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We are looking for general articles, ideas, and news stories on what God is doing as a result of prayer. As a start-up magazine, 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:

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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.

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The mission of PRAYERCONNECT is

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

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Previously in Prayer Connect

Prayer is the most powerful way to open the door of a person's heart to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Open Hearts, Open Doors" is the theme of the



November/December 2012 issue. Alvin VanderGriend and Paul and Jeannie Cedar write about the power of prayer evangelism and the effectiveness of prayer, care, and share. Nick Hall issues an urgent call about the ripeness of the evangelistic harvest—which is now! Order at prayerconnect.org.



From Desperation to Excited Anticipation

The Church in the United States has recently experienced (and is experiencing) one of the greatest moves of prayer in our nation's history. Feelings of desperation have grown due to the painful moral and economic situations in our nation. Clashes in political views have led to lashing out in hatred. All this has caused the Church to rally her prayer efforts.



Last year many churches held days of prayer, fasting, and 24/7 prayer for a week or more. Hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—prayed through the prayer guides offered by dozens of ministries, all related to the elections.

Now the elections are over. The desperation may not have changed, but now that rallying point has passed. Will the Church continue to pray?

Sadly, most Westerners pray out of desperation rather than anticipation. That's one of the reasons that corporate prayer is all but dead in most churches. People do not pray from a foundational belief that prayer changes things—and that God responds when we pray. They do not act on the truth that the Kingdom of God advances through our prayers. They only pray when a current situation makes them desperate for God to intervene.

What would happen to our lives, churches, and communities if believers learned to pray with anticipation, instead of out of desperation? What if we prayed with a sense that we are a part of releasing God's will and purposes in this world? When we stay tuned into how God wants to use our prayers to fulfill His purposes, we will pray with more excitement and anticipation that a powerful force is being unleashed—and we are a part of it! Our hearts and minds will stay more watchful at what is happening around us—both in people's situations and how God is at work around us in our churches, communities, and world events.

Prayers that Advance the Kingdom


Those prayers are the kind described in Matthew 16:18–19: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Those are not prayers that wait until circumstances come at us; instead we will go after the circumstances—binding and loosing.

We attack the gates of hell when we pray for lost friends. We attack the gates of hell when we pray that Jesus Christ will be glorified in our difficult situations. We attack the gates of hell when we pray for the transforming power of Christ to be unleashed in our communities.

These prayers of anticipation rise from the belief that God is going to do those things that are on His heart. Then it gets exciting. Prayer is no longer an "I hope so" fix-it tool, but a Kingdom force.

To sum it all up, let me adapt the words to the old Heinz Tomato Ketchup commercial: "Anticipation. It's making me pray—and watch!"

—Jonathan Graf



Imagine What God Would Do ...

If we cried out with one voice ...
With a unified voice desperate for change.

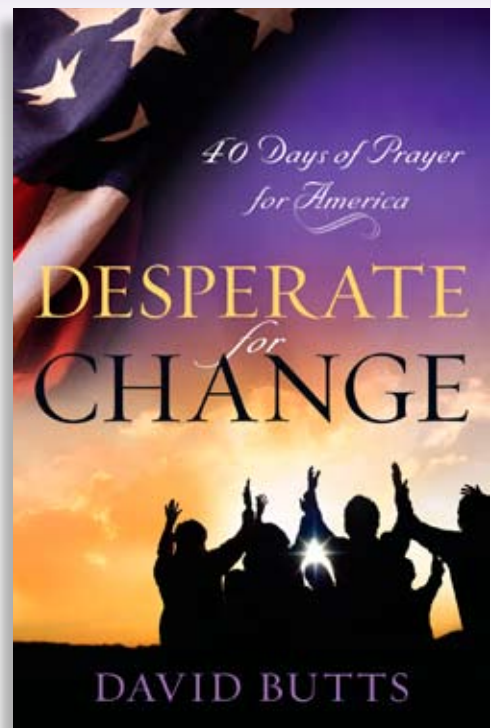
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A Gideon's Army Responds to The Summons in D.C.

