**ISSUE THIRTY-ONE, OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2017** 

# PRAYERCONNECT Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

## Hope for a World in Turmoil

# a Handred Hand

Ask Ribnard Handillan

Journey BEYOND Bitterness | He's Good, So Pray Like It! ENGAGE THE NEXT GENERATION



### 2017

### SCHOOL OF PRAYER

SERIES



### THE WARFARE CLUSTER: Overcoming in Prayer

Wrestling in Prayer, Warring in Prayer, Travailing in Prayer October 14 from 9 am to noon (MDT)

### THE GUIDANCE CLUSTER: Listening in Prayer

Communing in Prayer, Searching in Prayer, Meditating in Prayer November 18 from 9 am to noon (MST)

### THE VICTORY CLUSTER: Prevailing in Prayer

Overcoming in Prayer, Ruling in Prayer, Conquering in Prayer December 9 from 9 am to noon (MST)

Join us as we continue our School of Prayer series *In Prayer with Dick Eastman*. Dick has been a leading voice on the topic of prayer for over 40 years, and he has written several books on prayer with over 5 million copies in circulation. This series features nine teaching sessions, called "Clusters," to help you cultivate a fruitful, vibrant prayer life.

Future School of Prayer Dates (subject to change): October 14 | November 18 | December 9 All sessions start at 9 am (Mountain Time).

Join us in person, or watch live or on demand at ehc.org/sop



### Features

### **28** Freedom from Bitterness When You Can't Get Past the Hurt By Linda Graf

### 32 He's the Good Father

Making Room for the Goodness of God in Prayer By Pierre Eade



### Departments

5 Publisher's Note

The Peace that Eludes Us

### 6 News & Events

- Times Square Hosts 14,000 for Prayer and Bible Reading
- First Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast
- China Gripped by Revival as Millions Turn to Faith
- Kentucky Governor Calls for Prayer Walks
- Senator Lankford Prays on Senate Floor
- Greg Laurie: Spiritual Awakening Is Overdue
- Trump's Cabinet Meets for Prayer
- Prayer Calendar

# **PRAYER**CONNECT

October-December 2017 Vol. 7, No. 4

# LET PRAYER ARISE

Hope for a World in Turmoil, p. 9

### **10** Yes, You Will Have Trouble

Remaining Prayerful, Hopeful, and Eager By Jerry Tankersley

### 14 In the Face of Hostility

A Prayerful Voice in a Polarized World By Mark Forrester

### 20 Facing the Unexpected

A Personal Journey of Replacing Fear with Faith By Dave Butts

### 26 Bible Study

Hope for a World in Turmoil By Cynthia Hyle Bezek

### 36 Tips & Tools

- Heart-changing Prayers for Fellow Believers
- Will You Pray with Us?
- The Holy Spirit Is Like Flowing Water

### 38 Prayer Leader

Making the Next Generation a Priority

### **39** Classics

Divine Efficacy of Prayer



### Start with a Complete Set

### GET EVERY BACK ISSUE OF PRAYER CONNECT

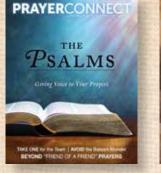


**Issue 25 THERE'S STILL HOPE** A Call for United Prayer for Our Elections

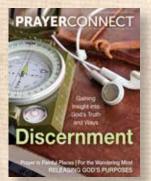


**Issue 28** WATCH AND PRAY

- **Issue 1 Can Prayer Save America? Issue 2** Fresh Fire
  - **Issue 4** As the Waters Cover the Sea **Issue 5 The Place Was Shaken Issue 6 Stand Firm & Strong Issue 7 Open Hearts, Open Doors Issue 8** The Lord is Near **Issue 9** Releasing Children to Pray **Issue 10 Living in the Upper Room Issue 12 Hope Undaunted**
  - **Issue 13 Ask for the Nations**



Issue 26 **THE PSALMS** Giving Voice to Your Prayers



DISCERNMENT Staying Alert in a Troubled World Gaining Insight into God's Truth and Ways

> **Issue 14 Help! Issue 15 The Power of Praise Issue 16 God Speaks Issue 17 Roadblock Ahead Issue 18 Faith and Prayer Issue 19 Awakening on Campuses Issue 20 Rediscovering Fasting Issue 21 Beyond the Obvious Issue 22 Transforming Praver Issue 23 Embracing Intimacy Issue 24 Leaders Who Pray**



**FROM KNEES TO ACTION** Becoming the Answer to Your Prayers

FROM KNEE

PRAYERCONNEC

On My Prayer List Mel Couples Who PNAY TOGETHER CALLING MEN-and Everyone Else

**Issue 27** 

**JOHN 17** 

Praying the Heart of Jesus

PRAYERCONNECT

MULTIPLE COPY DISCOUNTS availahlet

### COVER PRICE: \$6.00 | PRAYERSHOP PRICE: \$5.00

www.prayershop.org | Click on "Prayer Connect Magazine" "Back Issues" | 812-238-5504

Prayer Connect and PrayerShop Publishing are ministries of Harvest Prayer Ministries

# CONTACTUS

#### **Business and Shipping Address** PRAYERCONNECT

3525 S. 3rd Pl. | Terre Haute, IN 47802 812.238.5504 | prayerconnect.net

#### Article Submissions

We are looking for general articles, ideas, and news stories on what God is doing as a result of prayer. We are primarily looking for newly written pieces that have not appeared in other publications. Writer's guidelines are available by emailing Carol Madison at editor@ prayerconnect.net. For news stories, we recommend emailing first to see if we have an interest in reporting on the event or item you wish to write about. Send your submissions to:

Carol Madison

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

### **Subscriptions**

Prayer Connect is published four times per year, available in Print (\$24.99 per year) or Digital (\$19.99 per year) formats, and through the Church Prayer Leaders Network (CPLN) Membership (\$30 per year). Both CPLN and Print subscriptions include access to the Digital version. To subscribe, go to prayerconnect. net. We also have multiple copy discounts available for individuals or churches who want to purchase copies for a prayer team or small groups:

prayerconnect.net Joanne Telle 800.217.5200 or 812.238.5504

### Permissions

Jonathan Graf jong@harvestprayer.com | 812.238.5504

#### **Reprint Permissions**

If you are making copies for your small group or for church use, you have blanket permission to make up to 100 copies without asking for permission (as long as the copies are not sold or in a for-sale product). Please include the phrase: "Copied from Prayer Connect (Issue #). Used with permission." Contact us to gain permission for all other uses, including posting articles on the Internet. We do encourage you to put links on Facebook and Twitter to articles that are open to the public at prayerconnect.net.

### Advertising

If you would like information about placing an ad in Prayer Connect, or if you have concerns or questions about our ads, please contact: Prayer Connect, 3525 S. 3rd Pl. Terre Haute, IN 47802 jong@harvestprayer.com | 812.238.5504

### 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

harvestprayer.com | prayerleader.com

### **PRAYER**CONNECT

Issue Thirty-one • Vol. 7, No. 4

### Sponsored by

America's National Prayer Committee Denominational Prayer Leaders Network International Prayer Council

Published by Church Prayer Leaders Network Harvest Prayer Ministries PrayerShop Publishing

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

- To encourage and equip believers toward a deeper walk with Jesus Christ through prayerour 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

Sometimes tension can arise between a pray-er and someone who just wants to "get things done." But praying and doing can go together when we



also ask the Lord if He intends us to "become the answer to our prayers." This issue "From Knees to Action" and other back issues can be ordered through *prayershop.org*.

# PUBLISHER'SNOTE



### The Peace that Eludes Us

few years ago, a coworker humorously showed our team a picture that reminded her of me. It was of a squirrel looking intense, with his paws raised up. It seemed to portray a sense of agitation—that he was about to blow. It reminded her of me because when I am interrupted while dealing with an immediate problem, my tendency is to respond in a somewhat stressed manner. After laughing together, I started calling myself "Old Squirrel Hands." It caught on.



All of us deal with stress in our lives. For some it comes from serious circumstances such as illness, job loss, or relationship problems. For others, it is simply caused by the everyday stuff that doesn't seem to be going our way.

As believers, we know we are supposed to walk in peace. But it often eludes us in the nitty-gritty of life. That response must have been common in every era of humankind. For sure it was in Paul's day, as he had to remind the Philippian believers: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6–7).

There is a huge connection between prayer and peace!

I have recently been struck and challenged on this topic because over the summer I worked on a new book by Dave Butts entitled *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God: A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus.* We released it in September.

Dave had wanted to write a book on this topic for some time, as he believes many believers struggle with the ability to always appropriate what they have in Christ, and to walk every day in that peace.

But ten days into starting the project, Dave learned that he has a rare form of lymphoma—and he was already at stage IV. He was at death's door! Talk about a peace robber. But God was allowing Dave to live out what he was teaching others to do. Dave often wrote portions of his book from a hospital bed. Dave and his wife Kim experienced the peace of Jesus in powerful ways throughout this trying time. (Read Dave's story on page 20)

I have never used this column to point toward one of our resources. But I must *highly recommend* this book to you and to your friends. I have worked on eight previous books of Dave's, and this is by far the best, most powerful book he has written. Formatted as a 30-day devotional, *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* can alter how you walk through life. Its format also makes it a great resource for an entire congregation to pray together.

You can get this book through *prayershop.org*, or through normal book purchasing sites/stores. It is also available as an ebook. You won't be disappointed. The shalom of Jesus does not need to elude you.

–Jonathan Graf



### Times Square Hosts 14,000 for Prayer and Bible Reading

fter a tragedy in Times Square, where a troubled former Navy recruit mowed down 23 pedestrians and killed one young girl, Christian leaders rallied together and brought Jesus Week to the heart of New York City.

During the first weekend in June, a reported 14,000 people gathered in Times Square for Jesus Week, an evangelistic outreach that brought the churches of New York together to celebrate and lift up the name of Jesus through prayer, the reading of Scripture, and live performances.

The event was led by Concerts of Prayer—Greater New York (COPGNY), which is a Christ-centered network of pastors and churches led by Pastor Dimas Salaberrios. The goal of COPGNY is to encourage prayer across "ethnic, economic,



and denominational lines."

Jesus Week kicked off on May 27 with the leaders of COPGNY going into every borough in New York City to pray, help the poor, and minister in schools and troubled neighborhoods. The week concluded on June 3 with a large stage set up in Times Square.

The weekend event featured audio Bible recordings that played throughout the day. Each reading ran for an hour and was then followed by a minister who prayed through that Scripture.

"People said it was the boldest thing they've ever seen," Salaberrios told *The Christian Post*, describing people's reactions to the Bible being played out loud. He says the Scriptures, prayers, and music were

heard down four New York City blocks.

In addition to the time of ministry, Jesus Week gave the people of New York more than \$3 million of available resources. The materials included 120,000 Christian children's books (40,000 in Spanish), 180,000 Christian devotional books, and 100,000 *Jesus Film* DVDs.

> -Reprinted from *The Christian Post* (christianpost.com).

