

# PRAYERCONNECT

Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

## Embracing INTIMACY

ALLOWING GOD TO INVADE YOUR PRAYER LIFE



**Not by the Book**

*What's Your Prayer Personality?*

**SHAKEN OUT OF LETHARGY**



Sunday, November 6, 2016 is . . .

# Prayer Force One SUNDAY

The Sunday Before We Elect Our Next President

Save The  
Date!



Then  
Participate!

*"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

II Chronicles 7:14

*"Prayer Force One Sunday is not an event, but a date. We are asking every individual Christian, every home, and every church, ministry and denomination to participate in their own way. To find out how you can become involved in your own community, please visit our website listed below."*

Senator Ed Moore, (OK-Ret.)  
President, Prayer Force One



[www.PrayerForceOne.com](http://www.PrayerForceOne.com)



# PRAYERCONNECT

November/December 2015 | Vol. 5, No.5

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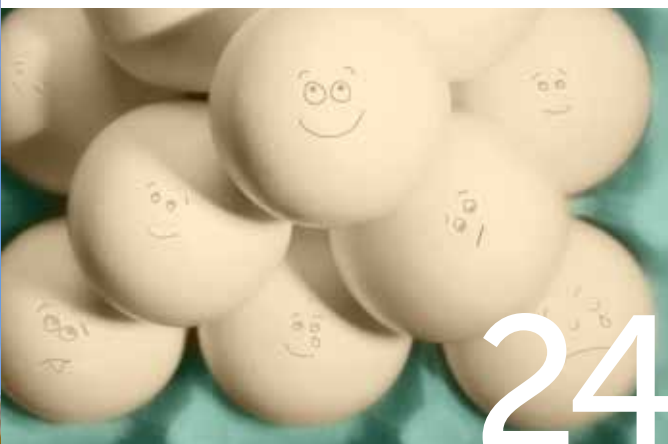
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Carol Madison  
Prayer Connect Submissions  
4300 West 98th St. | Bloomington, MN 55437  
[editor@prayerconnect.net](mailto:editor@prayerconnect.net)

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[prayerconnect.net](http://prayerconnect.net)  
Joanne Telle  
800.217.5200 or 812.238.5504

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Jonathan Graf  
[jong@harvestprayer.com](mailto:jong@harvestprayer.com) | 812.238.5504

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

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

Jonathan Graf | [jong@harvestprayer.com](mailto:jong@harvestprayer.com)  
Carol Madison | [editor@prayerconnect.net](mailto:editor@prayerconnect.net)  
[harvestprayer.com](http://harvestprayer.com) | [prayerleader.com](http://prayerleader.com)

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1. To encourage and equip believers toward a deeper walk with Jesus Christ through prayer—our experiential connection to God.
2. To resource prayer leaders and pastors with tools to help them motivate, disciple, and mobilize believers in churches to be a part of an army that seeks to play 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

When God “comes to town,” surely that community will be transformed to reflect the glory of Christ. The September/October 2015

issue on “Transforming Prayer: Inviting God’s Presence to Your Community” outlines hopeful ways to pray for what seems impossible. When we pray God’s heart for our cities, He responds! This issue and other back issues are available at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).



# PUBLISHER'S NOTE



## Ashley Madison and Revival

**T**hanks to the Ashley Madison website hacking, it was a rough summer for Western Christianity in general—and some Christian leaders in particular.

The site was designed to allow people to set up “secret affairs” online. Thousands of people signed up, never dreaming their hidden lives would be revealed to the world. Josh Duggar may be the best-known Christian whose sinful activity has been outed by hackers. But a sizeable number of pastors and Christian leaders were also publicly embarrassed by their hidden attachment to this site.



The more I thought about this, however, I thought, *Wait a minute. This is not bad! The answer to our prayers is beginning to germinate. Revival, which once seemed somewhat dormant, is beginning to show signs of life. Revival is on its way!*

How do I know that?

As I have challenged churches over the past 20 years to raise the bar on prayer, there is one thing I often see as they first start the process—something I call “hidden things coming to light.” Typically, as a church begins praying more and asking for the transforming work of Christ in its midst, suddenly the truth comes to light that an elder has been sexually abusing his daughter (or some other sad and grievous sin). Or perhaps the marriage of a key couple in the church suddenly implodes, even though there were no visible signs of trouble.

I believe these things often happen (though not always) for two reasons:

First, I think Satan wants to see if a church has the fortitude to withstand the results of prayer. He tries to make prayer so messy that people back away from serious intercession. I have seen this happen in several churches. Fear and pain brought on by unpleasant exposures can cause people to cease praying for transformation.

Second, if Jesus Christ is going to release His transforming power in a church, all masks must come off! He will allow those hidden things to come to light so that repentance, forgiveness, and healing can take place.

Many have been praying for revival for decades. Others are just now recognizing that it is getting darker and darker in our nation and that a fresh move of God is the only answer. Prayer—a unified crying out in desperation—is the key. So more and more prayer is rising up.

I believe God is beginning to move in response to our cries. But first He will move in a way that purifies His Bride, the Church. He is allowing the falseness, the pride, the dabbling in the world, and the secret sins in the Church to be exposed. Why? So repentance will follow and healing can come. Then He can pour out His Spirit in a powerful way to cause His Church to once again be a light in a dark place.

As you continue to pray for revival in the Church and spiritual awakening in our nation, do not be alarmed at what happens in the physical world. God will use the building turmoil in this nation for His glory—to purify and revive the Church and to bring many lost to Himself. Pray that a spirit of repentance and humility will fall on us so we can, in turn, be the salt and light Jesus calls us to be.

—Jonathan Graf

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## David's Tent in D.C. Leading to Elections

**A**iming to be the site of continuous worship for 424 days until the national elections on November 8, 2016, David's Tent D.C. was launched on September 11, 2015, near the Washington Monument on the National Mall of Washington, D.C. In previous years the U.S. National Park Service has issued the organization permits for 40 and for 50 days, but this longer permit is an unprecedented opportunity for 24/7 worship to be offered to Jesus for more than a year—10,000 hours.

Organizers believe this opportunity is a call for extraordinary intercession and unity throughout the Church on behalf of the nation. "This is simply a platform for our nation to bring an offering of worship and prayer," says Jason Hershey, director of David's Tent D.C. "Our desire is that this [tent] would be owned



by the Church . . . and that our staff in D.C. would simply make it a meeting place for God and America in our nation's capital."

David's Tent D.C. schedules worship teams in two-hour time blocks. The goal of the team of young people who facilitate David's Tent is to make sure all worship teams and choirs in America know they are invited to come and take the stage to minister to the Lord. Musical styles, language, and denominations will vary, but the unified focus will be on

pure ministry to the heart of Jesus.

In addition to the worship tent, organizers have initiated a 24/7 Bible Read-a-thon called "Ezra's Platform." Participants believe the Word of God heals, and this reading of God's Word will be offered as prayer to "heal our land" in a spirit of repentance, based on Ezra's example in Nehemiah 8.

"We have three motivations for doing this," Hershey says. "First, we know that Jesus is more than worthy of a lavish offering. It's that simple. Second, we feel the urgency of the hour for America, and this is intercession for our country. Third, it's a public witness to the goodness of God, that people would encounter God, right there on the National Mall."

To sign up your worship team, support financially, or volunteer to serve at David's Tent, go to [davidstentdc.org](http://davidstentdc.org).

## Gospel Wildfire Spreads through Prayer

**T**he gospel is going forward in an unprecedented fashion—especially in the most restricted countries—driven by prayer, boldness, persecution, and the Holy Spirit, according to a recent report.

"What we are seeing around the world is really a gospel wildfire," says Brother Jonathan, a Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) international ministries worker. "We're seeing the gospel go forward like never before," he says.

A strong commitment to prayer creates an atmosphere for the wildfire to burn. Brother Jonathan asked one indigenous leader in Myanmar about his ministry's strategy to send workers into unreached villages.

"The secret is Fridays," the leader

answered. "On Fridays we all come together and we fast and we pray—every Friday, all day."

"What if you're going into a hostile village?" asked Brother Jonathan.

"If we think it's going to be a really hostile area, we set aside seven days to fast and pray," the indigenous leader replied. "When that's over, we go."

The fuel Brother Jonathan sees in this gospel wildfire is a bold proclamation of the gospel. In North India, he met with a coalition of 1,000 pastors working in Uttar Pradesh (UP), one of the most unreached states in India. "They risk their lives every single day," Jonathan notes.

