and I announced to our family that we were finally ready for children. I assume we prayed for that first child-to-be. Mostly, I recall that we *assumed.* Assumptions turned to prayers, though, when, as time passed, I did not become pregnant.

The ensuing years of infertility were marked by doctor visits, testing, medicine, and disappointment. They were also marked by a deep sense of inadequacy and a longing to crawl under a rock and hide from continual failure. Frankly, I wanted to consider it all a "short no" from God. I was ready to concede parenthood.

But God was bent on revisiting the foundations of my life, where I was an unstable blend of the wise man who built on the rock of obedience to Christ's words and the foolish man who failed to put His words into practice (Matt. 7:24–27). Scripture says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5), but I had not learned to fix my confidence on God and persevere. Although God's Word says, "Carry each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2), I shrank from allowing others to help bear mine.

And so God brought alongside me a dear pastoral couple who, with scandalous frequency, month after month, gathered one depressed me (along with a feisty widow named Olive) just to laugh and eat and play UNO. He enlisted the quiet support of family and the not-so-subtle efforts of church friends to encourage me. (I can still see women furtively arranging for my gift at another woman's baby shower to be the seventh one opened—a "sure sign" I was the next mother-to-be.)

And just when I wanted to give up, Dave persuaded me to take the medication one more month. Nine months later, we welcomed James David Mayle. This journey to motherhood taught me some all-important basics: the Fellowship of Suffering, the Danger of Despair, and the Value of Persistent Community. These are some weight-bearing underpinnings that are rarely constructed from instantaneous answers to prayer.

God's long answers are always accompanied by invitations to learn more and lean more while waiting on Him.

#### The God of Expansive Explanation

In more recent years I became reacquainted with the minister of my childhood. Bob was a reserved individual, and I'd had little interaction with him as a youngster. Yet he had always been "my pastor." I guess with the common exodus of young people from our congregation, he considered me one of his success stories, a fruit of his labors. Now he delighted in long conversations, frequently inserting anecdotes from the past. A story from his youth would serve to illustrate a point; a dilemma would remind him of advice from a famous saint.

Sometimes he would apologize with, "I'm probably boring you with all these stories." And I must admit, I did find my mind wandering at times. But other times, nothing but his stories communicated more clearly.

I remember the day we discussed my family's leaving the denomination (for the second and final time). He could have said, "I'm devastated—again." And I would have understood that he felt sadness about it.

Instead, Bob unfolded a narrative of the time he lacerated his leg during some boyish endeavor. Days later, he rode his bicycle again, despite the injury, and had an accident. As he hit the ground, the half-healed wound viciously reopened.

He concluded his story, saying that the news of our final departure from the denomination brought him that same excruciating pain.

I'd had no idea. Bob's "long version" communicated the depths of his heart in ways brief comments could not have done. It deepened our friendship.

I like it when God keeps the conversation moving, because sometimes, like Bob, He loses me in the long backtracking and "remember when" and "consider this." My eyes glaze over. My mind wanders. He wants to send me digging into Scriptures or embarking on a new spiritual discipline. He simply waits for me to keep on asking. I wonder why He doesn't get to the point.

And finally He does get to the point, sometimes with a *coup de grâce* that leaves me speechless. How could any quick reply have packed the cumulative punch that His long answer delivered? What grace, that He cares enough to open His heart and give me the full-length version whether I want to hear it or not. He takes time to instill truth through repetition layer upon layer of study, illustration, discipline, revelation, and dialogue.

"I wait for the LORD," the psalmist wrote, "my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope" (Ps. 130:5). Like that writer, I'm learning to wait, too, and listen more patiently to God's extended replies.

Stop and Study Joy

Recently, in the throes of chronic illness and a newly emptied nest, I felt my spirit bogging down. For months, emptiness, sadness, and negative thoughts bombarded me. Alone on a personal retreat, I begged the Lord to take these away and renew my jaded heart.

His answer: Philippians—the book of joy. Spend the next three months in Philippians. Read it over and over. Read it in different translations. Study it. Study what others have written about it. Memorize from it.

So I carefully read Chuck Swindoll's Laugh Again, based on Paul's letter to Philippi. Then I worked though John MacArthur's Philippians 12-week study guide. Meanwhile, and most importantly, I prayerfully studied the Book of Philippians itself, writing key verses on memory cards and memorizing "glad verses" such as these from The Living Bible:

- "I am going to keep on being glad, for I know that as you pray for me, and as the Holy Spirit helps me, this is all going to turn out for my good" (1:19).
- "Whatever happens, dear friends, be glad in the Lord" (3:1).
- "Always be full of joy in the Lord; I say it again, rejoice!" (4:4).
- "Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about" (4:8).