### First Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast

he first-ever Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast was hosted at the Israeli Knesset (Israeli Parliament) on June 6 by the Speaker of the Knesset Yuli-Yoel Edelstein and Members of the Knesset Robert Ilatov (chairman of the Beiteinu party) and Rabbi Yahuda Glick.

More than 550 delegates from 56 countries attended, representing politicians, pastors, leaders, and business people from all walks of life. The event took place at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Jerusalem.

Inspired by the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. (hosted annually by the Senate and Congressional Prayer Groups), the Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast Movement is coordinated by Albert Veksler who says he is "focused on building an atmosphere of unity and mutual understanding." The invitation stated the Bible's call to pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "They shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. 122:6, KJV). The purpose of the gathering was to build bridges of blessing between Christians and Jewish leaders around the world.

At the reception in the Knesset commemorating the 50-year anniversary of the reunification of the ancient city of Jerusalem, Mr. Ilatov, who is also chairman of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus, spoke of the need to stand together to promote the fulfillment of biblical prophecy of Jerusalem as the undivided capital and "eternal home" of the people of Israel. That is why, he emphasized, people came from the four corners of the world to



realign us with God's covenant. "Now is the time to put prayer into action" and put pressure on our governments to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem, he said.

Michele Bachmann, former U.S. Congresswoman, and head of the U.S. Christian Allies Caucus, received a standing ovation as she gave her commitment on behalf of the United States to stand with Israel, including a reminder that those who bless Israel will be blessed.

**ANNABEL FOREY**, special to Assist News Service (*assistnews.net*).



### China Gripped by Revival as Millions Turn to Faith

Forty-one years after China's Cultural Revolution snuffed out all forms of religious expression, millions of Chinese people are flocking to religions such as Christianity. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ian Johnson believes what's transpiring in China is nothing short of "one of the world's great spiritual revivals," and he says the world better take note because the impact of this "spiritual transformation" could have significant global implications.

"People [in China] are looking for new moral guideposts, some sort of moral compass to organize society," says Johnson. "So they are turning to religion as a source of values to help reorganize society."

Johnson spent six years researching

the "values and faiths of today's China." He says the fastest-growing drivers of this "religious revolution" are unregistered churches or so-called "house" or "underground" churches.

"These groups have become surprisingly well-organized, meeting very openly and often counting hundreds of congregants," Johnson wrote in an article for *The Atlantic*. "They've helped the number of Protestants soar from about one million when the communists took power to at least 60 million today."

Church leaders told CBN News that prayer has played a key role in sparking the Christian revival.



For example, in one corner of northeast China, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, thousands of Christians have

been meeting for an unprecedented prayer movement. What started as a small gathering several years ago has turned into a nationwide prayer initiative uniting hundreds of Chinese churches.

While the government remains deeply suspicious of China's religious revival, Johnson says it hasn't stopped people from exploring matters of faith.

-Reprinted with permission from CBN News (1.cbn.com).

### Kentucky Governor Calls for Prayer Walks

he Republican governor of Kentucky is calling on faith leaders in Louisville to form prayerwalking groups in the city's high-crime areas to help combat the blot of violence within the municipality.

Gov. Matt Bevin issued his plea during a meeting in June at Western Middle School, which was packed with hundreds of pastors from throughout the city, as well as residents who wanted to hear his remarks on the matter.

"I personally believe in the power of prayer. I've seen it," Bevin, a Southern Baptist, stated.

He asked that pastors and members of their congregations join together for one year to walk a block weekly, praying as they go and reaching out to their neighbors. While he personally plans to walk with his family, Bevin is leaving his recommendation in the hands of local Christians because his office is not organizing the initiative. "You don't need permission from me how to do it.

You know, you walk to a corner, pray for the people, talk to people along the way," he explained. "No songs, no singing, no bullhorn, no T-shirts, no chanting. Be pleasant, talk to the people, that's it."

According to reports, there were 52 homicide investigations in Louisville by June of this year. The city is also plagued with an opioid problem, as well as homelessness.

Bevin noted that his plan to combat violence is multifaceted and prayer is just one aspect of the fight. "This isn't in any way, shape, or form trying to take the place of other things that have got to be done," he said. "But this is something that we firmly believe will make [a] difference in our community."

**HEATHER CLARK**, reprinted with permission from Christian News Network (*christiannews.net*).



TRAYERCONNECCPRAYERCONNECCGROURSMALLGROUPS



### NEWS**&EVENTS**

### Senator Lankford Prays on Senate Floor

R ollowing the shooting at the Republican Congressional baseball practice in June, which injured several people (Majority Whip Steve Scalise, a congressional staffer, and two Capitol Hill police officers), Senator James Lankford (R-OK) led in prayer on the Senate floor. He first commented on hearing spontaneous prayer meetings in offices as he walked the halls. He challenged his colleagues, "We can help lead.

We can set a tone to tell the nation we should disagree on things, but we don't ever do this. So I'd like for us to take a moment of privilege and to just be able to pray."

He then prayed, "Father, thank You for the way that You have protected . . . those individuals that are in surgery now and are recovering now, for the Capitol Hill Police, for Steve Scalise, for other individuals that were affected today. God, we pray that You would bring them healing. We pray that You would take care



of families that are worried and a nation that's worried. I pray that You would cause something good to come out of something that is very evil. Help us to know how we respond as a nation. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen."

### Greg Laurie: Spiritual Awakening Is Overdue

he United States is "overdue" for another spiritual awakening and Christian revival—or else it could run the risk of becoming a post-Christian state like many countries in Europe, California evangelist Greg Laurie has opined.

Laurie, an author and senior pastor of the Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, CA, who hosts evangelistic revival events throughout the U.S., told *The Christian Post* that this country is a "nation in crisis" because it has gotten away from its "virtue" created by people who believed in Christ. He says there have been four "spiritual awakenings" in America's history, the last one being the Jesus Movement during the 1960s and 1970s. "I think we are overdue for another," Laurie explains. "My prayer is that we will have another Jesus Movement, another Jesus Revolution."

He adds, "Recently, I read that the number-one phrase typed in the Google search engine was 'Is World War III near' because of a nation like North Korea threatening to nuke us . . . doing missile tests," Laurie said. "I think that people are agitated, they are concerned, they are wondering about the answers to those

### Trump's Cabinet Meets for Prayer

embers of President Donald Trump's cabinet are gathering for weekly prayer and Bible study. Vice President Mike Pence and eight cabinet secretaries sponsor the sessions, which occur weekly in Washington.

It is led by the founder of Capitol Ministries, Ralph Drollinger, who started working on arranging the Bible study during the Trump team's transition to the White House.

Sponsors also include Secretaries

Betsy DeVos, Ben Carson, Sonny Perdue, Rick Perry, Tom Price and Jeff Sessions; EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

Capitol Ministries also hosts weekly Bible studies in the House and Senate. The ministry has started Bible studies in a number of state capitols and is currently working on expanding into international capitols.

-Reprinted with permission from CBN News (1.cbn.com).

age-old questions. I think we need to be there with answers from the Bible."

Earlier this year, Laurie declared 2017 to be "The Year of Good News." His declaration was signed by several prominent Christian leaders and performers such as Franklin Graham, Jack Graham, Anne Graham Lotz, Chris Tomlin, James Dobson, and others.

-Reprinted from *The Christian Post* (christianpost.com).



### THEME INTRODUCTION

could hear automatic weapon fire in the distance as my tour group, earlier this year, looked over the border of Israel into Syria. It was sobering to stand on a hill in the Golan Heights (next to an abandoned tank), aware of the well-marked landmines nearby. The landmines served as a warning to any potentially aggressive nation that Israel was prepared to defend her borders. And the distant gunfire was a reminder that many innocent

people are caught in the crossfire of warring parties within Syria. When we asked our tour guide about a possible solution to the Syrian crisis,

he shrugged his shoulders. "There are no easy answers," he said. Then he told us an underreported story related to the conflict. At times, when a Syrian civilian is critically injured, his family will drop him at the Israeli border, knowing that Israeli soldiers will have compassion and pick up the injured person (even though Israel is considered "the enemy"). That Syrian citi-

zen will receive free care in an Israeli hospital and then be returned to the border after he is restored to good health. It is a glimmer of light in a dark world. The Middle East is just one part of the world ravaged by turmoil. There are always talks of peace between various nations and their enemies. But this visit to

Israel demonstrated in tangible ways that true peace can come only when Jesus reigns in the hearts of people.

### **TROUBLE WILL COME**

Whether we recognize turmoil on a worldwide scale, or experience that inner conflict of our own souls, Jesus reminds us that we will have trouble in this world (John 16:33). But He also guarantees peace in the midst of turmoil when we take to heart His promise that He has overcome the world!

I noticed something else on that trip. Israel is a nation under constant threat. Yet the people go about their lives in relative peace, confidence-and often prosperity. They have learned to survive and thrive without ignoring the potential dangers.

It's like that for believers in Christ, as well. We need to be on guard. The apostle Peter instructs us to be aware and alert to the schemes and strategies of Satan (1 Peter 5:8-9). He encourages us to guard and protect our hearts-and stand firm in the truth of the gospel. Hostilities toward God and His Word surround us, but God wants us to be confident in Christ.

He also calls us to be compassionate and loving toward the lost, even at our own risk. We seek out and help the hurting and the abandoned because we know we have the truth that heals and restores. People may reject us and even hate us, but we respond in love and with the hope that they might receive the transformational power of Jesus.

In this issue, Jerry Tankersley reminds us of the hostilities that the apostle Paul and early believers faced, yet they knew how to rejoice in all things. He describes the way many of the Psalms have helped him to pray with peace in trying times. Mark Forrester uses his expertise in social media to show ways we can be prayerful voices in a polarized world. And Dave Butts writes about knowing Jesus' peace during his personal cancer battle.

In an increasingly hostile and tumultuous world, I don't want to just survive. I want to thrive in the love of Jesus-and be a voice of hope! Let's keep praying with confidence to the One who offers true peace.

CAROL MADISON is editor of Prayer Connect magazine.



everal years ago, eight of our Presbytery pastors gathered with Dallas Willard for a three-day spiritual formation retreat. Willard published *The Divine Con*-

*spiracy* text that many of us were reading and seeking to absorb. We wanted to understand the faith and commitment needed to follow the traditional spiritual disciplines of the Christian life.

Willard led a discussion on Philippians 4:4–7. At the heart of that text the apostle Paul wrote this:

> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (vv. 6–7).

During the conversation, I told Dallas and my colleagues that there were times when—in the process of lifting up my inner concerns, needs, anxieties, fears, and circumstances to the Lord—I felt like I might have an emotional meltdown.

I have carried Dallas's response in my soul ever since. "Jerry," he said, "what better place to have a meltdown than in the presence of the God of peace?" He added, "God is able to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

His words liberated me spiritually. They reminded me that I ought not to fear praying about anything that was happening either inside or outside of me. After all, the Lord knows me better than I know myself.