One young minister told him, "I ride my bicycle into a village where there are no Christians and I bang on my drum

until a crowd comes out and then I preach the gospel. We see people's hearts touched, we see them repent, and we see the birth of a church."

Jonathan noted there are 1,000 other young ministers like him riding around UP State on their bicycles doing the same thing. As a result, UP state has gone from almost no Christians to about three percent Christian—about six million believers.

The spark for the gospel wildfire is the Holy Spirit, Jonathan observes. "Dreams and visions are becoming so common among Muslims that when we meet someone for the first time we ask if they've had any strange dreams lately."

Among Hindus and Buddhists he is seeing signs and wonders, with many





miraculous healings. One pastor told Jonathan, “Maybe we’re lazy, but we don’t want to spend 12 weeks convincing them that Jesus is God. We just want God to show up.”

Persecution is the accelerant of this move of God. “When the church is

persecuted, the church thrives,” Jonathan notes. “The places where the church is growing most rapidly are also some of the worst places of persecution. So if persecution comes to America, praise the King, because it means the church is going to explode.”

Brother Jonathan’s advice? “Make prayer a priority. Proclaim the gospel with boldness. Don’t be ashamed of anything. Trust God to show up.”

**MARK ELLIS** is a special correspondent for ASSIST News Service ([assistnews.net](http://assistnews.net)) and the founder of [Godreports.com](http://Godreports.com).

## National Security Call to Prayer

Several national prayer leaders and ministries (including National Day of Prayer and America’s National Prayer Committee) have joined forces to call for urgent prayer on behalf of the United States, indicating their “deep concern for the state of our nation, its spiritual decline, and national security.” Their collective call is for united prayer between now and the national elections in 2016.

John Robb of the International

Prayer Council cites two key factors that have put national security at risk:

- Insufficient alertness and prayer for military/police forces as well as for our overall national security in spite of the growing threats from ISIS and other radical Islamic groups to carry nuclear weapons into the continental USA, a re-arming of Russia, a rapidly emerging Chinese military build-up, and the avowed North Korean intention

to put nuclear missiles on submarines.

- The shocking moral and spiritual decline of America has opened us to attack at all levels. Because of gross sin and broken covenants before our holy God, He may rightly withdraw His protecting hand that has kept us relatively secure until now.

This prayer cooperative also sponsored weekly security phone calls for prayer.

## Pray for America Bus Tour: This Generation

The National Day of Prayer (NDP) team set out this fall on another bus tour across America, this time focusing on college and university campuses. From September 9 to November 4, a busload of team members representing various ministries traveled 6,000 miles and visited 45 campuses in 24 states with their message: we need God to work in extraordinary ways in this generation.

In May 2013 the NDP team launched its first bus tour—and since then it has journeyed through 45 states, visited more than 500 communities, and touched more than 130,000 people with the encouragement to pray for various spheres of influence (church, media, education, government, military, family, and business).


John Bornschein, NDP vice chairman, believes this year’s campus bus tour is crucial because of the way religious freedoms and the nation’s Christian heritage and belief system have been

under attack on school campuses. But in spite of the challenges, he is encouraged. “Over the past two years, we have heard hundreds of testimonies and [have] personally witnessed a stirring of the Holy Spirit among young people nationwide—a generation crying out for revival and awakening,” he says, “a generation asking God to ‘reset’ our culture.”

The tour began at Harvard and will end on November 4 in Washington, D.C., where they will pray for the Department of Education. Some of the 45 campuses visited include Yale, Penn State, Ohio State, Wheaton, Virginia Tech, University of Iowa, Clemson, and Purdue. At each campus stop, team members prayed with faculty, staff, campus ministry leaders, and students.

Several organizations worked alongside NDP on the tour, including RESET, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Youth with a Mission, Collegiate

Day of Prayer, Circuit Riders, Campus Renewal, the Navigators, Cru, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. To learn more, go to [pray4america.org](http://pray4america.org).



### Prayer Calendar

**Days of Prayer for the Persecuted Church**  
**Sunday, November 1 and 8**  
[idop.com](http://idop.com)

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**Weekend of Prayer to End Slavery and Trafficking**  
**January 8–10, 2016**  
[nwoprayer.org](http://nwoprayer.org)

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**Praying with Jesus:**  
**21 Days of Prayer**  
**January 10–31, 2016**  
[awakeningamerica.us](http://awakeningamerica.us)



I thought my summer was going to include some relaxing times and trips to visit family and friends. Instead, my father's declining health required a change of plans so I could help my parents as his situation became increasingly difficult.

I was expecting his imminent death, but there was still some shock when he passed away suddenly at the breakfast table. I'm grateful that God's peace was so evident for my family as we walked through all the planning and decisions that go along with the death of a loved one.

What I did not expect were the many stories about my dad that surfaced from family and friends—a very intimate look into a somewhat unknown part of his life.

In his more than 50 years as a community banker in a small town, my dad built personal relationships with his customers. He did not view them as financial transactions. Out of those relationships came stories. Several times I heard a common phrase: "You have no idea what your dad did for us."

One man told me that Dad helped him when he did not have enough money to return to college. Not knowing what to do, this man visited my dad (without his parents' knowledge) to ask for help. As he put it, "Your dad believed in me and took a risk." Dad gave him the money he needed to return to school—and told him to pay it back when he could (not your conventional banking practice!). The student started a Navigators group on campus that semester, and was

instrumental in leading 40 people to Christ. Many are now pastors, missionaries, or Christian businesspeople.

I also learned of several times when my parents came alongside people in crisis—in very messy situations—and led them on a path toward healing through Christ.

### SO MUCH MORE

I wish I had asked my father more questions and invited him to tell me more stories. I'm not surprised at what I heard because it matches his character. Yet there was so much more to his life than what I knew.

It can be the same way with my heavenly Father. I may think I know Him and understand His character, but if I have not been intentional in spending intimate time with Him, how can I know the depths of who He is? It is easy for my prayer life to revolve around my personal needs and concerns. But how often do I pause to seek out intimate moments with the Lord and allow Him to speak into my life, deepen my understanding of Him, or simply saturate me with His love?

This issue is about embracing intimacy with God and allowing Him to invade our otherwise self-focused prayer lives. Jamie Overholser writes about "doing the dance" with God and learning to be comfortable with vulnerability and closeness. Pat Chen explains ways God is intentional in His relationship with us, and ways we need to do the same. Sandra Higley highlights "intimacy blockers" and steps to overcoming them.

The reward for knowing Jesus more intimately is this: "As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need to live a godly life" (1 Peter 2:3, NLT). I want my life to reflect more of the deeply personal moments I have spent with the Lord. With joy and confidence, I want to say to others, "Oh, you have no idea what my Father has done for me."

**CAROL MADISON** is editor of *Prayer Connect*.

# ALLOWING GOD TO INVAD YOUR PRAYER LIFE



# GOD'S WORK THROUGH CONSTANT COMMUNION



I DREAD ONE PARTICULAR situation. It happens once every couple of years. It's when I'm at a wedding reception and my wife reaches out her hand and asks me to go to the dance floor. I cringe. I can't dance! I wish I could. As a musician, I can feel the beat and keep rhythm, but it does not translate into bodily movement on a dance floor. The only dance I will attempt to do in public is a slow dance with my wife since it only requires hugging and swaying.

What gets me through my fear of dancing is the thought that my wife wants to be close to me. Because of this, I will take her hand and say, "Only because I love you so much."

Perhaps you feel the same way when you sense God extending His hand in your direction. You think, *I can't dance!* Well, let's look at this from the same perspective that got me on the dance floor. My love for my wife always trumps my fear of dancing. Likewise, my love for God always trumps any fear surrounding what He may call me into.

#### FUMBLING AND BUMBLING

I confess that I write not so much from where I am, but from where I want to be. I long for intimacy in prayer, for constant communion, for God's work and power in my life. But I often fumble and bumble my way through an awkward dance with God.

# DOING THE DANCE TOGETHER

BY JAMIE OVERHOLSER



One of those awkward moments is God's admonition through the Apostle Paul to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, KJV). That strikes a little fear in me. In a way similar to my fear of stepping onto the dance floor, I dread that I will fail in front of everyone and make a fool of myself. Therefore, I choose not to participate. If I don't try, I can't fail,

right? Sure, I'll pray, but I will leave that "unceasing" part to monks and nuns who have dedicated their lives to that kind of existence.

Through the centuries many have attempted to interpret Paul's words. From Brother Lawrence in *The Practice of the Presence of God* to the pilgrim in *The Way of a Pilgrim* to theologians galore,

we have tried to grasp the "unceasing" part. Brother Lawrence, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Carmelite monk, understood "that it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times."