In the process, I came to appreciate

Paul's attitude in that Roman jail. I realized that his outlook was available to me, too, through the Holy Spirit. His words, committed to my memory, brought a new discipline to my mind, courage to my heart, and confidence for the future.

I spent several weeks in Philippians. While I felt the heaviness lift immediately, I took a long time and soaked in that happy book. Like the psalmist, I put my hope in God's Word and found that God's "Philippians story" revealed His heart to me and deepened our relationship. He lifted my own heart to say with Paul, "Whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead" (Phil. 3:11, TLB).

#### He Doesn't Forget

Yes, more and more I believe in the God of long answers, Oh, I still come to Him with requests for prodigals and problems. I still look for answers to fall off the edge of heaven. There are still some long silences. Some days I tend toward doubt; some days I just hope He hasn't forgotten.

But I remember the piano instructor's intentionality. I recall the mentors and Christian friends who have taught me long-term lessons. I think about my three-month visit with Paul and his perspective on waiting on the Lord during difficult times. And I see all over again that in the long reply, God is honoring not dismissing—my request. He is asking only for my trust and cooperation.

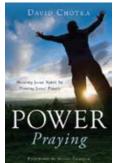
He's giving me the long answer and the faith to keep holding on until it comes.

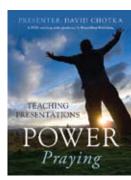


SANDY MAYLE is a freelance writer who has written for both *Prayer Connect* and the former *Pray!* magazine. She and her husband Dave are from Erie, PA.

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# Guarding the

uthor Stormie Omartian, in her book *The Power of a Praying Parent*, says, "The battle for our children's lives is waged on our knees. When we don't pray, it's like sitting on the sidelines watching our children in a war zone getting shot at from every angle. When we do pray, we're in the battle alongside them, appropriating God's power on their behalf." She also says, "Whenever you pray for your child, do it as if

## Doing Battle on Their Behalf

# Minds of Our Children

you are interceding for his or her life—because that's exactly what you are doing. Remember that while God has a perfect plan for our children's lives, Satan has a plan for them too."<sup>1</sup>

We have an enemy who wishes to damage our children. He wants their hearts and their minds. We are in a battle for the lives of our children, and, as previously quoted, the battle can only be waged on our knees in prayer. We can't wish the enemy wouldn't bother them or hope he will go away. We can, however, defeat him by the power of the Word of the Living God.

PRAYERCONNECT.NET 35

# We can't wish the enemy will go away!

#### Take a Stand

Read carefully and claim the mighty message of Ephesians 6:10–13:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

We can defeat the enemy because we are enabled to be strong in the Lord and in *His* mighty power. We can put on the full armor of God in order to take our stand against any scheme the devil might attempt to throw at our children. This armor will allow us to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, and it will allow us to defeat the enemy as we wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God!

Jesus defeated the enemy using the Word whenever Satan began to tempt or try to do Him physical harm (Matt. 4:4–11). His example should be our own, because the enemy's tactics are still at work today. Satan wishes to cause our children to fall morally and spiritually. He desires to poison the minds of our children so that they will be unable to be of service to the Living God.

As parents, grandparents, teachers, youth workers—and others with children in our spheres of influence—we must stand firm against the enemy and declare that he cannot have the minds of our children. We must fight for them in faithful prayer and teach them to fight for themselves! It is foolish and dangerous to ignore the schemes of Satan, for he is powerful and looking for every weakness.

This is a lifelong battle, and we must never let down our guard. We must diligently pray and teach our children how to pray the Word of God as a sure defense against the one who continually seeks to destroy. Only through the powerful Word can victory be won over our sinful natures and the enemy.

# Prayers of Truth and Power

Here are some specific ways to pray that the minds of your children and grandchildren will be protected against the deceptions and schemes of Satan—and are instead saturated with the mind of Christ:

• Pray that your children's minds will be controlled by the Holy Spirit so that they can be pleasing to God and filled with life and peace. "Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Rom. 8:5–7).

> Sample Prayer: Holy God, give my children the mind of the Spirit, set upon what the Spirit desires so that their lives will be characterized by life and peace. Help them to fight against the sinful mind that the enemy would seek to place within them, so that they will live lives submitted completely to You.