### PAUL'S TROUBLED WORLD

The Lord has been listening to His people from the beginning of time—and most certainly in the midst of threatening and trying circumstances. Jesus Himself walked through the valley of the shadow of death in the presence of His enemies (as foreshadowed

Remaining Prayerful, Hopeful, and Eager

**BY JERRY TANKERSLEY** 

# Prayer has become the oxygen of my soul.

in Psalm 23). He learned to trust, to pray, to weep, and to hurt before His Father. He also learned, as Paul did, that the Father of mercies is the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3).

Paul wrote his letter to the church at Philippi while he was in prison. We are not sure, but most likely he was imprisoned in Caesarea, Ephesus, or Rome. I personally believe it was Rome because he had appealed his case to Caesar.

After a terrifying journey by boat around the Mediterranean (which he barely survived), he lived under house arrest in Rome, waiting for his case to be decided under Roman law. He hoped to be found innocent of charges brought against him by the religious authorities of Jerusalem. He longed to continue his mission of spreading the gospel of Christ, but if convicted he would likely be executed as a martyr to the faith. In fact, tradition says that he and Peter lost their lives during Nero's persecution of the Christian community in the mid 60s of the first century.

Apparently, the Philippian believers met resistance and persecution in their city. Paul founded the church despite great personal persecution that included an attack from a mob of people, severe flogging, prison—and even an earthquake (Acts 16). Despite being thrown into jail, Paul and his fellow missionaries sang hymns of praise and joy through the night. By God's grace they were released the next day, but not without a confrontation with the political authorities.

Paul continually encountered trouble from all kinds of powers throughout his missionary journeys (2 Cor. 11:23–30). Through it all he found God's grace sufficient. When he was weak, then he was spiritually strong (2 Cor. 12:10). The strength of his heart and mind came from the living Lord with whom he continuously communed in prayer.

After all, Paul's mission was God's mission. His life was inspired, guided, and blessed by the Holy Spirit. From beginning to end, the apostle knew and trusted that in life and in death he belonged to God. He was sustained through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Through all his hardships, sufferings, and joys, Paul made this confession of faith:

> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10–11).

He had not achieved this yet, but he pressed on to his high calling in Jesus Christ, straining forward into God's future for him. And he exhorted those mature in mind and spirit to also press on.

### OUR OWN TROUBLED WORLD

We too live in a hostile world. As I have faced trials of my own, here are a few things that have helped me:

First, I worship on the Lord's Day with the Lord's people. Then I daily pray the Psalms (the prayer book of Israel) and the prayers of Jesus.

In the early 1990s I was as close to burnout as I could be. The stresses were great. I had a panic attack that I thought was a heart attack. During that period of my life I took a two-week course with Eugene Peterson on "Spirituality and Ministry." Peterson, the author of *The Message*, taught us to establish a pattern of praying Psalms 1, 2, and 5 every day, and then praying five consecutive psalms each day. In this way, one can pray through all 150 psalms in one month's time.

This rule, along with other Bible guides and devotional readings, as well as corporate Sunday worship, have become the foundation of my prayer life. In fact, prayer has become the oxygen of my soul, bringing a deep focus and growing peace.

This rule has transformed my inner life, my view of the world, and my obedience to the truth of God's Kingdom. In Walter Brueggemann's book *The Message of the Psalms*, he analyzes the Psalter according to three types of psalms: *Psalms of Orientation, Disorientation,* and *New Orientation.* I have incorporated these perspectives into my prayer life.

- **Psalms of Orientation:** Sometimes psalmists prayed to God when all was well, life was in balance, and personal peace and harmony prevailed. In those times they gave thanks for all the good gifts of creation and history. (See Psalms 1, 8, 14, 15, 19, 24, 33, 37, 104, 119, 131, 133, 145.) Most of us would like to stay at that place throughout our life journey. I love these psalms, but they have not captured the totality of my experience as a person of faith.
- Psalms of Disorientation: Often a psalmist prayed when all was not well. Perhaps he was surrounded by his enemies; maybe he was ill and facing his own mortality and felt like he was walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Other times he was afraid, anxious, insecure, and afflicted with the awareness of his own personal sin and guilt. The author may have been angry with God over His absence or silence during various circumstances. Sooner or later, everyone's life will spiral into disequilibrium. These psalms encourage us to open our souls to the Lord, seeking an assurance of His love and comfort. I love these expressionsfor I have been in these places. (See Psalms 13, 35, 74, 79, 86, 137.)

• Psalms of New Orientation: In these psalms the psalmist had seen his enemies defeated. He had been healed of a disease, his depression had lifted, and his fear had been conquered. Good had come with restored faith, hope, and love! The discernment process led to clear resolution and trust in God's will.

As Jesus Himself prayed, He was empowered to do the Father's will with courage and confidence that nothing would separate Him from His Father's love.

The apostle Paul prayed this way, too. He penned Romans 8 out of his lifetime of abiding in Christ, dying to sin, coming alive in the resurrection Spirit, walking in the light of Christ, and being reconciled to God and to one another in the church. Those of us who believe in prayer need to remember that God welcomes us to pray every dimension of our life experience. (See Psalms 29, 30, 34, 47, 65, 98, 99, 103, 114, 124, 129, 138, 146, 150.)

More and more, God has imparted to me the gift of the transformed mind by my praying of the Psalms. Renewed energy also has come. As Paul says, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:12).

This is the transformed mind that Jesus seeks to form within us. In my life and in the life of my church, the work is not yet complete. But, like Paul, "I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in [us] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6, Esv).

### ANTICIPATED JOY

I pastor a congregation of people who represent the diversities of our secular, materialistic, ideological, polarized nation. Preachers like me now struggle with how to preach to congregations that are politically diverse. We worship, fellowship, serve, and pray together—and we face many difficult issues, conflicts, and relationships. We are committed to promoting the peace, the unity, and the purity of the body of Christ. But if we seek to press all our members into one mold with the same way of thinking, they may end up frustrated, angry, and alienated.

We are not always on the same page when it comes to understanding our Scriptures and their teachings. The surrounding culture has shaped us far more than we know. How can we engage the "principalities and powers" with the truth of God in Christ, while also maintaining a model of civility in rhetoric, attitude, and service? When we feel like we're about to have an emotional meltdown, like I mentioned earlier, we can remember that we are always in the presence of our powerful God.

I believe we are living between "the already" and "the not yet" of the Kingdom of God. Our present world is deeply conflicted. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote that we live in "enemyoccupied territory." There has been a rebellion in this part of the cosmos, but the good news is that there has also been a divine invasion. "The rightful king has landed" in our world.

In Lewis's book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* he also describes a world that has been frozen over, where it is always winter and Christmas never comes. But the snow is melting. Creation is awakening with anticipated joy. I, like Lewis, believe the spring thaw has begun. Aslan, the Christ lion, is on the move. "He isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

This is our story, as well, as we eagerly wait and pray with the hope of "Come, Lord Jesus."



JERRY TANKERSLEY has served as senior pastor of Laguna Presbyterian Church, Laguna Beach, CA, since 1972.

### Become a Partner of PRAYERCONNECT

Do you believe in the ministry of *Prayer Connect?* We need a team of people to partner with us.

We are slowly growing our subscriber base, but currently our subscription income only covers about 70% of our expenses. Advertising revenues cover another 15%. Beyond that income we still need to raise \$3,000 for each issue. We currently raise a little over \$1,000 from partners to help cover that shortfall. More partners would help us remain strong financially so we can continue producing *Prayer Connect*.

### Would you consider a special gift or becoming a monthly donor?

Every gift of \$10, \$25, \$50 or more helps to assure that *Prayer Connect* will be published for many years to come.

### To donate, go to prayershop.org/ donate.asp

and select *Prayer Connect* Magazine as the ministry you want to partner with. You can choose to give a one-time gift or to give monthly. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Or you can mail a check to:

Prayer Connect, P.O. Box 10667, Terre Haute, IN 47801 prayershop.org/donate.asp



# In the FACE OF HOSTILITY

A Prayerful Voice in a Polarized World

**BY MARK FORRESTER** 

few months ago I found myself at the world's most militarized border—the infamous demilitarized zone (DMZ) at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel between North

and South Korea. Looking beyond the barbed wire, guard shacks, and patrols, the hills and villages of North Korea were clearly visible. Red triangular signs, dotting the hillside, signaled the presence of land mines. Most overwhelming at the site, perhaps, was the broadcasted barrage of propaganda.

At one point, my guide stopped and said, "I think we're hearing the North right now." After pausing a few more moments, she smiled nervously. "Yes. That's definitely the North."

From the South, loud speakers blasted trendy K-Pop<sup>1</sup> tunes onto the North Korean hills. From the North, music and passion-filled speeches rushed across the narrow DMZ and into the border town of Paju, South Korea.

In-between, we found ourselves in a confusing mesh of sounds: angry and calm, classical and contemporary, oppressive and progressive.

### **RISING TENSIONS**

Do you ever feel "in-between" two conflicting cultures?

In today's world of increasing polarization, it's easy to feel bombarded by competing, conflicting, even hostile messages. News headlines are increasingly difficult to decipher amid inherent bias among reporters and news organizations. Reading through social media newsfeeds can alienate people. In personal relationships, cultural tensions and hostilities arise in workplace conversations, impromptu encounters, even the family dinner table. Simple statements, which could be interpreted in multiple ways, create controversies never intended. Some social media users seem determined to live in a perpetual state of conflict, thriving on the energy of debate.

How can a believer thrive or even survive in such an environment?

### RUNNING FROM OUR MISSION FIELD?

As in the story of Jonah, it's tempting to run away from the places God calls us to serve. Jonah resisted speaking to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1–3). Perhaps fear, hatred, or even pride caused him to run.

The heart of Christ, however, shows love unconditionally and never avoids

dangerous or uncomfortable situations. Time and time again in the Gospels, we find Christ in such situations, breaking cultural barriers to reach an individual with a message of hope.

- How?
- Be a voice of hope at work, in your community, and even in your home.
- Bring the light of Christ into the darkness.

# Help Us Disciple a New Generation of Intercessors

Our new websites teach others how to pray. You can help us by writing new, fresh content that inspires and equips them.



We especially need short, 150- to 500-word pieces for "Prayer FAQ," a section that answers basic questions about prayer. And we even pay for content.





Go to: prayerleader.com/about-us/write-for-us for information.

- Be a voice of hope to the homeless and hurting. Seek ways to become involved in your community in a positive way.
- Be a beacon of hope in the middle of a rancorous social media environment.

Perhaps the conflict you are facing is a God-ordained opportunity for ministry. A word of encouragement to a grumpy co-worker may change his or her emotional trajectory. A "soft answer" may turn away the irrational wrath of a family member (Prov. 15:1).

More than two billion people are active on social media.<sup>2</sup> For many of them, social media could be the first voices and the last voices they encounter each day. Imagine the impact we could have on a person's first waking social media interaction if we're led by the Spirit.