In *The Way of a Pilgrim*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian prayer classic of uncertain authorship, the pilgrim character believed that "the frequency and the uninterruptedness of prayer, however feeble it may be," was the way to spiritual perfection.

And, for me, the well-worn interpretation of "to be continually in an attitude of prayer" is, to be honest, overused and not very helpful.

The above statements have merit and provoke thought, but none of them makes me want to jump right in. Praying without ceasing seems over my head.

From what I understand, the original language of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 could be translated "Pray without intermission." Don't stop the production. Keep the orchestra playing. Don't leave the room. Don't disengage. Don't clam up. Don't allow large gaps of time when you wander out of range.

Why? Because relationships don't go well when we do that. When things are not going well in a marriage, frustrated spouses have used threatening phrases like "I'm done! I'm outa here! It's over!" Few relationships can sustain that kind of conclusion. Perhaps John Eldredge says it best: "Relationship requires things of me that are harder than a life of comfortable distance."

Prayer assumes relationship. Good communication (speaking and listening) is essential to any healthy relationship. Perhaps then we should say that unceasing prayer beckons us *to do whatever it takes to maintain healthy, consistent communication with God for the sake of our relationship with Him*. We don't get an intermission. We remain in His presence, consciously aware of Him (thank you, Brother Lawrence) in the undulations of life, whether in silence, praise, intercession, thankfulness, confession, spilling our anxious thoughts, expressing

## INTIMACY AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Psalm 23 provides us with a glimpse into how the Lord receives us when we come to His table. As part of David's description of the table prepared for him, he said, "My cup overflows" (v. 5). Naturally, we tend to equate this with the many blessings God graciously gives us. But in this context that would be an erroneous interpretation.

In that ancient culture the host would keep filling the guests' cups for as long as he wanted them to stay. Our western culture is similar. If we keep offering food and drink, it indicates that we don't want our guests to leave quite yet.

So imagine David at the table with the Lord as his Host. The Lord not only keeps filling David's cup, but He fills it to overflowing!

What would that communicate about how the Lord feels about you? Can you hear Him?

"I never want you to leave, My son."

"I want to commune with you always, My daughter."

God never tires of our company. We never have any reason to ask to be excused from the table. Our cups overflow—and no one frantically rushes to clean up.

I believe the Lord wants us to stay at the table because He enjoys the conversation, the intimate connection that the table brings, and the sound of our

voices. He wants the mutual conversation to keep going.

As a pastor I enjoy making Communion a little more interesting and participatory. On one occasion I lined up several eight-foot tables in the middle of the sanctuary to form one long table approximately 48 feet long. After covering it with a long paper tablecloth and placing chairs all around it, I positioned the bread and the cup at several places in the middle of the table. I then scattered a variety of pens, pencils, markers, and colored pencils on the table.

When it was time to partake of the elements, I encouraged our people, as the Spirit directed them, to come and sit at the table to eat the bread and drink the cup. But I encouraged them to stay for a bit and talk to God by writing to Him on the tablecloth. I asked them to express their thankfulness and love for their Host with words and pictures that overflowed from their hearts.

When your heart overflows in love and thankfulness, it demonstrates that you don't want to leave the table either. He overflows your cup, which in turn overflows your heart.

What a wonderful experience we had! The tablecloth was filled with prayer through love notes, doodles, and thank-you notes to Jesus in appreciation for giving Himself to us—not only on the cross, but every single time we come around His table.

—JAMIE OVERHOLSER

our frustration, or babbling on and on. Whatever the case, we don't leave. We stay put and do the hard things that relationship requires.

## TAKING TIME AND TRUST

Intimate communication evolves over time as two individuals unveil and entrust themselves (heart, soul, mind, and body) to one another beyond the surface self. In *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer wrote that "this intercourse between God and the soul is known to us in conscious personal awareness."

Ah, yes, *intercourse*. That word makes us blush. It implies that "nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare" (Heb. 4:13).

It also suggests contact, leaving something of oneself with the other. This is not a shameful uncovering, for it is never God's intent to shame us. It's an unveiling that allows us to know that He still loves us beyond measure in our spiritual nakedness, insecurity, and countless flaws—like a sensitive groom in the honeymoon suite with his bride.

Prayer is an intimate act because it brings the whole of our life together in union with God. Prayer exposes our longing and weakness. Many are not willing, however, to be that close because intimacy requires something of us. We're not sure we want to give that much of ourselves. A "comfortable distance" seems the less intrusive option. Indeed, it is. But prayer and intimacy will only become synonymous when we are willing to unveil ourselves before God.

The older I get the more contemplative I become. I want to hear God's voice, see Him in the ordinariness of my life, and experience the power that raised Jesus from the dead. I've come to understand that unceasing and powerful prayer cannot be divorced from life itself. Unceasing prayer calls us to uncover our lives before God. Paul's words ring true: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation,

by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil. 4:6). If we turn all our anxiousness into prayer, that alone will keep us praying constantly!

## GLIMPING INTIMACY

In Psalm 139, David, the warrior-king and poet, gives us a peek behind the veil to see what intimacy looks like: "You

have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways" (vv. 1–3).

David welcomed this invasion of his heart and personal space by his loving and tender God! Prayer becomes intimate when we surrender to His searching and

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knowledge of us. We underestimate the importance of intimacy in prayer when we keep our distance and feel unnerved that God would dare be this invasive. David said, “Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely” (Ps. 139:4).

Do you know husbands and wives who know each other so well that they finish one another’s sentences? The ultimate indication that we’re becoming intimate with God is the assurance that God knows what we’re going to say before we say it. He knows the rhythm of our prayers and the manner in which we pour out our hearts. Prayer becomes intimate when the sound of our voice becomes so familiar to Him that He finishes our sentences. How dare we think that God is bored to tears with our rambling! David continues:

You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me. Such  
knowledge is too wonderful for me,

too lofty for me to attain. Where can I  
go from your Spirit? Where can I flee  
from your presence? If I go up to the  
heavens, you are there; if I make my  
bed in the depths, you are there. If I  
rise on the wings of the dawn, if I set-  
tle on the far side of the sea, even there  
your hand will guide me, your right  
hand will hold me fast (Ps. 139:5–10).

Prayer becomes intimate when we are aware of His constant presence that brings peace, stability, and security. Using Tozer’s phrase again, this is our “conscious personal awareness” of His loving company in the midst of our joy and depression, happiness and sadness, calmness and anxiety. God is constantly touching us in the midst of consolations and desolations, mountaintops and valleys, bright mornings and dark nights. His omnipresence brings calm, not angst. He is there to guide us and hold us tight.

We miss the importance of intimacy when we assume that God wouldn’t want to be with us in our messiness, doubt, and confusion—or that He simply stalks us to expose our wrongdoing.

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Unceasing prayer, then, calls us to uncover our lives before God, to expose every angle to His outstretched hand, to unveil ourselves to the core, to join Him in the dance because *He* wants to feel us close.

On this lifelong journey, for the serious disciple of Jesus, to live is to pray. **PC**