- Pray that your children will continually ask the Lord to examine their hearts and minds so that they will be able to walk in truth and purity.
  "Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness" (Ps. 26:2–3).
- Pray that your children will use their minds to understand and search out wisdom so that they can recognize the stupidity of wickedness. "So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly" (Eccl. 7:25).
- Pray that their minds will be steadfast as they trust in the Lord. "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal" (Isa. 26:3-4).
- Pray that your children will keep the greatness of the Lord's faithfulness always in their minds, so that they will have hope. "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:21–23).
- Pray that your children will always have the mind of Christ. "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).
- Pray that your children's minds will never be led astray, and that they will always have sincere and pure devotion to Christ. "But I am afraid

that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

- Pray that your children's minds will be saturated with God's peace in every trial and difficult circumstance. "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).
- Pray that your children will be drawn to value spiritual truths over earthly things. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Col. 3:2).
- Pray that your children's minds will always be prepared for action, so that they can live out lives of holiness. "Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:13–16).

Now that you have the Lord's perfect strategy for keeping the minds of your children protected from Satan, be diligent in your prayers. Be consistent in your teaching of the Word and in your personal study and devotion. Most of all, be a godly example for your children and grandchildren to follow as they mature in Christ.

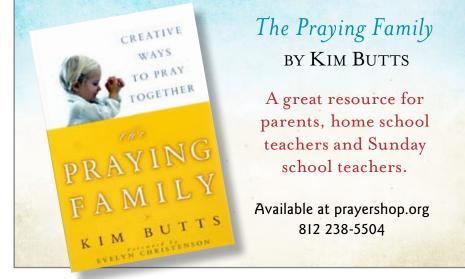
<sup>1</sup> Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1982).



**KIM BUTTS** is the co-founder of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the author of *The Praying Family*, available from *prayer-shop.org*.

# 12 Ideas to Grow Prayer in Your Family

Teach your children to pray and develop meaningful times of prayer together.



# DISCIPLE YOUR PEOPLE

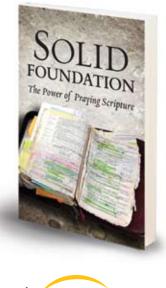
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# Stark Raving

A woman in Michigan had just begun to listen for the voice of God while she prayed. Driving home one day, she felt something in her spirit say, "Stop in the 7-Eleven and go stand on your head next to the pop machine."

Was that God? Then she heard that internal voice again, "Stop in the 7-Eleven and go stand on your head next to the pop machine."

By now she could see the 7-Eleven, but she was determined to continue on her way home. God didn't make insane requests like that, especially not to people like her. Old Testament prophets and ascetic Nazarenes, maybe—but not normal people. By Isaiah and Ted Kallman

Essential Factor in Hearing God's Voice

This time, the nudge had urgency. "Go back to the 7-Eleven and stand on your head next to the pop machine."

She turned her car around and parked in front of the 7-Eleven. There were no other cars. *At least no one would stare at her*, she thought. When she entered, she saw a young man standing behind the counter. The woman wished that he would go into the back room to stock some things. She walked over next to the pop machine, stood on her head, and—nothing happened.

The woman began to walk out when the young man behind the counter stopped her. "Excuse me, why did you just do that?"

Okay, how does one explain this in a spiritually relevant way? "Ah, yes, I was driving home, communing with the God of the universe, the Maker of heaven and earth, and He said to me, 'Oh, woman of faith and power, go thou to the 7-Eleven and stand upon thy head by the pop machine!" Does that sound normal? Does it sound sane? Does it even sound like God? No, it sounds stupid.

She told him to please just forget about it. "I'm sorry to have bothered you. I'm a little embarrassed. I think I'll just leave."

He insisted, "No, wait, I have to know why you did that." Then he pulled a gun out from under the counter. "A few minutes ago, I had this gun in my mouth. My life isn't worth living, and I was going to kill myself. At the last moment, I gave God one more chance. I said, 'God, if You are real, why don't You send somebody in here to stand on his or her head by the pop machine?' So I really need to know why you did that. Could you tell me about your God?"

So, was that God? How do you know if it was God? Would you have obeyed?

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# Learning to Trust God

My family (Isaiah) has heard about and seen some pretty amazing miracles that happened after people obeyed God's voice. The willingness of people to follow through on the direction of the Holy Spirit allowed God to work in their lives or in the lives of others in profound ways.

In one instance, God told a young woman, "Give the Kallmans bags of frozen chicken." Back then, my family didn't have much money, and we had very little food. I remembered feeling frustrated. My family had tried to follow what we heard from God. *Why wasn't He blessing us?* we wondered.