No, social media is not a "safe place" for those looking to avoid conflict. But the work of a successful missionary has never been confined to what is safe. George O. Wood, leader of the 68-millionmember Assemblies of God denomination, often says, "Look anywhere in the world where you see a work of God, and you will find the story of those who have risked greatly."

Social media interactions are no exception. Don't run from the place God has called you. Be a light to those around you. We can have no impact where we fear to go. Without risk there is no reward.

### **POST PRAYERFULLY**

Peak hours for social media usage have held steady at around 9:00 to 11:00 p.m. Most studies conclude that this peak happens as young couples have put their children to bed and may be relaxing in front of a television screen.

Users will see plenty of messages to conclude their day: partisan headlines, rants from the offended, people lashing out in hurt, pictures that portray a perfect life. What will your message be to people at this critical time in their day? Choose to be a voice of hope in the chaos.

Approach your own online posting and personal interactions prayerfully. Ask God to give you wisdom and courage as you face others who may have hostile attitudes. Pray that your conversations will be led by the Spirit and that your social media posts will lead people closer to Christ.

### **ENCOURAGEMENT, NOT DEBATE**

One day during my junior year of college, my sociology professor started the class by bringing up a topic of monumental controversy for an evangelical university. For the next ten minutes, he unpacked an extremely controversial case for an issue each student there would have opposed. Then he yielded the floor for discussion.

Hands went up across the small auditorium, and students raised heated objections to the professor's ideas. The temperature was quickly rising.

After a few student responses, the professor stopped in his tracks, folded up his notes and simply said, "You're right. I was wrong." He then walked calmly to a stool on the side.

The class sat in stunned silence, wondering what had just happened.

After a few moments, the professor asked, "Why are you shocked? Didn't you enter the debate to change my mind? Why are you so surprised that it worked?"

The answer was so clear that it did not need to be verbalized. We never truly expect a debate to end in changing the other's mind. If it happens, we're shocked.

Jesus frequently confronted individuals who tried to lure Him into debates over theological or ethical dilemmas, but He never sank to their level. He spoke simple words of truth and wisdom.

In today's world, when co-workers, acquaintances, or family members try to lure you into a debate, recognize the situation for what it is and follow the example of Christ.

Although Paul's warning in 1 Timothy 1:3–8 refers to arguments and distractions

within the church of Ephesus, his counsel applies to our daily personal interactions and social media participation as well. Paul told Timothy that some people "waste their time in endless discussion" leading to "meaningless speculations, which don't help people live a life of faith in God" (v. 4, NLT). Paul emphasized that the purpose of his instruction was "that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. But," he says, "some people have missed this whole point" (vv. 5-6, NLT).

In social media, avoid endless debates that will have no winner. Instead, focus on being a voice of hope and encouragement.

We all know people who focus relentlessly on one issue. It could be a political candidate they love or despise. It

### Subscription Information



# Take Prayer to a **NEW LEVEL**

If you enjoy this issue of *Prayer Connect* magazine, why not start a regular subscription? There are three types of subscriptions available:

**Print Subscription.** Our most popular subscription, the print sub sends a hard copy of *Prayer Connect* through the mail to you four times per year. You also receive full digital access to all issues online at *prayerconnect.net*. Price: \$24.99

**Digital Subscription.** This version provides just the online version of *Prayer Connect*. Each issue, an email announcement is sent to you with links to the articles at our password-protected website. You can view any or all articles, and have access to the articles in all back issues. Price: \$19.99

**CPLN Member Subscription.** This subscription is an annual membership in the Church Prayer Leaders Network. Besides a subscription to *Prayer Connect* (U.S. members receive a print subscription and foreign members a digital subscription), members receive a bimonthly email newsletter, *Prayer Leader Online*, and discounts on most of the 300 plus products at our webstore *prayershop.org.* Price: \$30

### Three Ways to Subscribe:

**Online.** Go to *prayerconnect.net* and click on "Purchase" on the upper right hand side of the toolbar at the top. Then simply select the type of subscription you want and follow the instructions.

**Phone.** Call Joanne at **1-800-217-5200** or **1-812-238-5504** and have her help you place an order (you need to have a credit card available). She is available 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM EST.

By Mail. Simply make out a check to *Prayer Connect*, in the amount of the subscription you want and mail it to us. Mail to: **Prayer Connect**, P.O. Box 10667, Terre Haute, IN 47801.

PRAYERCONNECT | 1-(812) 238-5504 | prayerconnect.net

could be a divisive issue they hold dear. Chances are, you won't change their minds by entering a debate.

Pray that God will give you a measure of grace as you interact personally or online. Pray that your interactions will reflect Christ's heart and point people to the gospel. Trust that the Spirit will guide your posts and interactions to demonstrate hope, healing, and reconciliation.

### TAKE A BREAK

In the early days of Apple's revolutionary iPhone, an app was created to integrate the camera into text messaging as a safety feature. Users could keep their eyes glued to their screens while walking. With a sort of picture-in-picture technology, they could see what was ahead. No need to physically interact with those nearby or even lift your eyes from your phone.

Social media addiction has become a concerning phenomenon. National Public Radio (NPR) recently reported a sharp rise in depression among adolescent girls.<sup>3</sup> The link they found? The girls spent a large portion of their day on social media, comparing themselves to the seemingly perfect lives of their friends and heroes.

FOMO (fear of missing out) has become a lynchpin in social media marketing. On Snapchat, Instagram, and now Facebook, "stories" will disappear within 24 hours. Live posts on Instagram disappear when the broadcast ends. This creates a competitive environment where many strive to be the first to know even the most trivial information. The pressure is on. They think they must be glued to their devices all day, every day.

Healthy social media interactions happen within well-defined boundaries. Don't allow yourself to get sucked into the constant hype of friends' rants, misleading headlines, or nonstop debates. Set parameters so your social media usage remains a tool, not an addiction.

In regards to your personal time with God and others, ask His help in resisting social media distractions. Trust that the Lord will give you grace to avoid traps of narcissism, fear, and jealousy that can come with unhealthy social media use. Pray that your posts will bring hope to those dealing with addiction or damaged self-worth.

### WALK IN THE SPIRIT

A Spirit-led life always points to Christ. After sharing an article on Facebook, I received a private message from someone in Eastern Africa. He had a spiritual struggle directly related to the subject matter in the article I had shared. He needed prayer. Within a couple of hours, I contacted our missions office to find someone close to this man. They connected him to someone who could personally help him through his struggle. This isn't a unique case. God can use any means of communication to bring a message of hope and healing.

In part, walking in the Spirit means that we remain open and willing to share His message in all settings. When we do, He is faithful.

Walking in the Spirit also means that we reflect the true nature of a Spiritempowered life—the fruit of the Spirit. Will the fruit of our social media and other interactions be contention, strife, or anger? Or, will the world see us as being primarily characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? (Gal. 5:22–23).

Ask God how you can show hope and kindness in a hostile environment. It could be mailing an encouraging note to a local business owner, sending flowers to a friend facing anxiety, or even spending a few more minutes of personal time, listening.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in your heart to bring forth His fruit in your life. Ask God to help you maintain a spirit of love in what you say in person and online. Believe that the Lord will provide opportunities for the messages you post to impact the lives of readers when they need them most.

### LET PRAYER ARISE

Just on the other side of the North Korean border town of Paju sits the Osanri Prayer Mountain, operated by the world's largest church, Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC). The day after being at the DMZ in Paju, I took the hourlong shuttle from YFGC in Seoul to the Prayer Mountain.

When walking through the mountain facilities, one can hear literal cries of prayer echoing off the Korean hills. Here, too, is a barrage of sounds along the contentious Korean border. But this is different.

Unlike the conflicting sounds along the DMZ, the *prayers* at Osanri rise in concert—from believers praying in multiple chapels, praying in hundreds of individual prayer grottos, and even praying while roaming the hills.

As I sat on the hillside in the still chilly Korean air, hearing the cries of saints from various nations, I noted the contrast. Unlike the two loud competing voices the previous day, here various voices cried out in the unity of the Spirit.

Our challenge in a polarized world is to stand out as voices in clear harmony.

Psalm 133:1 reminds us how rare and precious it is when God's family dwells together in unity. Let's pray that as people encounter the conversations and online messages from followers of Christ, they will find that rare, precious beauty that will lead them ultimately to faith and hope in Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>Korean popular music

 <sup>2</sup>statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/
<sup>3</sup>npr.org/sections/healthshots/2016/04/22/474888854/suicide-ratesclimb-in-u-s-especially-among-adolescent-girls

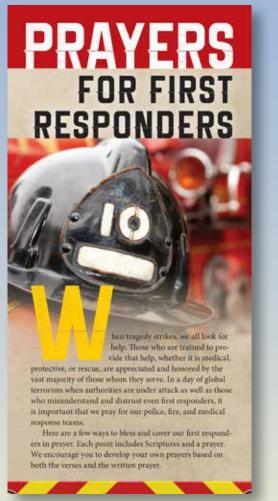
6

MARK FORRESTER, director of communications and public relations for the General Council of the Assemblies of God in Springfield, MO, also serves as their manager of social

media. He is the general editor of *Trending Up:* Social Media Strategies for Today's Church.

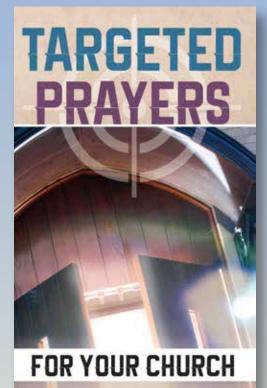
# Get Your Congregation Praying!

### Introducing Two New Scripture-Based Prayer Guides



### **Prayers for First Responders**

Bathe your community's first responders in prayer! "Prayers for First Responders" should be in the Bibles of every member of your church to pray through regularly or to pull out and pray in a time of need.



1. PASTOR - Lord, I lift up my pastor to You. Thank You for his servant's heart. Keep him from losing heart when ministry gets tough. Help him prove faithful with the things you have entrusted to him. Teach him Your ways so that he knows You and finds favor with You as He leads us. Keep him open and honest before You and help him to represent the truth plainly.

### **Targeted Prayers for Your Church**

Encourage your small group or congregation to pray through "Targeted Prayers for Your Church," which provides 31 Scripture-based prayers to pray over all your ministries and regular needs. Your church will experience new life as your members pray God's kingdom heart for its ministries.

Sold in Packs of 50 | \$11.99 per pack of 50 Multiple Pack Discounts Available at prayershop.org.





prayershop.org 812 238-5504



A Personal Journey of Replacing Fear with Faith

**BY DAVE BUTTS** 

he phone call from my doctor was a surprise to my wife Kim and me. We knew something was amiss with my health,

but we had no idea the seriousness of it. It's amazing how one phone call with unexpected news can realign our best-laid plans.

The Lord has amazing timing! For several months prior, I had been pulling together resources and studying Scripture to write a devotional book on prayer, peace, and the presence of Christ. By the time I sat down to write, that peace was far more than just a topic to study. It was now an integral part of my life.