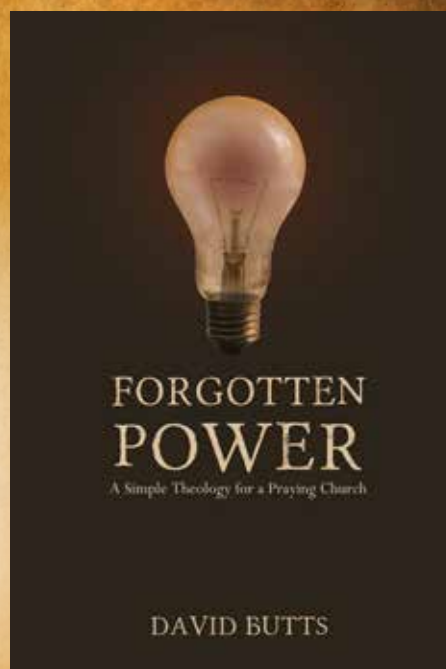
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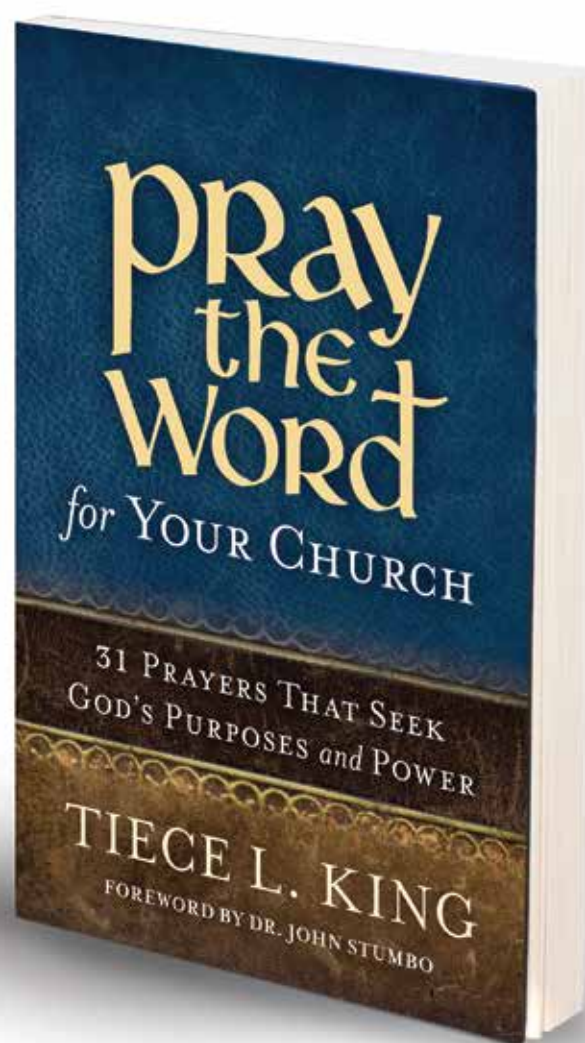
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# BEING YOURSELF IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



I WAS IN TORONTO, Canada, for a speaking engagement when I received news of my 95-year-old father's passing away to be with Jesus. After conferring with family members, we determined it was best for me to go ahead and speak at my session and then fly to the Washington, D.C., area to be with my family. But from that point on, it seemed like "the world stopped and I got off."

I was exhausted from travel, speaking, and a very busy schedule. In addition I had just experienced several ministry disappointments and a hurtful situation—and now I was grieving the loss of my dad who held a very special place in my heart. I needed strength and refreshing from the Lord, perhaps more than I realized.

His memorial service was held at the Maryland State Veterans Cemetery in Crownsville, MD. Years ago, my husband and I lived very close to this cemetery, so I felt like I was back on my old home turf. Then I recalled that this is the very place where I had a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit and received the call for the ministry that I am engaged in today.

# INTENTIONAL INTIMACY

BY PAT CHEN



My heart and mind were suddenly flooded with wonderful memories of ministry. I recalled the evidences of spiritual fruit that remain in my life and the lives of those I've encountered since then. Now my dad was being laid to rest so close to the place where I experienced my moment of "holy encounter" with the Lord that transformed me so many years ago.

I watched the hearse pull up in front of the chapel. Two young soldiers saluted my father's flag-draped casket and then ceremoniously folded the flag and handed it to my sister (his caregiver) with the words, "On behalf of the president of the United States and the U.S. Army, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's service to our nation. I am sorry for your loss." I don't have words adequate to express how I felt, except that God's presence was there.

Some encounters with the Lord are experienced in a hidden closet with God alone. At other times, we can experience being alone in the secret place with Him even though we are in a crowd. While my father's memory was being treated with such dignity and respect, my heart and vision were being refreshed for the next season.

## GOD IS DELIBERATE

Through the years I've learned that intimacy requires intentionality. And intentionality indicates design or purpose. It is deliberate, planned, studied, willful, and purposeful. The Lord is intentional in His relationship with us, and He wants us to be the same with Him. He even allows hurtful circumstances that draw us closer to Him because He desires an intimate relationship with us even more than we desire one with Him.

In Psalm 42 (from the Sons of Korah), we sense a precious intimacy in this one-to-one relationship with God: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (vv. 1–2).

This psalm cries out to God to come and quench the soul's desperate thirst with spiritual water that only the Living God Himself can satisfy. The psalmist obviously speaks from personal experience about knowing God in times of tears, trouble, despair, mourning, oppression, and stress. We enter into his emotions as he feels hunted like a deer panting for its very life.

Direct and forthright, this prayer holds nothing back. I believe the purpose of the "hunt" here (God pursuing us) is to draw us, one by one, into an intimate relationship and encounter with the Lord that will touch our soul on a new level. Our relationship with Him will enable us to live victoriously, regardless of what life brings.

Sometimes the Lord is wooing us, wanting us to spend more time in His presence and His Word than we normally would. Sometimes we need to make plans to do as Jesus did in Luke 5:16, when He slipped away into the wilderness to pray.

Someone and something very special awaits us.

## NO NEED TO FEAR

An intimate relationship flows from a depth of knowledge and understanding shared by no one but the two individuals in a relationship. But it requires making choices and taking risks. Intimacy reveals our hidden thoughts, feelings, and emotions—our real selves that most people do not see. Most people never know us completely. But our Lord does. Solomon tells us that "the crooked man is an abomination to the Lord; but He is intimate with the upright" (Prov. 3:32, NASB).

In human relationships, who we really are will surface at times and cause misunderstandings affecting our relationship for good or bad. Not so with God. He knows and understands everything about us, for He made us. He had us on His mind from the beginning of time. How does He want us to respond?

- By faith we trust Him and choose to yield who we are to Him.
- By faith we choose to believe Him when He says in His Word that He has accepted us "in the Beloved." He will not reject us, regardless of what we've done in the past.
- By faith we choose to believe that He accepts us solely based upon His love for us.

## INTIMACY REQUIRES HONESTY

The only requirement for intimacy with God is to be ourselves.

1. *Pretense has no place in a truly intimate relationship.* Intimacy leads us to receive and then to respond openly without any expectation of being paid back. When we understand the richness of a mutually intimate relationship, we esteem its worth so highly that we don't hesitate to give of ourselves. And once we receive, we want to give back more and more. We can't outgive God, and He says it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).
2. *Fear has no place in intimacy.* We can trust our Lord. He promises He will never leave us or forsake us.
3. *Competition has no place in intimacy.* We delight in bringing joy and fulfillment to God and others. We find our greatest satisfaction in knowing that God is pleased with us, that we have given our lives to Him, and that we have become a gift to others.

The prophet Anna was just such a gift to the people of God in Luke 2:36–38:

Anna . . . was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Anna's life was one of waiting on God with worship and prayers of intercession—and it seems she simply enjoyed His presence, waiting until He spoke and told her what to do next. In this case, apparently Anna was not the hunted. Instead *she* earnestly pursued God's presence and His voice.

## INTIMACY REQUIRES TRANSPARENCY

In the presence of the Lord our masks fall off. The person we are on the inside is not always the person others see outwardly. We have learned to speak, think, and act in ways others will accept. The inner self is a complex person of many secrets, longings, motives, and intentions. Who and what we are is not revealed to us all at once—even with God. Jesus reveals our inner self during precious encounters with Him.

This is why I can express myself to the Lord in ways I cannot do to others. When I'm surrounded by the presence of God, I discover who I am because I'm responding to who He is. He is truth, the Spirit of truth. In His presence I cannot hide from the truth of who I am.

Approaching the Lord in a nonsupercial way means a total nakedness of our soul. And total abandonment to God requires transparency. It astounds me that, as imperfect human flesh, we can have the perfect Holy Spirit of God living and moving inside of us. Each time I get a glimpse of Who He is, I see more of who I am. His brilliant light of truth is reflected in my image.

## WHO IS THE BELOVED?

Your Beloved is the One who invites you to discover a depth of relationship you never dreamed existed—an intimacy that is secure, settled, and secret. It is that place of relationship, knowledge, and love of Jesus.

Our heavenly Bridegroom invites us to know Him intimately, which stirs our heart to want to deepen our relationship with Him. From our raptured heart will

flow the passion and life of God unto the earth—birthing new souls, dreams, visions, and the will and plans of God.

The Lord pursues us with intentionality. And here is what He requires from us to accept that intentional invitation:

1. Say yes!
2. Be yourself. Be real in the presence of God.
3. Cry out to Him from your heart and even with your mouth.
4. Be honest and transparent to share what's on your heart.
5. Trust that God loves you. Have faith in His Word and His character.
6. Be fearless, and don't allow the enemy's lies to taunt you and bring up old sins.
7. If possible, take time to get away with Him to a place to pray.
8. Be still and know that He is God. Be silent and listen for His response. This is prayer, too!