That night, my family had just sat down to a humble dinner of seasoned rice when they heard this woman knock at the door. According to Dad, no one in our family had ever met her before. She handed the bags to my dad and said that she had been told in a dream to give us food. Although she knew that our family lived in the general area, she had no idea which road we lived on, much less in which house. She had gone from door to door asking people if they knew where she could find the Kallmans. Someone eventually told her.

My family praised God for His provision and thanked the woman before she left. I am almost sure she had a moment or two during her search for our house where she questioned whether she had really heard God's direction.

Crazy? Absolutely. But it was part of God's provision for my family. I know *I'm* glad that the woman listened and pushed through her own discomfort to obey God. Now she has more reason to trust in the voice of the Holy Spirit and have confidence in God's provision for her life because she saw the result of her obedience. Everyone is blessed, everyone is encouraged, and everyone is built up in his or her faith. And we ate chicken for a month.

This is the crux of listening prayer. If we pursue God and His voice to gain direction and guidance—and then ignore what He gives—we are at risk. His expectation is that, as servants, or more deeply as friends, we will obey. It is not even a question.

# Living Stark Raving Obedience

Think about some of the things God said to people. He asked them to do some remarkably stupid things by human standards [in my paraphrase below].

- "Build a huge boat in your yard. I know you don't know how to do it, but I'll show you" (Gen. 6).
- "Pick up everything you own and leave town. I will tell you where you're going when you get there" (Gen. 12).
- "Kill your son. Wow, you were really going to do that, huh? Well, don't kill him. I wanted to test your faithfulness" (Gen. 22).
- "Walk up this mountain during an earthquake" (Ex. 19).

And it was not limited to the Old Testament. Acts 8:26–40 tells the story of the Apostle Philip. God told him to walk down the Gaza road into the desert. Do you think Philip had a schedule that day, things to do, people to see, ministry to perform? I'll bet he did. But when the Holy Spirit told him to go, he went.

Out on his stroll into the desert, the Holy Spirit directed Philip to stand next to a chariot. Philip heard an Ethiopian eunuch, the Queen's treasurer, reading a passage out of the Book of Isaiah in the chariot. The eunuch said, "Who can explain this to me?"

And Philip said, "Oh, that would be me." Philip began to tell the man how this passage spoke of One chosen by God to redeem the world. This promised One, the Messiah, had come, and His name was Jesus. Right then and there, the eunuch accepted Christ and Philip baptized him.

Let's put this story into a modern context. Imagine that you wake up one morning, and you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit tell you to go stand on a busy street corner in your town. Does that sound like God? It sounds kind of strange, right? Okay, imagine you've obeyed and now the Holy Spirit tells you, "Walk up to the stretch limo and knock on the window."

Philip's actions centuries ago might have seemed stupid or irresponsible when

he obeyed the Spirit's direction. But he knew it was God, and his obedience caused widespread change [with the gospel going to nations outside of Philip's "comfort zone"]. We can see the ripple effect in our own day because he acted in stark raving obedience.

Isn't that what you want for your life—to have an impact that lasts hundreds of years? If you listen to God's

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By Ted and Isaiah Kallman

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voice and obey, the results are supernaturally powerful, even if you don't see them in your lifetime.

People like Abraham, Noah, and Philip must have built a relationship with God beforehand, an established legacy of blessing and miracles through listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and obeying.

In Matthew 17:24–27, some tax collectors from the temple ask Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, if Jesus plans on paying the temple tax. This put Peter in an awkward situation. Jesus hasn't yet paid the tax. Jesus tells Peter, "Go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Doesn't that strike you as odd? I would have thought that Jesus had gone out of His mind. But what did Peter do? He obeyed. That is stark raving obedience.

# "Do You Have Bibles?"

Clive Culver, former head of World Relief, was in Iran on a trip visiting some underground pastors and churches. A pastor shared with Clive what had recently happened to his church through God's direction. They had a few Bibles come in, and they wanted to deliver them to a house church in a mountain village outside of Tehran, Iran. So they boxed the Bibles up, put them in a car, and asked a couple of young men to deliver them.

It's sort of dangerous to drive around Tehran in broad daylight with the back of your car loaded with Bibles, since the government there puts you in jail for that type of activity. So they left before five in the morning the next day to make the journey.

As they traveled through the city they came to a spot where the car seemed to brake. The steering wheel made a hard right turn, and they went slamming around a corner and hit a curb. They thought something major in the front end had snapped.

As they got out to inspect the car, a man approached them. He asked them if they had Bibles. They did not know him and were not about to share information regarding illegal material with a complete stranger. They talked a little about the car and kept on looking for the problem.

The man once again, this time more forcefully, asked them, "Where are the Bibles?" This time one of the young men carefully asked him why he would think that they had Bibles.