I had no idea how important the truth of Philippians 4:7 would become to me: "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

### GOD KNOWS

I often withdraw to other places to write, and I did so for this devotional book. The Holy Spirit was clearly at work as I wrote. It seemed like the devotionals flowed from my heart and mind as I wrote for several days.

Then came the call I had been waiting

for regarding medical tests a week earlier. The results showed that I have a rare form of cancer called B-cell mantle lymphoma. I confess that the writing stopped for some days while Kim and I scoured the Internet to discover all we could about this disease.

As we learned about the rarity of this cancer—and often discovered things we didn't want to know—God's peace never left us.

Now I'm back to writing again, this time about God's peace in an imperfect world. Through His Word, God prepared me with His peace for the news I received. Far more than just an academic topic, His peace is a reality. It is a precious gift we have received, and we thank Him for it.

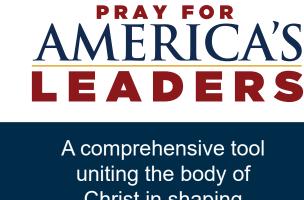
### **ON GUARD**

This peace from God is beyond under-

standing. A cancer diagnosis typically brings much fear and anxiety—and I confess I have had anxious thoughts. But in a way I cannot understand or begin to explain, God's amazing peace guarded our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

I think the key word is *guard*. Anxious thoughts and fears do arise. But God, through Christ, has supernaturally set a guard upon our hearts. This guard—awake and alert—prevents the natural thoughts and fears from gaining a foothold. Our minds and emotions do not have to be subservient to the circumstances around us. The peace of God is a strong guard that protects us and allows us to overcome a situation through the thoughts that come from Him.

The key to all this is desiring God's peace and asking for it. We can read Philippians 4:7 and feel good about the potential for peace. But if we do not receive it into our lives through prayer and faith,



Christ in shaping history through prayer.

Go to:

PrayforAmericasLeaders.org



we are allowing this truth to be nothing more than a nice thought. God's peace is available for all followers of Christ if we will ask and receive. Then we can *cultivate* His peace through a life of intimacy in prayer and studying the Word.

### Really, Truly

As I began my cancer treatments, a good friend wrote to assure me of his prayers. He asked how I was doing, then he followed up his question with "*Really*, how are you doing?"

This was my response:

### Alan,

How am I doing? That's harder to answer than you might think. Everything radically changed in my life with the diagnosis of a stage IV rare form of lymphoma. The things I thought critical are not so critical. All my speaking engagements are either cancelled or put on hold. For a guy who has spent his career living by the calendar, the calendar is irrelevant, except for doctor visits.

But how am I doing? Hate to say it this way, but I'm in an amazing place! God is so good to me. I'm experiencing His peace day by day and He has removed any and all anxiety from me. The only tears I have shed have come not from cancer, but from the amazing care and love shown by the Body of Christ. God's people have provided finances, care, and above all, an avalanche of prayer that covers me continually. I am in an amazing place!

Even ministry-wise, I am able to write and connect with prayer leaders around the nation and even the world. I'm convinced that this temporary illness will sharpen me for far greater effectiveness in ministry and compassion than ever before. I do believe it is "an illness not unto death," but even if I'm wrong, I can't lose on this one.

I don't pretend to enjoy what

I'm going through. The chemo last week was really intense because I have a very aggressive cancer. I'm paying the price for it this week. And in two more weeks I get to do the whole thing over again, for 6–8 cycles. Then we see whether the chemo killed the cancer or it killed me. I'm believing the cancer is going down!

How am I doing? I certainly cannot complain. I am on a journey with the Lord that is exciting and daunting at the same time. I am already watching Him do some amazing things and am committed to keeping my eyes open and to learning more of His ways as we go together.

Thanks for asking. Didn't mean to get carried away. I appreciate your prayers and friendship. Blessings! Dave The only way I can explain the ability to deal with cancer is the supernatural peace that Christ gives to His followers. Jesus said to us, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). This kind of peace is not a temperament type, nor is it the result of carefully cultivating a peaceful lifestyle. It is a gift from God to be received. And it is an important aspect of God's will for each of us.

The peace that Jesus speaks of is closely associated with His presence. The 23rd Psalm is a favorite for many people. It has become life-giving for me. You see, I am walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Though I firmly believe I will experience physical healing, the truth is that I currently am in stage IV lymphoma—and death shadows me.

But like King David, I can say that I

am not afraid. The reason? Because Jesus is walking with me through this valley. The rod and the staff that comfort me (Ps. 23:4) are symbols of a king and a shepherd. My King and Shepherd is walking with me—and that provides perfect peace regardless of outward circumstances.

### BENEFITS OF WALKING In Peace

Kim and I have discovered the amazing benefits of peace as it impacts others. Many people who are struggling with illness or other difficulties have shared ways our peace in our circumstance has encouraged them in whatever they are facing. Several of the medical staff at the hospital told us that they look forward to our every-three-week stay because we don't come in complaining. They notice the way we are filled with joy—and that has opened the doors for us to pray

# DO YOU WANT TO SEE A GREATER PASSION FOR PRAYER IN YOUR CHURCH? ARE YOU EQUIPPED TO BE A CATALYST FOR PRAYER

# IN YOUR CONGREGATION?

Then you need to be a member of the



The Church Prayer Leaders Network exists to encourage, challenge, inspire, and resource you as you seek to motivate and mobilize your church toward deeper levels of prayer.

### **BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP:**

- Annual subscription to Prayer Connect magazine
- Receive "Prayer Leader Online," a bi-monthly email that includes suggestions, inspiration and resource ideas to help you in your ministry of developing prayer.
- Discounts on prayer resources at prayershop.org

GO TO prayerleader.com/membership OR CALL 812 238-5504 TO JOIN.



### We're Everything Prayer!

Corporate Prayer • Bible Studies/Small Groups • Personal Prayer Intercession • Prayer Guides • Spiritual Warfare Prayer Ministry Teams • Church • Women • Children • Youth • Men Conferences • Prayer Evangelism and 24 other categories

Sponsored by







Lessons from the Prayer Life of Moses

MARK D. PARTIN

PRAYERSHOP PUBLISHING

www.prayershop.org

EXPLORE A LIFE THAT DESIRED TO BE IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Using the life of Moses, Mark Partin shows what can happen if we choose to lead out of a life spent in the presence of the Lord.

Available from **prayershop.org**, or through your local Christian bookstore or normal book outlets.

prayershop.org | 812 238-5504

with nurses and share about Jesus. With God's peace, despite serious illness, you can focus on others and on ministry to the Lord.

There are other by-products of this peace:

- Peace gives rise to worship. I often find myself up in the early hours of the morning, walking and worshiping the Lord.
- My infirmities have allowed me to be more compassionate toward others who are struggling with illness.
- My appreciation for the prayers of others on my behalf has led me to greater prayer for others.

God has been so gracious to me in this time of illness. The prayers of thousands and the release of the power of God, along with the best of medical science, have brought me rapidly to remission. Though the medical community says that mantle cell lymphoma is "incurable," I worship a God who doesn't recognize that word. My trust and hope is in Him for complete healing. But the Lord also provides peace and strength to deal with what amounts to a chronic disease. Ministry continues unabated and with even greater effectiveness because of the peace God has given to Kim and me.

The presence of Jesus brings peace to whatever circumstances any of us are walking through. As we daily draw near to the Lord and commit ourselves to deeper intimacy with Him, His peace becomes a guard that banishes fear and gives joy. When the Prince of Peace reigns in believers, a supernatural peace marks their lives—and that speaks volumes to the world!



**DAVE BUTTS** is the co-founder of Harvest Prayer Ministries and chairman of America's National Prayer Committee. This article is adapted from Dave's book, *Prayer, Peace and* 

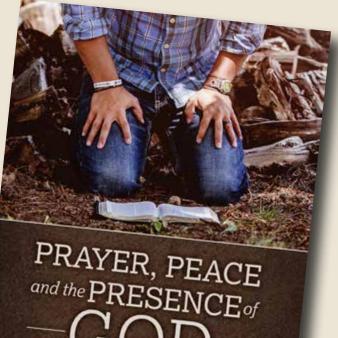
the Presence of God: A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus (available at prayershop.org).

# Know Anyone Who Needs the **PEACE OF CHRIST?**

A s believers, we are supposed to walk in Christ's peace day by day. But when the trials, struggles, and stresses of life come upon us, many of us do not experience that peace. Instead, we look at our circumstances and worry.

In Prayer, *Peace and the Presence* of God, Dave Butts, who learned he was in stage 4 of a rare form of lymphoma just after he started writing this book, will show you how to experience—to walk in—the peace that God promises.

Buy copies for yourself and friends you know who need encouragement. Experience God's peace and presence in your life.



A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus

DAVID BUTTS

Available through prayershop.org and where you buy your Christian books. Also available in ebook form.

MULTIPLE COPY DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE AT prayershop.org.



# BIBLE STUDY

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

In his article, "Yes, You *Will* Have Trouble," Jerry Tankersley quotes words he found helpful from Dallas Willard: "What better place to have a meltdown than in the presence of the God of peace?" The first type of resistance we can exert against the turmoil of our lives is honest, gut-felt prayer. Read Psalms 13, 79, and 86. Choose the one that resonates most with what you are feeling right now. Then answer the following questions:

What emotions does the psalmist express?

### Hope for a World in Turmoil

**Note:** This Bible study is formatted for small group open discussion. If you use this study by yourself, we suggest 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.

no physics geek, but I do remember a few things from high school science. I remember Newton's Law of Motion, that says, in part, that an object in motion will stay in motion with t in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force

the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.

This principle is true in the natural, physical world. And when I read the articles for this issue of *Prayer Connect*, I thought about how it applies to our spiritual world as well. Jesus promised that we would have trouble in this world (John 16:33). A force—let's call it trouble—presses against us. It's part of living in a fallen world. If we do nothing, that force will keep trouble moving, like a snowball down a mountain, until it crushes us. That's what the enemy wants.

But Jesus does not call us to do nothing. He calls us to overcome! When, by God's empowering, we exert force against these trials, peace comes. The outward circumstances may or may not change, but our inward condition will. "Then [we] will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard [our] hearts and minds as [we] live in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7, NLT).

So what is this "force" that we can use as resistance when our world is in turmoil? That's what this Bible study is all about.

### **BY CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK**

What questions does he ask?

What petitions of God does he make?

What indicators do you see of his faith?

Mark Forrester suggests that relational conflicts may actually be ministry assignments from God. Think of a relationship that is difficult for you. With that relationship in mind, prayerfully read the following verses from Proverbs and note any insights that may prove useful as you put up resistance against trouble.

15:1

16:32		
17:9–10		
25:21–22		

In the story of his personal journey with a cancer diagnosis, Dave Butts relates that "the peace of God is a strong guard that protects us and allows us to overcome a situation through the thoughts that come from Him." One of the things that can help us cultivate God's peace, he says, is Bible study. Study the following Scriptures and note the nature of the trouble, the feelings associated with that trouble, and how faith in God brought/ brings peace.