What is the reward of accepting this invitation? Psalm 84:10 sums it up: "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

In my moment of spiritual exhaustion and in the midst of my grief in losing my father, my Beloved pursued me and overwhelmed me with His presence. He is always intentional in His love for me. **PC**



**PAT CHEN** is the founder and president of First Love Ministries International Prayer Center, located in the San Francisco Bay Area. She also has a prayer room near the White House in Washington, DC, available for pastors and prayer leaders from across the nation. She serves on the Board of Directors of America's National Prayer Committee, National Day of Prayer Task Force, and Mission America Coalition. Portions of this article are adapted from her book *Intimacy with the Beloved*.



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A high-angle, top-down photograph of a woman lying on her back on a grey stone tile floor. She is wearing blue jeans and a grey long-sleeved shirt. Her hands are clasped together near her eyes, which are closed. Her hair is brown and voluminous. The lighting is soft and even.

## A LOOK AT FREQUENT INTIMACY BLOCKERS



IT HAPPENED AT a Dennis Jernigan concert.

He invited the audience to picture a time in our lives when a deep hurt left us feeling abandoned and wondering where Jesus was when we needed Him most. Dennis sang a prayer over us asking Jesus to allow us to clearly see where He was at that exact moment of hurt.

Unaware of any unresolved issues in my life, I didn't expect to "see" anything. Suddenly, I got a mental image of a scene from 1978: I was posing for a picture with my dad and sister. The memory came rushing back. Standing in the middle, my dad turned and put his arms around my sister, leaving a significant gap between the two of them and me.

Old rejection issues surfaced as I saw a snapshot of the scene—like a Polaroid picture—develop before my eyes. With my sister on the right, my dad draped his arms around her, and I stood off to the left. But what I saw next made me catch my breath. *Jesus was standing right behind me with both of His arms wrapped around me from behind.* My dad couldn't have gotten closer to me if he tried because Jesus' arms filled the gap.

In that instant, I realized that Jesus always deals with me *intimately*. Certain situations—usually ones I create—block my ability to see or sense His presence. When that faulty perception occurs—as it does for all of us at times—it is a major problem.

# WHEN THE HEAVENS SEEM SILENT

BY SANDRA HIGLEY

It may feel as if the heavens are “brass” (Deut. 28:23). Since God desires sustained intimacy with us, we can be sure that He offers ways to identify and tear down any barriers that block that sweet closeness with Him.

Here are some specific intimacy blockers to consider.

### CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

When we feel our intimacy with God blocked, the first issue to consider is personal sin. From an early age we hear the erroneous teaching that “God always hears our prayers.” God’s Word makes it apparent that embracing personal sin distorts our relationship with Him—often to the point that He will not hear us (2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 66:18–20; Prov. 15:29; Isa. 1:15–17, 59:1–2). Though God’s grace provides us the confident, direct access to His throne that was not available to Old Testament believers (Heb. 4:16), once we start that approach, confession and repentance clear the path.

Peter confirmed that this is not just an Old Testament dynamic when he exhorted husbands to treat their wives with consideration “so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Peter 3:7). He encouraged all of us to turn from evil so that the Lord’s ears would be attentive when we pray (vv. 10–12). God’s love never changes. His desire for intimacy is always there. But in His love, His holiness never diminishes. We frequently misunderstand that. Though He longs to have a vital relationship with us and has provided a way for that to occur through confession (1 John 1:9), we must actively seek it.

Surprisingly, this positional need for cleansing can sneak up on an intercessor. Enjoying His presence and talking with Him as friend-to-Friend sometimes keeps us from regular heart-search and confession. As soon as we enter our prayer closet, we hit the floor running and neglect a thoughtful approach of self-examination. Before we know it, we

are asking what happened to our connectedness, and we’re looking at a list of intimacy-busters that crept in unaware (Psalm 15).

Most believers are familiar with the first part of James 4:8: “Come near to God and he will come near to you.” But we sometimes overlook the last half of the verse: “Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” Nearness comes on the heels of the purification process. We can take a cue from the popular mobile phone advertisement and frequently check our access: “Can You hear me now?”

### A BURNING BUSH AND A SYCAMORE TREE

The second intimacy blocker to consider is whether we have a deep, deliberate desire for a heart connection with God. Francis Thompson (1859–1907) immortalized God’s relentless pursuit of us in his poem “The Hound of Heaven.” But as much as the Lord pursues us, He also desires to be pursued. In fact, He looks for those who seek Him out. In Exodus 3:1–4 we can almost see Almighty God holding His breath, waiting to see if Moses will turn aside to investigate the burning bush. “When the LORD saw that [Moses] had gone over to look, God called to him” (v. 4). From that “drawing-near” point on, Moses’ intimate relationship with God deepened until he talked with God regularly, as with a friend, face to face (Ex. 33:11).

There’s drawing near, and then there’s *drawing near*. How often do we follow a crowd in search of Him, thinking that is enough? Although crowds turned out to see Jesus, He went home with the one who didn’t care how foolish he looked as he climbed a sycamore tree in order to get a better view (Luke 19:1–6). When crowds crushed Him on every side, Jesus stopped and asked, “Who touched Me?” It was His response to the intimate touch of one woman who reached out to Him with a deliberate purpose (Luke 8:40–48).

Following only because the crowd is

following is never enough. He is looking for a personal heart connection!

### A SCARY PROPOSITION

The third intimacy blocker to consider is fear. Fear of intimacy and vulnerability are barriers we often create subconsciously. In any personal human relationship, we open ourselves to emotions we may not be comfortable feeling or expressing. Isolation offers protection from a loss of complete control. But intimacy bares the soul and is—quite frankly—messy. It is no different in a deep, personal relationship with God.

Deep down we know that our omniscient God sees all our “stuff.” Interacting with Him means we can’t pretend or ignore it—He’ll want to talk about it, of course. The first thing Adam did after sinning in the garden was to hide. Although God knew what Adam had done, He showed up for His daily walk with Adam so that they could talk it through. Adam pulled back, and it broke God’s heart (Gen. 3:8–10).

If fear of intimacy is an issue for us, recognizing that God makes Himself open and available to us may help pull us back into relationship. He is the perfect Lover; He will never cheat, lie, or betray—something that can’t be said of us.

### MISSING IT

The fourth intimacy blocker to consider is distraction. There’s a scene in the movie *Hook* where Peter Banning, a successful lawyer, is spending more time at work than with his family. His wife Moira talks to him about the way he’s putting his job before his relationships with his growing children. “You are not being careful,” she tells him, “and you are *missing it*.”

We have a tendency to do the same in our relationship with God. We while away the hours, doing good things but miss the deeper intimacy available to us. Though Jesus appreciated the hospitality Martha offered Him, it was the sister who sat at His feet and hung on His



every word who found His favor (Luke 10:38–42). How sad to get so caught up in busyness that we *miss it* when it comes to intimacy with our Creator!

If we allow busyness and distractions to stifle intimacy, God may take serious measures to reestablish connection and make us hunger and thirst for Him. Sometimes a dust-bowl experience is the only thing that will get through to us, as it was with Israel:

“I will lead [you] into the desert and speak tenderly to [you] there . . . [You] will give [yourself] to me there. . . . When that day comes,” says the Lord, “you will call me ‘my husband’ instead of ‘my master’” (Hosea 2:14–16, NLT).

Although God’s stern dealings to get our attention may take longer than we would like, we can take heart. The Hosea passage also says that He will turn our “Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope.” Intimacy restored!

## DELAYED RESPONSE

Here’s a fifth intimacy blocker to consider: if we’re honest, it’s not always busyness or distraction that robs intimacy—sometimes it’s just plain laziness. Song of Songs 5:2–6 (NLT) recounts a picture of our lazy, delayed response to our Lord’s overtures and the resulting loss of intimacy:


I slept, but my heart was awake, when I heard my lover knocking and calling: “Open to me, my treasure, my darling, my dove, my perfect one. . . .” But I responded, “I have taken off my robe. Should I get dressed again? I have washed my feet. Should I get them soiled?” My lover tried to unlatch the door, and my heart thrilled within me. I jumped up to open the door for my love, and my hands dripped with perfume . . . as I pulled back the bolt. I opened to my lover, but he was gone! My heart sank. I searched for him but could not find him anywhere. I called to him, but there was no reply.

If you’re guilty of being a lazy (or procrastinating) lover, don’t despair. Song of Songs chapter six speaks of the hope of reestablished intimacy.