He said, "I am part of a small house church up the mountain on the other side of Tehran, and we do not have a Bible. It makes it very hard to learn more about Jesus. We asked God to give us a Bible. Last night I had a dream that an angel came and told me if I would come down to this corner at 5:00 this morning the Lord would give me Bibles. It is 5:00; you have Bibles."

The young men said, "Yes we do." Because that mountain villager listened and obeyed, the request of his house church was fulfilled supernaturally in a land where following Jesus can lead to death. And on top of that, it increased the faith of the young men transporting the Bibles.

When God calls you to do something, and then you do it, what does He do? He blesses you with provision, joy, and peace. Most importantly, He fills your life in every corner with His presence, because *now* you're living the life He always intended for you.

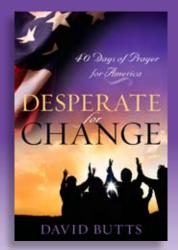
Close, intimate, heart-to-heart, friend-to-friend. ☑



**ISAIAH KALLMAN** is a worship leader and experienced speaker to young adults and high school students. His father **TED KALLMAN** is a lay prayer leader and speaker at prayer and healing conferences (*hearinggod.org*). This article is excerpted from their book *Stark Raving Obedience*, available at *prayershop.org*.

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# Got Prayer?

was invited to lead a prayer effort for a week of Vacation Bible School-a daunting assignment when I realized they expected some 700 children to participate! But I knew this was a great opportunity to go beyond sequestering a few intercessors in a room to pray, and instead figure out a way to involve the children in unusual prayer moments throughout the week.

We decided to offer a time for children to receive prayer at the end of each closing session. But we knew that might seem a bit intimidating, so we devised a way to encourage the children.

Using a button-maker, we designed buttons that said "Got Prayer!" Then we informed the children that if they came forward for prayer, they would receive a button they could wear the rest of the week. We prayed it would become a "hot commodity"-and it did!

We recruited several intercessors to be present at the front of the worship center at the end of each VBS evening. We equipped intercessors with "prayer blankets" they could wrap around the children as a warm hug while they prayed over each child.

It was heartening to see lines immediately begin to form with each intercessor. Although it was a bit slow the first night, the buttons became an attraction for the children to come the following nights.

We asked the children if they had a specific prayer request, or if they just wanted us to pray a blessing over them. Most chose the blessing, but many also had surprising requests that revealed

# Send Out a Walle I in a Send Out a Walle Line A Prayer

getting several churches in the city to join in a prayer wave?" I asked.

What's a prayer wave? Churches agree to pray for 24 hours, one after another for as many days as there are churches participating. Each prays for church ministries, for other churches, for the community, the schools, local government—whatever needs exist in the community, whatever prayer burdens the Lord gives.

We've tried this in a variety of venues throughout the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and beyond.

Thomas Bush, coordinator for the San Diego Regional Prayer Network

saw God unite hearts and give ministry creativity and fruit during and after prayer waves in 2009 and 2010. Bush reports that 67 churches of different denominations kept the wave going for 44 days. Their prayers focused revival in the church, spiritual awakening in the community, and praying for the lost by name. These unified and concerted prayer times "sparked the prayer lives" and gave new vision to many individuals and churches.

Todd Unzicker, former associational missionary for Holmes Association in Florida, encouraged churches to join

some deep hurts in families.

Got Prayer!

It was especially touching to me that one of the most common requests was for grandparents—a helpful reminder that grandparents are very important in a child's life. Another common

request was for pets that had died, which always presented a challenge to pray in an honoring way! Of course, whatever the prayer request, we always managed to work in a prayer of blessing over each child.

Many of the children who came were not from our church. I am quite certain that for some, it was the first time they had ever been prayed over. But by the end of the week, almost all the children "got prayer."

CAROL MADISON is editor of Prayer Connect.

in this kind of praying each February, citing this time as "the key for us as an association of churches." They covered every minute of the month in prayer.

"Any 'success' that our churches saw was because of God. Many of us believe that prayer is the conduit by which His power comes into one's life; it's the way anyone lays hold of the promises and blessings of God," says Unzicker. "I'm more convinced as a result of our prayer wave that the absolute highest value in



# TIPS&TOOLS

ministry, evangelism, and missions is staying attuned to and cooperative with the Holy Spirit. This is prayer. Why not do it together?"

### Fruit from Prayer Experiences

In Brevard Baptist Association on the Space Coast, one creative, interactive prayer experience was a "garden of prayer." People were led into confession, praise, intercession, and seeking the Lord. The Seafarer's Ministry there added a garden of prayer to their location and saw several staff from cruise ships come and pray. Many came to faith in Christ.