Matthew 6:25–34

Matthew 8:23-27

Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

Luke 21:12–15

John 11:17–27, 38–44

Romans 4:18-24

Philippians 4:4-9

1 Peter 5:8–11

### **ACTION STEPS**

A spiritual discipline of praying the Psalms is one way Jerry Tankersley finds peace in the midst of trial. Commit to praying at least one psalm a day for a month. Write your plan for doing that. Consider doing this with a friend or family member as a means of encouraging one another. Choose a Scripture verse or passage that can help you partner with the Holy Spirit for the transformation needed to trust God, come what may. Write the verse(s) you select below. Review every day until memorized. Ask God to bring this passage to mind whenever you start feeling overwhelmed by the troubles of this world.

Tankersley also has found that worshiping with God's people helps him remain steady in the face of turmoil. Is God calling **CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK** is a regular contributor to *Prayer Connect* and the editorial director for Community Bible Study (*communityBiblestudy.org*).

you to change or strengthen anything about your worship habits? If so, write some thoughts about how to do that.

Mark Forrester challenges us to use social media and technology to bring a message of hope to the troubled world around us. What would it be like if you were to consider social media primarily as a tool for ministry? Write down at least three ways you can use social media and technology to minister to others, then plan to act on those this month. was moments away from losing everything my job, my church family, and most of my friends. As I awaited the decision, I honestly didn't know what I hoped for the outcome. Perhaps it would be better just to sever ties and move on from my employment. It certainly would be easier.

As the mediator of our meeting brought it to conclusion, he asked my boss (who was also my pastor), "Can you continue to work with Linda?"

After a long pause, my boss answered, "I'm willing to try."

At the time, I was trapped in patterns of sinful behaviors. I was unhappy with my life and lashed out at those I blamed for my circumstances. Painful childhood wounds and insecurities resulted in multiple strained relationships. I was angry most of the time and generally miserable.

That not-so-enthusiastic response of my boss crushed my heart. I didn't see how our relationship could ever be repaired. What could God ever do in this mess?

### Identifying Bitterness

I knew God felt far away, and I didn't have the hope and joy and love I was supposed to have as a child of God. But I didn't identify the bitterness that had taken over my life. I just thought there was something wrong with me. I was a product of my upbringing and the hurts and wounds of the past. I blamed my circumstances and the failures of others. And because I believed that most Christians had not been through the depth of my struggles and difficulties, self-pity consumed me.

The problem with this mindset is that it removes God from the equation. I was suffering from a profound lack of faith in what God could do within me. I settled into a victim mentality and didn't leave room for Him to work in my life.

Paul writes, "We all . . . are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). This is God's promise that He is working to transform us through the Holy Spirit.

# BY LINDA GRAF

WHEN YOUCAN'TGET PASTTHE HURT

All of us who are believers in Christ have the Holy Spirit within us—and He wants to transform us! Regardless of the wounds we've suffered or the hard things we've experienced, God is ready to do His restoring work if we believe He can and if we ask Him for His help.

### Checking the Heart

How do we identify bitterness? Here is a description of the stages I've discovered lead to full-blown bitterness:

• Step 1. Anger. This is a common emotion. We all have felt anger flare up when people do something to harm us or fail to do something we expect of them.

However, Scripture speaks abundantly about how dangerous this emotion is and about the need to take care of it quickly. This is the key to stopping the progression toward bitterness. Paul says, "In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26–27). Satan takes advantage when we hold on to our anger. James says that "human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires" (1:20).

- Step 2. Rehearsing the wrong done to us. We relive the moment over and over again in our minds. We are quick to remind ourselves of the unfairness of it all. This creates resentment, which keeps the offense alive and painful. It causes us continual hurt, which grows and hardens us.
- Step 3. Bitterness. Bitterness is the firmly held belief that things are the way you've perceived and determined them to be, so now you have a worldview that cannot be changed or reasoned away.

It might sound like this: "My father never loved me." "That boss sabotaged my advancement in that job." "Those people are out to get me." "My sister will never change." "This is just the way I am."

People who embrace bitterness either knowingly or unknowingly tend to be angry, unhappy, and full of self-pity. We all need a "heart check" to see if bitterness resides in us.

### Praying for Release

If you suspect bitterness is affecting your life, here are a few ways to pray:

1. Pray that your eyes will be opened. You may be harboring anger and bitterness against others or even God Himself. Ask God to reveal your sin and any areas of unforgiveness you are hiding or denying. We can feel far from God when we have unconfessed sin. Ask Him to shine a spotlight on the far corners of your heart. Psalm 66:18 says, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."

2. Pray for a deeper love for God. Jesus tells us to love God *first* and *wholly* and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:37–39). Ask the Lord to help you grow in love for Him and others. Invite Him to heal your wounds and repair anything that keeps you from loving Him or others fully. God assures us that it is His will that we grow in holiness and sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3–5). Seek to purify your heart and mind and increase your desire and capacity to love.

3. Pray for a heart that feels remorse and sorrow. It's easy to focus on what has been done to us and forget that we have often wounded people. Ask God to show you how your unkind words and actions have hurt others. Pray that Psalm 51:17 will be true of your own heart: "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."

**4. Pray, believingly, for forgiveness.** Our Father has compassion on His children, but He also remembers that He made us out of dust! (Ps. 103:13–14). It is because of His kindness that we can come to a place of repentance (Rom. 2:4). Ask God to forgive you for your sins of anger, revenge, or bitterness. Be encouraged that He is always faithful to forgive when we ask (1 John 1:9). Thank Him for His great love and the gift of forgiveness.

5. Pray for an obedient heart that turns away from sin. Ask God for a heart that chooses to forgive and submits to Him in obedience. If you have been bitter or angry with God, confess it and declare that you want His will in your life, whatever that looks like. Ask Him to bring beauty from the ashes as He promised in Isaiah 61:3.

**6.** Pray for the ability to forgive those who have deeply wounded you. God is not a harsh Father who commands us to do something we absolutely cannot do. As a popular worship song title puts it, He's a "Good, Good Father." And He has given us everything we need for "life and godliness" (2 Cor 4:7, KJV). Paul says we are as "jars of clay" so that God's power and glory will be evident in us (2 Cor. 4:7), and God's power will be made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Choosing to forgive is difficult, but nothing is impossible with God's power.

7. Pray for those you seek to forgive. If they are not believers, pray for mercy that they will be brought to salvation. If they are believers, pray for their growth in holiness and sanctification. If they are no longer living, pray that you will speak well of them. Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44).

8. Pray for a transformed mind in right thinking. We need to believe truth and take our thoughts captive to Christ. After we have taken the steps of repenting of our sin of bitterness and then forgiving those who have hurt us, God wants us to seek to transform our minds (Rom. 12:2). Otherwise we can easily slip back into the same patterns of taking offense, wallowing in self-pity, and harboring anger. When we recognize the battle, we can rely on God to help us overcome: "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 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. 10:4–5).

9. Pray for strength to put others first and avoid selfishness. Human beings are by nature consumed with ourselves. I am often most concerned about my to-do list, my feelings, and my desires for each day. But Jesus said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Paul follows up on that, instructing us, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Phil. 2:3–4).

For me, the battle against bitterness has often been one of self-pity. When I am feeling sorry for myself and concentrating on the disappointments, hurts, and injustices done to me, my focus is not on Jesus or His Kingdom. I have no thoughts of loving others or how I might please and glorify God. This is a trap God wants all of us to avoid. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can think of God and others first.

**10. Pray for a thankful heart.** It's God's will for us to grow in gratitude (1 Thess. 5:18). Paul warns us about the progression of sin as seen in godless and wicked people: "Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21).

An unthankful heart is the first step on the slippery slope to ruin. By giving Jesus thanks for His many blessings to us, we can fight sin and bitterness (1 Thess. 5:18).

### Finding Healing: God's Mighty Work

My story has a happy ending. The Lord graciously revealed my sins of anger and bitterness and the damage I had inflicted on others. As I embarked on a journey of prayer and repentance, along the way I found healing. I received forgiveness and was reconciled to my pastor. I still work for him today, years later. We even wrote a book together!

It took a mighty work of God in my life to accomplish this—and to restore hope and joy to my heart. But I praise Him that I believed Him for healing. I know now that He can do His work in us if we step out in faith and ask Him. 🖻



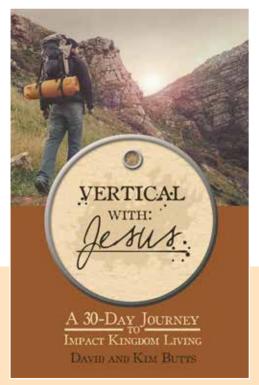
LINDA GRAF is the author of *Bitter Truth: My Story of Bitterness, Grace and Repentance.* She has been on staff at Front Range Alliance Church in Colorado Springs, CO, as

worship ministries director since 1999. She blogs at *lindagraf.org*.

# BECOME MORE KINGDOM-MINDED

Vertical with Jesus is a 30-day devotional that encourages a balance between connecting with Jesus through prayer and doing the work of the Kingdom. Each day you will be stimulated in your connection with God, and you will consider how to keep focused on Him as you live the life He has called you to.

A GREAT DEVOTIONAL PRAYER GUIDE FOR A CONGREGATION TO GO VERTICAL WITH JESUS TOGETHER.



Available through your local Christian book outlet or **prayershop.org** (Multiple Copy Discounts Available at PrayerShop)

prayershop.org | 800 217-5200



# HE'S THE

ne Saturday morning I was scurrying around our church, getting ready for our men's breakfast. I turned to my son Elijah, held out my keys to him and said, "Elijah—"

Before I could say anything else, he replied, "Would you please?"

He said the exact three words that were about to come out of my mouth. We laughed, and I slowed my frantic pace.

How did my son know with pinpoint accuracy what I was about to say? Does he possess the gift of prophecy? Maybe. But in this instance, it was probably the gift of predictability. My reliance upon my responsible 12-year-old son to help me with small tasks around the church (and home) had become so predictable that he could complete my sentence. It is not uncommon for those who know us the best to be able to predict our behavior, actions, and words.

### INTRODUCING GOD THE FATHER

A few years ago a question gently came to my mind: "How would Jesus describe the nature of God the Father?"

The question made me curious. *Logically*, I thought, *those who know us best are the ones who live closest to us.* My three kids know

By Pierre Eade



the *real* me. They can predict my standard lines or forecast when a "bad Dad" joke is on its way. They know the clues and can figure out when I'm tired and worn out.

So wouldn't it make sense that Jesus knows the Father better than anyone else?

When I searched the Bible for an answer, I found my logical conclusion backed by biblical truth. Jesus taught, "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). Father

What an audacious and amazing statement for Jesus to make about Himself and His relationship with God!

First of all, He says that all things have been handed over to Him by God. That includes God's authority, His people, His judgments—everything.<sup>1</sup> In essence, Jesus is saying, "God has put Me in charge." That's quite a statement to make about yourself!