## THE GUMBALL SYNDROME

A sixth potential intimacy blocker is self-centeredness. I confess that in this all-about-me society, I’ve found myself occasionally courting a very self-absorbed outlook toward intimacy. From there it is an easy downward spiral to begin to look at God—at least subconsciously—as our own personal “gumball machine.” How often do we want our surroundings to adhere to a specific formula in order to produce the optimal, intimate worship experience that *we* fancy? Maybe we like the lights low with a certain style of worship music playing in the background. Maybe we prefer complete quiet.

Interaction with the Holy Spirit is intoxicating (Eph. 5:17–19), and our time with God can become so self-gratifying that we forget there is another Person involved in the equation. Sometimes we consider our own pleasure (James 4:3) without thinking about how *He* would like to spend our time together. No human relationship can expect intimacy to survive and thrive in such an inconsiderate, one-sided atmosphere. If your relationship seems stale, ask God what He would like to do when you next get together. You may be surprised and delighted by His response!

God designed us for intimacy with Him. If God seems distant, press in to Him. Take a closer look at some of these intimacy blockers to determine what the problem might be. See the picture of His arms reaching out to you? Go to Him. He’s waiting! What is keeping you from spending intimate time in His presence right now? 



**SANDRA HIGLEY** is an author and editor who lives in Colorado Springs, CO. She has three children, nine grandchildren, and a great-grandchild due in November 2015.

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*Dis*



When You Don't Pray Like Everyone Else



By Pierre Eade and Dawn Metzger

cover

Have you noticed that people are wired to pray in various ways? One of the most vivid prayer meetings I (Pierre) ever attended took place in a church member's house after the attacks on September 11, 2001. Gathered in the home were 15 to 20 people from our small congregation, all with the same agenda of praying about the tragedy that had afflicted our nation.

Yet I was struck by the different personalities of the people as they prayed. Everyone was there to pray about the same topic, but each had a different flavor. Some were praying with great compassion and mercy. Tears filled their eyes—in some cases streamed down their faces. Others prayed with great authority and power,

asking for God's justice and intervention. Still others petitioned the Lord in silence but with sincerity.

Recently, I (Dawn) received an email from a friend who suffers from an ailment that usually requires a long recuperation. She asked several other praying friends and me for prayer as she visited her doctor. As we often do, some of us emailed prayers for our friend via Reply All so we could agree together on her behalf. I prayed comfort for her, reminding her she is in the "palm of God's almighty hand." Another praying friend asked God to bring the affected organs of our ailing friend's body into alignment with God's authority for "complete and total restoration and function."

# Your Prayer Personality

Two very different prayers for the same individual, yet both served to benefit her whole person.

Throughout Scripture we find various prayer personalities. Men and women with hearts for the same God were created with varying temperaments—and styles of prayer. Characters from both the Old and New Testaments demonstrate the way their God-given personalities shaped their prayers and the way God uses all our prayers.

## Nehemiah

Nehemiah had been a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Susa. But after Israel's exile in Babylon God called him to lead the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Nehemiah's name means "comforted by Jehovah," and he would certainly need comfort where God called him to serve.

A man strong in his faith, Nehemiah knew what he believed, why he believed it, and what God wanted him to do about it! Although he may have had a tough exterior at times, his heart—sensitive to God and His people—can be seen in his prayers.

Nehemiah's prayer in the first chapter of the book by his name reveals much about his character. In this passage, we see that he wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed (Neh. 1:4). Out of the depths of his heart gushed a mournful cry to God because of the decrepit condition of Jerusalem—the representation of God's covenant blessing. He prayed the way he spoke—clear, straightforward, and unembellished.

Nehemiah was also known to pray direct prayers petitioning God's help. "Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity" (Neh. 4:4). And he petitioned the Lord with this one-liner: "Now strengthen my hands" (Neh. 6:9).

His prayers serve as an excellent example of dedicated cries of repentance, intercession for his brethren, zealous protection of God's reputation, and plainly spoken entreaties to God against the

strategies of the enemy.

If Nehemiah were to join your church's prayer meeting today, his presence would undoubtedly challenge others to call upon God with a greater sense of urgency and desperation.

## David

King David is another example of an Old Testament leader with a distinct prayer style. As an individual and as a leader, David was unique both in his style of leadership and his method of communicating with Jehovah.

David prayed with great emotion. His prayer journal recorded in the Psalms is legendary. He was a heartfelt and passionate man with musical talents, and he had a burden both for God and people. God Himself referred to David as "a man after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14).

The way David prayed directly reflected the circumstances he was going through. We can feel his raw emotions: love, fear, anxiety, depression, hope, joy, faith, confidence, anger, and even confusion. David prayed no matter how he felt! Whether elated with joy or defeated by personal sin or the enemies' schemes, David's faith permitted God's truth to anchor him to eternal realities. Through David's example, we learn to pray at all times and in every situation. God is there—"an ever-present help" (Ps. 46:1).

If David were to join our prayer meeting today, it's likely that his prayers would be chock-full of emotions. He may begin weeping, calling out to God in desperation, or breaking out in unfettered and spontaneous songs of praise. David's emotions might stretch the stoic and inspire the emotionally transparent.

## Mary

God sent the angel Gabriel to deliver the news to Mary of her soon-coming pregnancy with Jesus. Talk about a shocker! Mary sincerely asked how this could take place since she had never known a man. Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. He also said that

Elizabeth would conceive a son in her old age. "For nothing is impossible with God," the angel said (Luke 1:37, NLT). With confidence and trust, Mary replied, "I am the Lord's servant. . . . May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38).

In this early stage of the gospel story, we get a clear glimpse of Mary's submissive and subservient nature. Soon afterward, she has an encounter and conversation with Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's baby leaps in her womb. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, begins to proclaim the blessedness of Mary. In awe and wonder, Mary responds in a praise song to God. In that prayer, we again hear words of a submissive and surrendered servant.

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:46–48).

About 30 years later Mary is enjoying herself at a wedding reception when news reaches her that the wine supply has dried up. Seeking to save the bride and groom from an embarrassing social blunder, Mary shares the message with her son Jesus. Jesus chooses to acquiesce to His blessed mom's request, and she tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you to do" (John 2:5).

This servant-hearted woman of God knew what it meant to do what the boss says! If the gospel narratives were to take place today, my guess is you'd find Mary singing songs like "I Surrender All." We can picture Mary singing out, "All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give."

## Paul

If you had to choose one word to describe the personality of the Apostle Paul, what word would you pick? Our guess is that most people would choose *zealous, bold, confident, forthright, or courageous*. All of these characterizations accurately describe the great apostle. Yet,

one word characterizes an entirely different side of Paul and his prayer life. The word is *thankful*.

Struck by the power of God at his Damascus Road conversion, the Apostle Paul overflowed with thankfulness for the grace and mercy of our Lord. His writings express his deeply embedded gratitude for God's work in *his* life as well as the life of God's people. Paul's grateful personality overflowed naturally into his prayer life.

In apostolic fashion Paul was constantly giving thanks for the growing faith and love found in God's Church.

- Paul gave thanks in prayer for the faith of the church in Rome (Rom. 1:8–9).
- He was grateful to God for the grace extended to the church in Corinth and the way they were enriched in every way (1 Cor. 1:4).
- He couldn't stop giving thanks in prayer for the church in Ephesus (Eph. 1:16).
- He gave thanks for the church of Philippi and their partnership in the gospel (Phil. 1:3).
- He continually gave thanks for the church in Colosse (Col. 1:3).
- The church of the Thessalonians made Paul grateful for their receptivity to the message of God's Word and their growing faith and love (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:3).
- Paul was convinced that thanksgiving was appropriate at all times—and was in fact the will of God (1 Thess. 5:18).

Without doubt, if you found yourself in a prayer meeting with this spiritual giant, you would hear praise and thanks coming from his mouth regardless of circumstances. Just ask Silas (Acts 16:25, NASB).

## Being Yourself Before God

The most comforting truth about the variety of prayer personalities in the

Bible is simply this—you can be yourself in prayer before God! God does not expect you to pray like Nehemiah, David, Mary, or Paul. He expects you to pray out of the unique and wonderful personality He has given *you*.

If you are more emotional, then pray with great emotion. If you are quiet and reserved, do not feel intimidated or pressured to be loud and boisterous. Of course, God always wants us to grow deeper in our prayer life with Him and to stretch beyond our comfort zone, but He never tries to make us become like someone else.

Prayer personalities are analogous to spiritual gifts. You may have several gifts that God tends to manifest through your life most frequently. At the same time, God will use you in an area outside your (super)natural gift set to meet a need. Similarly, you may have a tendency to pray in a certain way, but under some

circumstances you may feel compelled to pray differently as led by the Holy Spirit.