In Harmony Baptist Association in central Florida, the Lord gave Pastor Travis Hudson an idea that took off in several churches—"777"—Pray for seven lost people seven minutes a day for seven weeks. They saw many profess faith in Christ.

The Pensacola Bay Baptist Association prayed for 40 days, one church after another. Soon after their 40-day prayer wave, several churches had an idea for reaching their communities called "Meet the Church." On a Sunday afternoon several churches joined together for ministry outside the church walls and made a significant impact in their communities.

Among SBC Associations in Florida that experienced a wave of prayer, three clear results surfaced:

- 1. Greater unity among pastors and churches.
- 2. More *creativity* in ministry and in reaching their communities.
- 3. Greater *receptivity* to the gospel and more fruitfulness in ministry.

### **Great No-budget Tool**

A prayer wave is not a "silver bullet" to answer all needs in ministry, but it is certainly a good tool in the hands of the churches. It is a no-budget item that draws people together in the local church and in the community. The limited time commitment makes it easier for churches to agree to be part of something bigger

than just their church. And God uses this to realign their focus on prayerand more specifically on the Lord, to see the need to cry out at a new level.

A prayer wave can occur in any location, with many churches or just a few. Like the people of God in Jeremiah 29:7 or the early Church in Acts 2, praying

together makes a difference. God moves in churches and communities where people pray.

A wave of prayer for the works of God-that is the need of the hour.

**RICK SHEPHERD** is team strategist for the Prayer and Spiritual Awakening team, Florida Baptist Convention.

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# Living Prayer Center: Resources of The Upper Room

he Upper Room daily devotional guides that have been published since 1935 are familiar to many involved in prayer ministries. The reach of this ministry of the United Methodist Church has been extensive and well respected for decades as a "global ministry dedicated to supporting the spiritual formation of Christians seeking to know and experience God more fully."

The Upper Room Living Prayer Center is one feature of this effective discipling ministry. This seven-day-a-week intercessory prayer ministry, staffed by Christian volunteers, invites people to submit prayer requests online or by phone.

But there's much more! The mission of the Upper Room Living Prayer Center is "to help individuals, small groups, and local congregations grow in their understanding and experience of prayer."

Here are some of the interesting things you will discover when you go to the website *prayer-center.upperroom.org*:

### Volunteer to Pray

The Prayer Center needs volunteers to do one or both of the following:

- Receive prayer calls in two-hour time slots where you pray for those with needs.
- Receive weekly emails with prayer requests to pray over.

All volunteers are screened via an application process. The FAQ dropdown is helpful and answers questions related to the process of becoming a volunteer.

### **Be Prayed For**

Via the website you may submit a prayer request, which will be emailed to the Upper Room's Covenant Prayer Groups, who will pray for you! Covenant Prayer Groups are usually small groups in churches that make a commitment to meet weekly to pray together. Each group completes a preparatory study designed to deepen their prayer lives. Upon the recommendation of the pastor, the group is chartered as a designated Upper Room Covenant Prayer Group, and they will receive emailed prayer requests that come to the Living Prayer Center.

You can also call them at 1-800-251-2468 (7 a.m. to 11 p.m. CST), and a volunteer will pray with you. These prayer requests will be emailed to Covenant Prayer Groups.

# **Check Out Overview Video**

To get an overall sense of the prayer room ministry, click on the Resources dropdown tab. A short, informative video explains ways to participate as a volunteer, ways to pray, and ways to financially support the work of the Upper Room Living Prayer Center. This provides a good overview of the heart of the ministry.

You will also find tabs that offer resources to enrich your prayer life.

- 1. Spiritual Types Test: Be sure to take the Spiritual Types Test before exploring the articles. It is a short and enjoyable multiple choice questionnaire to see which of the four "spiritual types" you are.
- 2. Articles on Prayer: Here you will discover some short, helpful articles by authors from a variety of denominational backgrounds that will stretch your prayer life and give you useful tools for seeking God and interacting with His Word.
  - Begin with an introductory article called "Praying As We Are." It will

direct you to whichever spiritual type the survey has identified as yours and show you four ways to pray John 3:16.

- Other articles include the following: "Why Pray?" describes prayer as a means of grace. "Praying the Psalms" will help you pray through some of your deepest feelings. "Personalizing Scripture" explains how to make God's Word His word to you. "On Prayer" encourages prayer as a transformational conversation rather than a "formula" to get something from God.
- **3. Prayer Methods**: This material, based on the articles section, tends to be repetitive—but is a helpful explanation.