But wait. He goes further.

Jesus says that nobody knows Him except the Father, and nobody knows the Father except the Son. Jesus is saying that the relationship He has with God the Father is not like any other relationship. It is closer than the most intimate relationship Making Room for the Goodness of God in Prayer between a man and a woman. It is more exclusive than the words of a binding contract between two parties. Jesus and the Father are deeply connected to one another with no middleman (or middlewoman) in between—with one important exception. Jesus says, "No one knows the Father except the Son *and* anyone to whom the Son chooses to *reveal* him" (italics added).

In other words, Jesus has added one clause to this exclusive contract between the Father and Son. Jesus has exclusive rights to knowing God the Father, but He is also willing to reveal the Father to those He chooses.

Now we're getting somewhere. Jesus knows the Father best, so if we want to meet the Father, we need to ask Jesus for an introduction. That simple truth became the premise and theme of my book, *Our Good Father*.

What makes this even more interesting is that the word *reveal*, used in most English versions of the Bible, is translated from a Greek word meaning "to take off the cover or disclose."<sup>2</sup> It can also mean, "to make known" or "discover what before was unknown."<sup>3</sup> So Jesus is saying He has the ability and authority to take the cover off the mystery of God the Father, so we can truly know Him for ourselves.

### **CREATING A BLANK CANVAS**

When I came upon this truth, I realized I was standing at a critical juncture in my relationship with God. I was being invited to come and see the Father's heart, like never before, through the lens of Jesus' words. If I wanted to truly know the Father and have the most accurate picture of His nature, I needed to study the words of Jesus to see what He said about His Father.

With that in mind, I decided to give God a blank canvas and ask Jesus to paint a new picture in my mind and spirit to show me the real nature of the Father.

As I dove head first into the words

of Jesus to discover the true nature of God the Father, I found an overall theme Jesus wanted to get across to His audience—*My Father is good.* The good nature of God the Father was something Jesus seemed to emphasize time and again as He taught, preached, and told stories about His Father in heaven.

One of the more familiar passages where Jesus emphasizes the goodness of the Father is Matthew 7:11: "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

My favorite three words in this passage are, *how much more*. If a flawed individual like me can have the mind and heart to want to bless my children, *how much more* does a perfect heavenly Father desire to bless us—His kids with every good thing?

We can apply these questions to our prayer life:

- Do we trust the Father enough to ask Him for the things that are on our hearts?
- Do we believe the Father to be good at heart, not willing to give us something harmful, evil, or bad?
- If we knew with complete certainty that God would never give us anything bad, no matter what we asked for, how would it change the way we pray?

### CATCHING MYSELF

As I studied the teachings of Jesus to learn about the Father, my own prayer life began to change. I began to catch myself praying to God in ways that, at best, underestimated what God could do—and, at worst, were unbiblical and lacked genuine faith. I felt convicted that I thought myself better than God!

Let me explain. As a father, I know it is in my heart to give my children only the best in life. Even when I say no, it is because I want what's best for my kids in every way possible. For instance, last night I told my son he could not have a full glass of chocolate milk before bed. Was it because I do not love him? No, it was because I *do* love him! I know that chocolate milk before bed is a recipe for either insomnia or crazy dreams.

That's not to say I don't make mistakes and that I have not erred in my judgment, attitude, actions, or inaction. I'm just saying that I want the best for my children, both now and in their future. So how can I have such confidence in my own goodness, yet, at times, when I pray, I lack similar trust in Father God's goodness?

As this journey of discovering the goodness of God began to unfold, I started to catch myself praying in ways that did not give God much credit. "God, if You could . . . Lord, if You might . . . Father, if You see it best. . . ." I kept finding myself speaking to God in ways that made Him "less good" than what my own kids perceive *me* to be!

I am still a work in progress. My mind is still being renewed to fully believe in the goodness of God. But here are two practical elements that have helped me adjust the way I pray in order to make room for God's goodness:

1. Adding an Adjective. One of the habits I have developed in my prayer life is to put an adjective before the Father's name when I pray. Instead of starting my prayer by saying, "Father God," I will say, "Good Father," or "Faithful Father," or even, "Loving Daddy." I have found that when I add simple adjectives such as *good, faithful*, and *loving*, it sets the right tone for my prayers.

When I start my prayer with, "Good Father," it is hard to begin complaining or moaning about what I see is wrong. Instead, I am more inclined to seek Him to make everything work together for my good. When I begin by praying, "Faithful Father," I am setting myself up to pray with His promises or past victories in mind. When I pray, "Loving Daddy," I know I am coming to my Father who has compassion and mercy upon His children. 2. Negating My Prayers. One of the newer elements I occasionally throw in is to negate my prayers and ask for an upgrade. When Jesus prayed, "yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42), He was doing so as an act of submission to the Father in prayer. Yet when I pray these words, it is not always with the same pure motive of surrender. Instead, I may want to offer to God a concession to do less than what I have asked Him to do because of my own lack of faith!

I think we're all familiar with this type of prayer: "Father, I ask you to heal my friend—yet not my will, but Your will be done." When I pray this way, instead of surrendering the situation to God in prayer, my heart may be saying to the Father, "If you cannot handle this big a request, then I will settle for something less. I will settle for Your will instead."

Far be it from me to ever think I need to lower my standard in prayer to meet

God's ability! I remind myself that if I, being evil, know how to give good gifts to my kids, *how much more* will my Father?

So now, I often ask God to negate my prayers in order to receive His better answers. I might pray, "Father, if what I have asked for is anything less than what You want to give me, then negate my prayers and give me Your very best!" That's a whole different way of praying "Your will be done"! It is still an act of surrender—but it's one that believes God for the ultimate best in the situation, even beyond what I can ask, imagine, or think (Eph. 3:20).

### **REFLECTING HIS GOODNESS?**

Remember that incident of my son and I preparing for the prayer breakfast together? He knew my personality so well that he anticipated what I was about to say. Likewise, in our relationship with Father God, we can know His personality so well that we can anticipate His "goodness" in His response to our prayers.

Considering the goodness of God, we can ask ourselves this question: "Does my prayer life reflect that I am speaking with a God who is completely good?"

If the answer is no, how might we need to change the way we pray in order to make room for the goodness of God in our lives?

<sup>1</sup>See Matthew 28:18, John 3:35, 5:22, 27; 6:37–40, 10:25–30, 13:3.

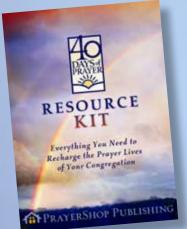
<sup>2</sup>Strong's Greek Dictionary #601, apokalýptō.
<sup>3</sup>Blue Letter Bible website, accessed January
23, 2017, blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g601.



**PIERRE EADE** is pastor of outreach at The Crossing, Washington Crossing, PA, and the author of *Born to Grow* and *Our Good Father*. He blogs at *discipleshipnetwork.com*.

VANDERGRIEND

# IMAGINE A CONGREGATION THAT LOVES TO PRAY?



Multiple Copy Discounts Available at prayershop.org Hundreds of churches are using the bestselling book *Love to Pray* by Alvin VanderGriend in a 40-day prayer initiative . . . and they are seeing more and more people catch a heart for prayer. Why not teach your people to *Love to Pray*?

Resource Kit includes everything you need to run a 40-day prayer emphasis.

800 217-5200 | 812 238-5504 | prayershop.org





### Heart-changing Prayers for Fellow Believers

n a crisp Sunday morning, I suddenly realized I didn't want to go to church. I wanted to stay home, sit on my deck, and sip coffee instead of being around people in the close quarters of a worship service. I had no desire to invest in small talk with people in the lobby—and I felt a rising cloud of anxiety in my chest.

Searching my heart, I asked God to reveal anything that might be hidden within me—anything that might be causing my aversion. A recent confrontation with a friend came to mind. I wasn't ready to see her. My mind also traced the footsteps of my busy week. I was weary and in need of rest.

Unsure how to proceed, I picked up my Bible and turned to the familiar words of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. As I read the first chapter, I considered how Paul poured out his love for his brothers and sisters in Christ. My heart was moved with compassion. What if, instead of grumbling about the obligation to gather with God's family, I prayed for them?

Following Paul's guidelines in Ephesians 1, I offered five distinct prayers that softened my heart and prepared me to worship with my fellow believers:

**I gave thanks for them** (v. 16): Nothing sets a heart right more quickly than the discipline of giving thanks. Our hearts are aligned with God's heart when we offer thanksgiving. Begin by giving thanks for the people in your church—those you are privileged to worship with each week. This will align your heart with Christ's heart for His body.

I prayed that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (v. 17): The more we know God, the more we can walk in the abundance of His love. When we pray for God to give others a spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him, we are praying that the gateway to the most fulfilling and abundant life will be opened for them.

I prayed that the eyes of their hearts would be opened, so that they would know the hope of their calling (v. 18): God has called each of His children to live a life of love. We are called to love Him first, and we are called to carry His love to a lost and broken world. When we pray for our brothers and sisters to have the eyes of their hearts opened, we are praying that they might see other people as Christ sees them and walk in the hope that comes from following Christ.

I asked God to keep their eyes on the glory (hope) of what is to come (v. 18): When our eyes are fixed on the struggles of this life, it's easy to lose heart. Many fellow laborers in the Lord are discouraged and downcast because they've stopped looking forward to the glory that is to come. When we pray for fellow believers to keep their eyes on that future glory, we pray they will remember that the hard work of this life will be worth it when they meet Christ face to face.

**I prayed they would experience the greatness of God's power working through them** (v. 19): We all need God's power to do His will and live out the calling on our lives. He has promised His power through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Few things are more encouraging than realizing that the Spirit of God is working in and through our lives. We bless our brothers and sisters in Christ when we pray that they will experience the greatness of God's power working through them.

As I prayed through these verses, a gentle shift took place. My feelings started to soften, and God impressed His love and compassion for His people on my heart. I was refreshed by praying His Word back to Him—and I stood up to leave my deck with a sincere desire to worship with His people!

**STACEY PARDOE** is the prayer ministry coordinator at Grove City, PA, Alliance Church. She writes weekly on her blog *staceypardoe.com* 

### Will You Pray with Us?

We appreciate your prayers for the staff of *Prayer Connect*. You are valued and strategic partners in our ministry.

- Praise God for the amazing answer to prayer for Dave Butts and his cancer treatments! He experienced minimal side effects and is now in remission. Dave is not cured of cancer, but he is eager for the next season of ministry as he leads America's National Prayer Committee. Pray for strength and continued remission.
- Praise God for the many prayer leaders who so willingly come alongside *Prayer Connect* and write for us. They are "prayer practitioners" who provide wisdom and helpful prayer insights for our readers. Pray that God will continue to provide experienced writers who can encourage the prayer movement.
- Praise God for the quality graphic design that Bridget Rennie provides for *Prayer Connect*. Ask God to continue to give her creativity, skill, and appropriate balance of her work and home life.