The next time you are in prayer with other believers, take note, as I (Pierre) did on 9/11, of the various prayer styles and personalities engaged in prayer. As you learn to appreciate the different styles you find in each person, you will begin to better appreciate the multifaceted personality of God and His creative genius to fearfully and wonderfully design every human being differently. **PC**



**PIERRE EADE** is pastor of outreach at The Crossing ([crossing-umc.org](http://crossing-umc.org)) in Washington Crossing, PA, and the author of *Born to Grow* ([borntogrowbook.com](http://borntogrowbook.com)).



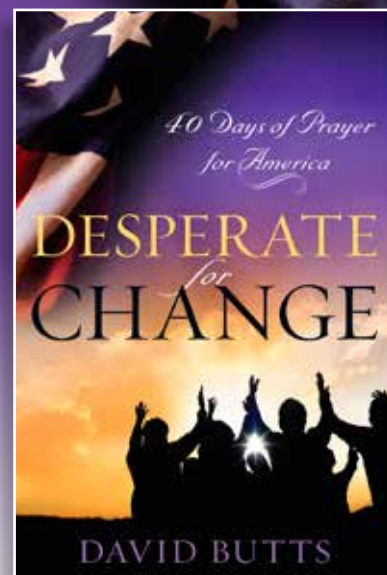
**DAWN METZGER** and her husband Jim attend The Crossing. She works alongside Pierre Eade as the leader of the prayer focus for outreach ministries.

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## Beyond the Academics of Prayer

Entering my classroom at Taylor University one day, I anticipated a session like any other with my students: presentations, assignments, and activities. However, this class turned out much differently.

One of the students assigned to present that day (I'll call him Mark) chose to inform us of an awakening unfolding every Thursday night for several years on our campus. Mark invited other members of the Thursday night prayer group to visit class that day. After a presentation on prayer and communication, he invited the guests to come to the front of the classroom to demonstrate how they pray.

Asking for a volunteer from the student audience, Mark called upon a young woman who knew nothing about the prayer movement. With a simple and direct prayer, Mark asked God to give them a revelation of truth concerning the volunteer student.

Silence followed.

After a few moments one of the group members spoke up. "I feel like the Lord is speaking to me in a mental image of you hitting a golf ball as hard as you can, and trying to be as accurate as possible as to where it lands," he said. "I feel like God wants you to know He sees your efforts and will make sure you hit the mark in your efforts."

Interesting. Total silence.

Another student spoke up, "I feel like you have a passion for children. God wants you to walk in your passion and not worry about the future."

Again, total silence.

Mark then closed with a simple prayer, thanking God for speaking truth to them. Eyes migrated to the volunteer student, and we awaited a response.

"Well," she said, "I don't know if I have a passion for kids. I don't even know if I like them. But I have been

struggling with knowing what God's will is for my life and what I should do. For the past two summers I have been working with the elderly who suffer with dementia, who are childlike in mind, and I love working with them. I need to continue to study and pursue a career in health care for these people."

Pausing to think, she added, "I don't play golf, but I am a perfectionist always worried about hitting the mark with assignments and life. God is asking me to let it go and trust Him with the outcome. All I have to do is my best."

Mark then simply closed with a short prayer, thanking God for His word of truth and knowledge to them.

Class resumed as normal. But things were not normal for me. As I returned to my office, I reflected on what just happened. Still feeling the "wind" of the Holy Spirit brushing over me, I gazed out my office window. The wisdom gifted to me that day transcended my academic experience.

Many of us spend a lifetime studying



theories, historical facts, and proven methodologies. I glanced over at my jammed bookshelves, representing proven evidence and recorded conclusions. Yet, in that moment, the brilliance these books offered faded away.

What flooded my soul was a new awareness of the contrast between earthly wisdom and direct communication with the *King of kings*. What I had just witnessed broke the parameters of my prayer teachings, professional studies, and training. I was the student and they were the teachers. I was much richer and blessed, having learned from them.

**JEANNE R. SIGWORTH** is assistant professor of Communication Arts at Taylor University, Upland, IN.

## Will You Pray with Us?

We appreciate your prayers on behalf of *Prayer Connect*. Several months ago the staff determined that we need to "make our requests known" to all our intercessors. Thank you for lifting us up in prayer.

- Please pray for the editorial planning staff of Jon Graf, Carol Madison, and Dave and Kim Butts as they pray together and determine the future direction of themes and articles of each issue. Pray for insights from the Lord that are timely, as well as for favor with authors who are invited to write.
- Pray for the production team of those who edit and proofread the magazine (Carol Madison, Joyce Ellis, Joan Sherman, Jon Graf, and Kim Butts), that they will use their editorial skills to create a quality publication—with no errors or typos!
- Pray that our art director Bridget Rennie will have an infusion of creativity with each issue, as well as access to quality photography and other graphic elements that complement the editorial content.



## Connecting through Prayer Fellowships | By John Maempa

It's been more than 20 years now—we have actually lost track of the beginning point—since my wife Jan and I began meeting once a month with various members of our home church for a time of prayer and fellowship. This began as a Community Outreach Group (COG) to encourage relationships and reach out to our members' respective communities.

A number of COGs were formed, and the vision was a good one—to help people who lived relatively close together get to know one another better and to develop strategies to reach out to others. An inherent weakness of the strategy was that the principle criterion for grouping people was zip code. It became apparent before long that sharing a zip code does not guarantee affinity. Eventually, the groups disbanded.

Since our group consisted of some close acquaintances, we continued to meet—but with a different focus. In time, others with whom we shared friendship and a passion for prayer joined us. Our group now draws from two churches. It is not a large group; presently there are 18 of us when all can come.

### Deeper Fellowship

As we have come together for prayer each month, a bond of fellowship has grown to the point that our hearts have become deeply attuned to the need and desire for collective communion with God and connection with one another. Thus, the first Friday of the month has become a time that everyone looks forward to.

Our format is very simple. We begin at 7:00 p.m., spend a few minutes chatting with one another, and occasionally open with a worship song. Then we share prayer requests. These relate to personal needs, family concerns, our churches and their leaders and congregations, the

mission of the church, our community, our nation, and more.

Once requests have been voiced, I open with a prayer of praise and adoration to our God. It is important to remember that He is enthroned upon the praises of His people (Ps. 22:3). Afterward, various individuals lead in prayer for a particular request that has been voiced, while the others agree in prayer. Often there is a concluding expression of praise and adoration to God—perhaps a song—giving thanks for His faithfulness to answer prayer. Following the prayer time, we gather around the table for refreshment and continued fellowship.

A relational and spiritual dynamic that takes place in this prayer and fellowship time reflects the example in Acts 2:42, a time when members of the early Church devoted themselves “to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Additionally, verses 46–47 state, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”

It is no wonder that “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” A magnetic holding power accompanies prayer and fellowship.

Within this close-knit relational environment, needs and concerns can be shared that perhaps could not be shared in another context. There is a level of trust, understanding, and familiarity—a knowledge of the journey—that allows transparency and informs the prayers of the group members.

### Safe Havens

Although our group is not an official

prayer initiative in our respective churches, we see value in encouraging others to form or participate in such groups. While a number of prayer initiatives can be established within the church setting, such as small groups, Sunday school classes, and prayer teams, a home prayer group can provide a haven, a safe place, for people to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2, NKJV) and receive a level of help and encouragement that might not be possible in any other way. Home groups function better if they are not legislated or structured according to a particular set of parameters. They are most effectively forged out of established relationships.

Another important advantage of drawing from more than one church, is avoiding even the perception of isolationism. Although the groups may include good friends, their purpose is to pray broadly for all people within the church and for many different concerns and issues—not to become cliques.

Jan and I have continuously hosted the group in our home over the years, but that privilege certainly could be shared. Admittedly, our purpose in welcoming the group into our home is somewhat selfish: we so enjoy the “afterglow.” After our prayer time there is a lingering peace, a presence that is so real. We treasure that.

Our group has seen many answers to prayers through more than 20 years of praying together, and that is another gift from God. Prayer is no idle task and there is power in agreement! ☞



**JOHN MAEMPA** recently retired from his position as director of the Office of Prayer and Spiritual Care for the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, MO.



## A Manifestation of God | By Tony Marshall Anderson

“**W**hen they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4: 31, KJV).

This remarkable manifestation of God reveals the effectiveness of prevailing prayer. It vividly discloses the fact that prayer can accomplish much. It is apparent that neither the apostles, nor the assembled company of devout believers were astonished at the marvelous visitation of God. They had assembled together in one place for the express purpose of achieving victory over the opposition of wicked men, and they fully expected the Lord to answer their united prayers in His own way.