### **Sidebar Information**

Blocks of information on the right side of each page change periodically. Two online classes offered at this writing are a Discernment course and a six-week course entitled, "Learning to Pray: Baby Steps." There is also a link to the daily *Upper Room* devotional.

The content writers of this site have a long history of providing rich and well-written devotional, prayer, and spiritual formation materials.

# What's Not to Like?

Here are some prayer pages on Facebook we encourage you to "Like." (Add www.facebook. com before the / on each address.) Prayer Connect /prayerconnect Harvest Prayer Ministries /harvestprayer New Life America /newlifeamerica



PRAYERLEADER Encouragement for Prayer Mobilizers

# Don't Forget Your Own Prayer Life! By Douglas Kamstra

n the busyness of praying with people, leading prayer meetings, organizing prayer initiatives, developing new ministries, teaching on prayer, recruiting prayer warriors, and encouraging intercessors, it is easy to forget about one's own prayer life. Under the weight of leadership and the demands of ministry, our prayer life—nurturing our personal relationship with Jesus—is often the first thing we tend to neglect.

All too often when we talk about *prayer leaders*, we seem to have the order inverted. I've heard speakers recommend that when churches are looking for someone to build (or lead) the prayer ministry in their church, they should look for someone with leadership and teaching gifts rather than someone who spends hours each week on their knees.

But my question is, shouldn't we have both? Shouldn't *prayer leaders* also be fervent pray-ers? All too often we put the emphasis on being *leaders*, rather than on being *pray-ers*. The term *prayer leader* suggests, rightly so, that *prayer* should come first—before *leaders*hip.

### **Resetting Priorities**

My initiation into prayer ministry came when another prayer leader invited me to take a two-week intensive Spirituality and Ministry class at Fuller Seminary. We spent the intervening weekend in the desert, literally, at Saint Andrews—a Benedictine monastery. Challenged to enhance our prayer lives, we sat in the desert alone in silence—and in prayer. I'd never done that before. It reset my priorities.

All of the studies on prayer I've ever encountered indicate that the average Christ-follower spends about five-toseven minutes a day in prayer. Pastors survey only slightly higher. I've never seen a survey of how much time *prayer leaders* spend in prayer, but I know welltrained and highly educated prayer leaders who are so busy mobilizing others to pray that their own prayer lives suffer. Periodically, I even see my own prayer life in that mirror.

Prayer leaders are busy people. Leading prayer ministries and mobilizing people to pray is an always challenging, sometimes frustrating, periodically exhausting, and usually underappreciated work. So sometimes we find ourselves speaking "out of our training" rather than out of our personal experience. Sometimes we realize we are leading out of our spiritual giftedness instead of an intimate relationship. While it may not *surprise* us that in many prayer meetings we spend more time talking about prayer than actually praying, it should *concern* us.

### Jesus' Prayer Life

The public prayer life of Jesus was saturated with daily praying—from the *Shema* (a prayer of profession, Deut. 6:4–5) to the *Amidah* (a prayer of 18 benedictions) to the *Berakhot* (prayers of blessing throughout the day). Jesus was constantly praying with and teaching His disciples (and the crowd) throughout the day, but it wasn't enough. The Greatest Pray-er would get up "very early in the morning, while it was still dark . . . [and go] off to a solitary place" (lit. *eremos topos*; Mark 1:35)—to be alone with His Father.

In Galilee, just outside Capernaum, there is a place known as Prayer Mountain (i.e., Mount Arbel). Each day, rabbis (the *prayer leaders* of Jesus' day) would rise early and climb this rugged mountain for the sole purpose of being close to the Father. This was no small feat during the day and a considerable challenge in the moonlight. It required incredible effort, energy, and fortitude to make the trek each morning. But they (and Jesus) did so because they understood that extended time praying "in a solitary place" was not optional but, rather, an absolute necessity.

When we remember that at His incarnation Jesus *emptied* Himself (i.e., set aside His divine power and prerogative), we begin to realize it was Jesus' prayer life—His pursuit of intimacy with His Father from the beginning of His ministry (Mark 1:35), throughout His ministry (Mark 1:35), throughout His ministry (Mark 6:46), and until the very end of His ministry (Mark 14:32–42) that empowered Him to teach, cast out demons, and heal the sick with authority (Mark 1:14, 25, 31).

# Slow Down and Go Silent

All believers, but especially *prayer lead-ers*, must embrace the prayer life of Jesus. Pursue time with your first love (Rev. 2:4). You have *His* permission to slow down to nurture your heart and soul. Find a solitary place and spend 20–30 minutes in silence every day. As leaders we need to stay vigilant!