### TIPS&TOOLS



### The Holy Spirit is Like Flowing Water

love praying the attributes of God and the many names of Jesus. When I see God as He is, when I think rightly about Him, my faith has substance, and I can keenly express my love to the Lord.

But I also love praying the metaphors of the Holy Spirit. They're all fluid or uncontainable—wind, fire, water, oil, and a dove.

Praying these metaphors of the Holy Spirit provides picturesque and creative space for entering the manifest presence of God. Various aspects of each metaphor can take on different scriptural emphases.

Consider the metaphor of water, for instance: Jesus specifically describes the inner ministry of the Holy Spirit as "rivers of living water" flowing within us—renewing us and refreshing others through us (John 7:38–39).

He also refers to this gift of God as "a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The Spirit quenches and satisfies our spiritual thirst for God (John 4:14).

The prophet Isaiah further speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit like pouring "water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground"—flowing into our lives, our families, our service, our spheres of influence, and bearing lasting fruit through us (Isa. 44:3). Continuing this metaphor of the Holy Spirit as flowing water, I am reminded of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—which, among other things, describes the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit alive within us (Gal. 5:22–23).

With these images, I pray this way slowly, meditatively, and with open arms receiving:

Holy Spirit, grant me to know You in Your fullness:

- the ocean of Your love
- the wellspring of Your joy

- the river of Your peace
- the quiet waters of Your patience
- the streams of Your kindness
- the floods of Your goodness
- the waves of Your faithfulness
- the dew of Your gentleness
- the channel of Your self-control.

The pictures continue. Sometimes the Holy Spirit comes to me like the *warm spring rain*—quiet, gentle, refreshing. Sometimes the Holy Spirit comes to me like a *torrential downpour*—overwhelming me, drenching me, knocking me down. Sometimes the Holy Spirit comes like the *morning dew*—daily present, an awareness I need to cultivate, new every morning.

I want to know the Holy Spirit of God in every way like flowing water.



For me, stepping into these images of the Holy Spirit is a sure and most delightful entry into the manifest presence of God!

DAVID J. SMITH is senior pastor at Queens Christian Alliance Church—a multicultural, multilanguage, multicongregational church in New York City.

# Js our nation in trouble? CAN PRAYER CHANGE A NATION? IF IT IS NOT TOO DIFFICULT, WILL YOU HELP?

Can you commit to 3 minutes a day, and lunch once a month, to be part of raising up 5 million new prayer warriors in the USA?

Order the free materials and see the math behind this goal.

To receive a FREE SPI-5Y80/PrayerCords envelope of materials, email mike@harvestprayer.com or call 708.673.5998. For such a time as this...?



PRAYERLEADER

Encouragement for Prayer Mobilizers

### Making the Next Generation a Priority | By Camden McAfee

ou've probably heard that 59 percent of young Christians temporarily or permanently disconnect from the church after age 15. You've probably heard that suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24. You've probably heard that a quarter of teenagers have at least one major episode of depression in high school.

These numbers aren't just statistics; they're my peers. As part of this next generation, I need to ask, are you praying for this generation, knowing we're the ones to inherit the Church in the coming decades?

### **Unprecedented Opportunity**

What an opportunity we have before us! Young people aren't a burden to be borne; they're a generation to be activated. Consider the ways God has used young people in the past to shape the direction of nations.

At the age of 26, George Whitefield expanded the impact of the First Great Awakening in America. Before Charles Spurgeon was 20, he had preached more than 600 sermons. Evan Roberts, the central figure of the Welsh Revival, was only 26 when God used him to carry the message of revival to an entire nation.

God is passionate about using young people to further His Kingdom on earth. As the Church, we need to learn how to pray for the next generation and how to mobilize prayer for them. The need and the opportunity are set before us; it's time for us to pray.

### **Praying for More**

God wants so much for my generation. Nick Hall, in his book Reset: Jesus Changes Everything (pulsemovement.com), suggests eight areas in which the next generation needs prayer. I've adapted them here:

- Faith. For those who have walked away from Jesus, pray for their faith to be restored and strengthened. For those who are following Him, pray for their faith to grow even more.
- Plans. The decisions young people make will affect them for the rest of their lives. Pray for God to direct their plans away from evil and toward good.
- Self-Image. Many young people struggle with feelings of worthlessness. Pray for the love of God to surround and fill those struggling with self-image.
- Relationships. Broken relationships plague this generation. Pray for restoration of relationships with family, friends, and God.
- •Purity. Pray for a restoration and renewed vision of purity for this generation. Pray for any shame to be removed by the love of Jesus.
- Habits. Destructive habits further drive my generation from God. Pray not only for the removal of old habits but for the establishment of new, God-honoring practices.
- Affections. At the root of our habits are affections. Pray for God to awaken a deep longing only He can fill in this generation, and pray for Him to satisfy our affections in Jesus.
- Generation. Finally, pray this generation will experience awakening and revival from coast to coast. Jesus longs for my generation not only to know Him but to spread His gospel around the world.

### **Mobilizing Next-Generation Prayer**

Knowing the need to pray for the next generation and *how* to pray for us, what are some ways to incorporate this into what you're already doing as prayer leaders? Here are a few simple suggestions:

- 1. Pray for the next generation regularly. Incorporate prayer for the next generation into your prayer group. Maybe this means a little each time, or maybe it means taking one night to focus solely on the next generation. I encourage you to pray monthly for the needs of young people.
- 2. Create intergenerational relationships in your church. Meet and get to know a young person or couple at your church. Learn about them. Invite them to lunch. Ask how you can pray for them, and begin to build these "prayer bridges" in relationship between generations.
- 3. Partner in prayer. Invite young people to join you in prayer. Consider ways you can adapt your group to accommodate their needs. Commit yourself to sharing the baton of prayer with the next generation.

The choice before us is clear. We can either ignore the cries of a generation, or we can do the hard work of praying for them and engaging with them. The brokenness the enemy means for evil can be turned around and used by God for good.



**CAMDEN McAFEE** is staff writer at PULSE, an evangelistic organization that exists to awaken culture to the reality of Jesus (pulsemove*ment.com*). He is also a young

leader and frequent teacher at Faith Church, Minnetonka, MN.





### Divine Efficacy of Prayer | By Arthur T. Pierson

Il the greatest needs, both of the Church and of the world, may be included in one: the need of a higher standard of godliness. The all-embracing secret of a truly godly life is close and constant contact with the unseen God; that contact is learned and practiced, as nowhere else, in the secret place of supplication and intercession.

Our Lord's first lesson in the school of prayer was, and still is: "Enter into thy closet" (Matt. 6:6, KJV). The "closet" is the closed place, where we are shut in alone with God, where the human spirit waits upon an unseen Presence, learns to recognize Him who is a Spirit, and cultivates His acquaintance, fellowship, and friendship.

### The Praying Soul

To the praying soul there becomes possible the faith which is the grasp of the human spirit upon the realities and verities of the unseen world.

To the praying soul there becomes possible the patience, which is the habit of waiting for results yet unseen and hopes yet unrealized. To the praying soul there becomes possible the love that, like a celestial flood, drowns out evil tempers and hateful dispositions, and introduces us to a new world of gentle and generous frames.

Those who yearn for revivals naturally lay much stress on preaching. But what is preaching without praying! Sermons are but pulpit performances, learned essays, rhetorical orations, popular lectures, or may be political harangues, until God gives, in answer to earnest prayer, the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue. It is only he who prays that can truly preach.

Praying souls become prevailing saints. Those who get farthest on in the school of prayer and learn most of its hidden secrets often develop a sort of prescience which comes nearest to the prophetic spirit, the Holy Spirit showing them "things to come." They seem to know something of the purpose of God, to anticipate His plans, and to forecast the history of their own times.

### A Mysterious Union

Like the Bible, prayer is self-evidencing. It is a mysterious union of Divine and human elements not easy of explanation; but to him who prays and puts God to the test along the lines of His own precepts and promises, God proves how real a force prayer is in His moral universe. The best way to prop up prayer is to practice it.

Prayer, likewise, keeps one steadfast in faith and all holy activity. Hence, as surely as God is lifting His people to a higher level of spirituality, and moving them to a more unselfish and self-denying service, there will be new emphasis laid by them upon supplication, and especially upon intercession.

We cannot too strongly emphasize that to keep in close touch with God in the secret chamber of His presence is the great fundamental underlying purpose of prayer. To speak with God is a priceless privilege; but what shall be said of having and hearing Him speak with us! We can tell Him nothing He does not know; but He can tell us what we do not know, no imagination has ever conceived, no research ever unveiled.

The highest of all possible attainments

is the knowledge of God, and this is the practical mode of His revelation of Himself. Even His holy Word needs to be read in the light of His own presence if it is to be understood. The praying soul hears God speak.

### Prayer Imparts God's Power

In favor of close contact with the living God in prayer, there is another reason that rises perhaps to a still higher level. Prayer not only puts us in touch with God, and gives knowledge of Him and His ways, but it imparts to us His power.

Things which are impossible with man are possible with God, and with a man in whom God is. Prayer is the secret of imparted power from God, and nothing else can take its place. Absolute weakness follows the neglect of secret communion with God—and the weakness is the more deplorable, because it is often unconscious and unsuspected, especially when one has never yet known what true power is.

We see men of prayer quietly achieving results of the most surprising character. They have the calm of God, no hurry, or worry, or flurry; no anxiety, or care, no excitement or hustle or bustle. They do great things for God, yet they are little in their own eyes; they carry great loads, and yet are not weary nor faint; they face great crises, and yet are not troubled.

Who will join the risen Lord in a service of intercession? God is calling His people to a revival of faith in the Divine efficacy of prayer.

ARTHUR T. PIERSON (1837–1911) was an American Presbyterian pastor and writer who preached more than 13,000 sermons and wrote more than 50 books. He was known as an urban pastor who cared passionately for the poor. He was also a consulting editor for the original *Scofield Reference Bible*.

HARVEST PRAYER MINISTRIES 3525 S. 3rd Place Terre Haute, IN 47802

NEW POWER SERIES Reveals the Why and How of Being a Praying Church

# A ROADMAP TO GROW PRAYER IN YOUR CHURCH

### **INTRODUCING NEW RELEASE**

Restored Power: Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time

Harvest Prayer Ministries has recently released the sequel to its landmark book *Forgotten Power: A Simple Theology for a Praying Church* by Dave Butts, *Restored Power* by Jonathan Graf.

Forgotten Power reveals the theology; Restored Power is the how to.

Both books are must reads for pastors, elders/deacons, and prayer leaders.

Available at prayershop.org (multiple copy discounts available there). Or through Christian bookstores, your normal Christian book outlets, and in e-book formats.

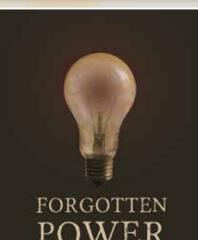




www.prayershop.org | 812 238-5504

RESTORED POWER Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time

### JONATHAN GRAF



DAVID BUTTS