Perhaps the shaking of the place where they were assembled together was an extraordinary occurrence, but receiving a direct answer to their importunate praying was neither unusual nor unexpected. The believers had assembled for the specific purpose of producing a miracle in the spiritual world, and not for the purpose of producing a phenomenon in the natural world.

We do not need a manifestation of the supernatural to arrest the attention of a pleasure-seeking world. God does not often shake the shackles off His imprisoned saints, and open the doors of the jail with an earthquake. [But] He can do the unusual and the unexpected when necessary. We do not need the Lord to do something to astonish us, but we do need Him to do something to alert us to our dangers.

### Shaken Out of Lethargy

We cannot ignore the fact that we desperately need a startling manifestation of

God to shake us out of our spiritual lethargy and selfish complacency. We cannot substitute a program for power and have the least semblance of hope that the unsaved will be attracted by it.

The believers were praying in a desperate crisis when they said, “Lord, behold their threatenings” (Acts 4:29). We are aware that some of the most enduring results recorded in sacred history were obtained when some devout person prayed in an hour of crisis. Abraham prevailed with God in prayer when the angelic messengers told him about the destruction of Sodom. . . . Moses prayed importunately for the people when they incurred the fierce anger of God by worshipping the golden calf. It was a critical time in Israel when Elijah prayed earnestly on Mount Carmel. Jesus was praying in an hour of crisis when He said, “Father, the hour is come” (John 17:1).

The believers were confronted by a desperate situation when they said, “Lord, behold their threatenings.” With them, it was a case of life or death, victory or defeat. The odds against them were tremendous, but the God [who] was for them was Almighty.

There is nothing in the sacred records to show that they had the slightest intention of compromising the truth in order to have favor with men. They did not call a meeting of the official board to discuss ways and means of evading the fundamental issues involved. They did not take refuge in a stupefying pessimism, saying that nothing could be done to remedy the situation confronting them. Neither did they deceive themselves by saying that things would work out satisfactorily to all parties concerned.

They were willing to accept the conflict that challenged their faith and

hope in God. They did the most natural thing in the sight of the Lord when they assembled together with one accord in prayer, and lifted up their voice in one concerted petition to Him for help.

### Strength Renewed

The believers in this day of grace should be impressed by the victory achieved by this praying company of saints. There are many things which threaten us today. We are confronted with serious situations that cannot be overcome unless we keep our strength renewed through prevailing prayer.

Unless the believers in the church today have their spiritual strength replenished repeatedly by the Spirit, they will not be able to overcome the increasing power of spiritual wickedness threatening them today. The church cannot cope with the menacing threat of worldliness except the company of believers pray for power to meet the insidious threat.

God did not answer their impassioned prayer in the hour of crisis by miraculously changing the attitude of the determined opposition. He did not remove the threat which endangered them. The company of believers accepted the fact that such persecution had been foreseen and foretold.

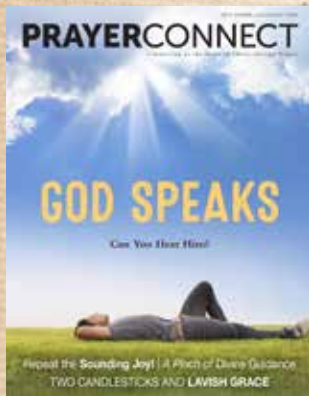
The Lord would have us understand that suffering persecution for His sake is the price to be paid in blood and tears for the unspeakable pleasure of serving Him in the holy way of life. ☞

**TONY MARSHALL ANDERSON** (1888–1979) was an evangelist and a college professor associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of the Nazarene. He was convinced that the people of God have not explored the boundless possibilities of prayer. Excerpted from his book *Prayer Availeth Much*.

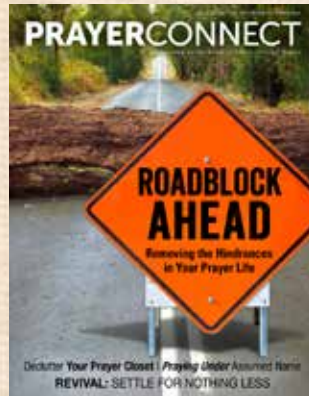


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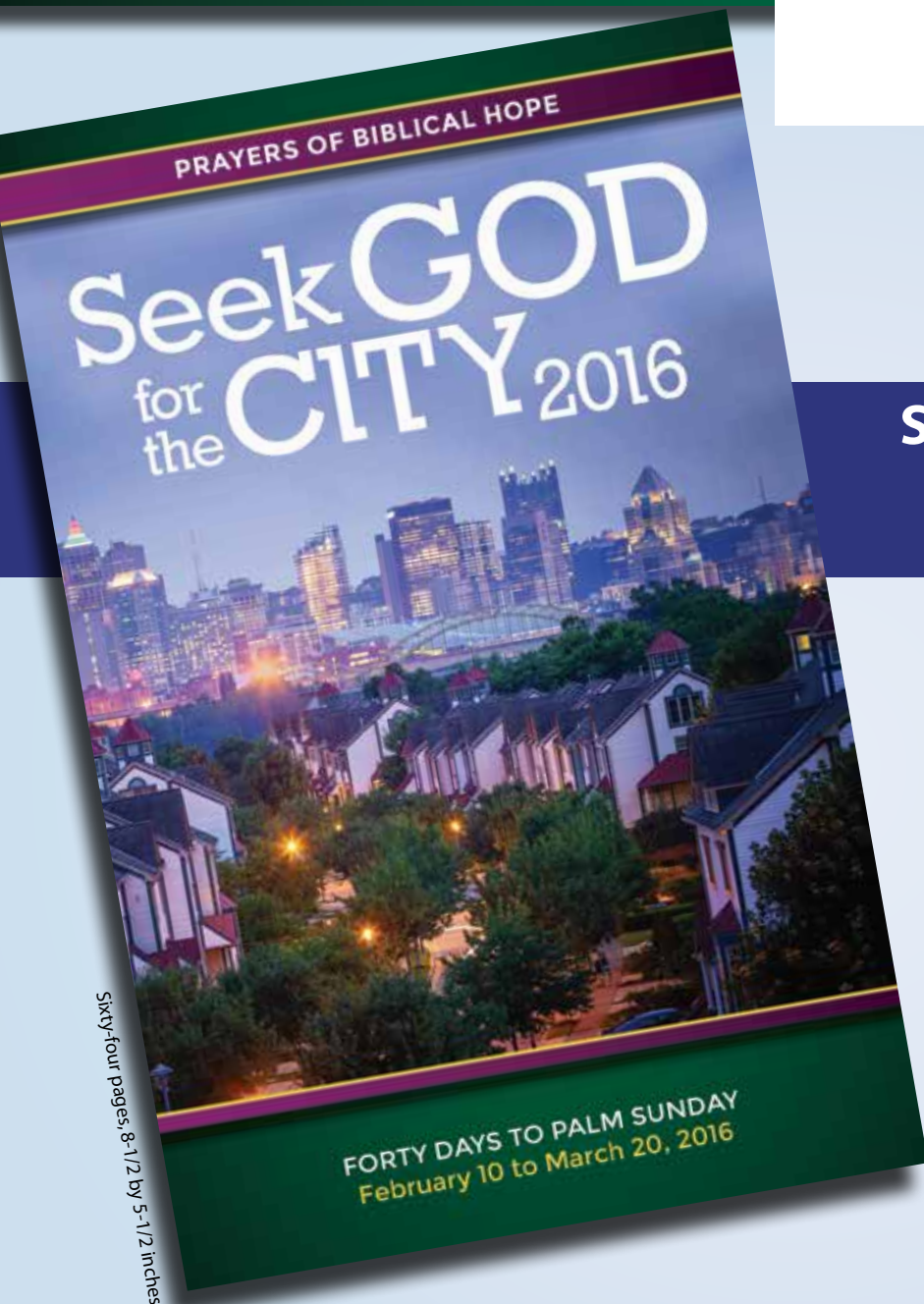


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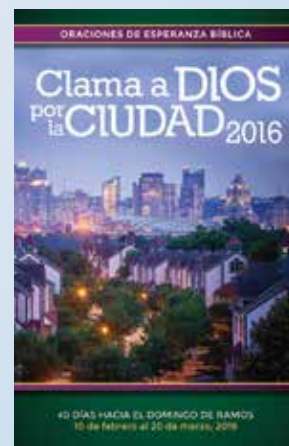
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