Spend some extended time with the Father—for adoration, confession, intercession, petition, and thanksgiving. But most of all, just be with Him, listen to His voice, and enjoy His company. It will transform your life. It will empower your ministry.



**DOUGLAS KAMSTRA** has been a prayer leader at the local, denominational, and national levels for more than 30 years. He is the chair of the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network and the

author of *The Praying Church Idea Book* (available at *prayershop.org*). He is also a spiritual director, seminar speaker, and retreat leader.



# Reviving Habits of Prayer | By F.B. Meyer

othing would be better for most of us than a great revival in our habits of private prayer. Perhaps we cannot do as Luther, who was accustomed to say, "I have so much work to do today that I cannot get through it with less than three hours of prayer." But that we should pray more, that we should labor in prayer, that we should cultivate the art of prayer, is clear.

The instinct and impulse are with us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, but we need to cultivate the gracious inward movements until they become solidified into an unbending practice.

### Set a Time and Place

As far as possible, we should set apart one period in each day for prayer, and there can be no question that the morning hour is best. When the body is fresh from sleep, and before the rush of daily thought, care and activity invades the mind, then the bells ring for matins [morning prayers], and it is wise to heed their call. Give Him thy first thoughts.

There should be, as far as possible, one room and one spot in the room, or one garden path, or a walk over the moor or beside the sea, where our seasons of private devotion are spent and our prayers are wont to be made.

The posture is a secondary matter. Many a Heaven-moving prayer has been uttered whilst the feet have been plodding along the road, or the hands plying their toils, or when weakness has chained the body to the couch.

# A Spirit of Prayer

The main point for each of us is to have a spirit of prayer, so that the exercise be not irksome and tedious, but that the spirit may spring to it with delight.

We must not, however, wait for the high tide to rise before we launch forth

on the voyage. If there is not deep water, we must make what use we can of the shallows. If the gale is not blowing to fill our flagging sails, we must make what use we can of the light breezes that dimple the calm and lethargic ocean.

Good is it when the soul leaps toward the prayer hour, but failing this eager desire, let us pray because we ought and because the supreme Lover of Souls will be disappointed if we do not appear at the trysting place to keep our appointment.

When the hour for prayer arrives, allow time for staying on the threshold of the temple to remember how great God is, how greatly He is to be praised, how great your needs are. Remember the distance between you and Him, and be sure that it is filled with love.

Recall the promises that bid you to approach. Consider all the holy souls that have entered and are entering those same portals; and do not forget the many occasions in which the lowering skies have cleared, the dark clouds have parted, and weakness has become power during one brief spell of prayer.

# Fanning into Flame

We specially need the aid of the Holy Spirit, who helps our infirmities in prayer. He kindled the spark of devotion at the first and knows well how to fan it into a flame.

It is good to confide in Him, to confess that you would but cannot pray, that your desires are languid and your love cool, that the lips which should be touched with fire are frostbitten, that the wings which ought to have borne you to Heaven are clipped. He understands and loves to be appealed to and will assuredly quicken the flagging soul.

One look to the Spirit of prayer will find Him in the heart. As our Teacher, He begins to repeat the words of petition which we lisp after Him. As our Comforter and Paraclete, He stands beside us, showing us where to aim our petitions and steadying our trembling hands.

# **Blessed Hope**

Sometimes it will be the confession of recent backsliding and inconsistency, which have drawn a veil over the face of Christ; sometimes, the overflowing of thanksgiving, as you count over your blessings, one by one; sometimes, the urgency of need to intercede for some beloved friend or friends. But always, you may discover some wave of blessed helpfulness.

When we pray, it is not enough merely to speak a long list of requests into the ear of God; it becomes us to wait after each one and to receive by an appropriating act of the soul. It is as though we saw God take from the shelves of His storehouse the boon on which we had set our heart, label it with our name, and put it aside until the precise moment arrived in which He could bestow it on us without hurt.

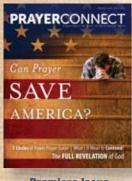
But whether it is in our hands or not is of small matter, because "we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:15,  $\kappa$ JV).  $\square$ 

F.B. MEYER (1847–1929) was a Baptist pastor and evangelist in England who became lifelong friends with D.L. Moody. He preached on both sides of the ocean and was known as a crusader against immorality. He authored more than 40 books.





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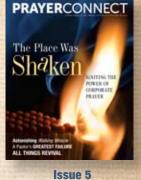
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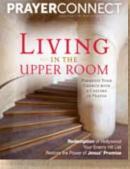
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