When the call went out for Christians to come to Washington, D.C. in early October 2012, to pray prior to the national elections, organizers were not certain how many to expect. John Bornschein, vice chairman of the National Day of Prayer (NDOP) Task Force, says he watched the numbers go up and down—as people registered or had to cancel—until registration for The Summons finally landed at exactly 300 people representing all 50 states.

Bornschein shared his belief in the significance of that number by comparing those in attendance with the 300 soldiers that God used in Gideon's army (Judges 6–7). "God chose each of you to be here on assignment," he said.

The assignment was to spend four days (Oct. 3–7) in D.C. in what was described as a "solemn assembly," with the focus on praying in humility and repentance toward a national revival and spiritual awakening. Organizers provided bus transportation to various sites for prayer, while participants also prayer

walked on their own to various key points throughout the city. Two-hour sacred assemblies of prayer and worship were hosted both at the base of the Washington Monument and at the Senate Park near the Capitol building. The group also participated in a pastor-led dedication service at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial.

In addition, participants had "prayer appointments" in many of the Senate and House of Representative offices. Although most of the Congress people themselves were on recess, their staffs graciously received the participants, shared prayer requests with them, and allowed prayers of blessing to be prayed over them. Shirley Dobson, chairman of the NDOP Task Force, stated her belief that there has never been such a comprehensive prayer saturation in the Congressional offices.



Dave Butts, chairman of America's National Prayer Committee, preached a closing message on Sunday morning. He encouraged the group to continue praying before and after the elections, stating his observation that "we are in the midst of the most massive movement of prayer ever in the U.S. It's happening now—and it's accelerating!"

Some of the partner ministries included America's National Prayer Committee, Campus Renewal Ministries, International House of Prayer, Family Research Council, Harvest Prayer Ministries, and the National Day of Prayer.

New Evangelism Effort to Love Every Person in America

"Every person in the U.S. should have the opportunity to experience the love of Christ through at least one person," says Dr. Paul Cedar, chairman of the Mission America Coalition (MAC). "This will never happen without the authentic move of the Holy Spirit, but why couldn't it happen? It is time to share Christ's love!"

Cedar was referring to the launch

of a national campaign sponsored by MAC and the U.S. Lausanne Committee to draw ministries, churches, whole denominations, and individual Christians to show the love of Christ to every person in America by the end of the decade. *LOVE2020* was announced at the MAC annual leadership consultation in Denver during the last week of October 2012.



He describes *Love2020* as a grassroots movement of Christians adopting a "prayer-care-share lifestyle." This lifestyle involves praying for those who do not know Jesus, showing them love in tangible ways through acts of kindness and meeting needs, and sharing the gospel with them. "The Holy Spirit works in a heart that has been prayed for, cared for, and shared with," says Susan Brill, MAC's director of communications.

Cedar points out, "If only ten percent of professing Christians in the U.S.



would adopt and put in practice the simple, yet powerful, prayer-care-share lifestyle, this vision and mission could be fulfilled. . . . We are not asking you to become involved in another short-term program,” Cedar emphasizes. “We believe it is time for us to change our long-term lifestyles by becoming praying, car-

ing, and sharing followers of Jesus.”

The initiative is unprecedented for MAC, whose 500 partners and members come from more than 85 denominations, every size of ministry and church, and many individuals (*missionamerica.org*).

Mission America has created a new website to support the initiative,

Love2020.org. The site hosts stories and video clips about efforts underway around the country. It also allows participants to submit stories of God’s work through their own prayer-care-share lifestyles. MAC will help track commitments to Christ and follow up with new believers and encourage their involvement in a local church.

“God Belongs in My City” Prayer Walks Spread

A movement of youth who are taking to the streets in their cities is spreading—but this movement involves prayer walking and the public declaration that “God Belongs in My City.” Thousands of students and young people in cities such as San Antonio, TX; Orlando, FL, and Nashville, TN, have organized prayer walks to make bold statements that honor God.

It began in 2009 when a youth group in New York City was stirred to action because of an atheist advertising campaign



in the subway system. It said, “A million New Yorkers are good without God. Are you?” The young people approached their youth pastor, who then went to a network of youth pastors with the question, “What are we, as the Body of Christ,

going to do about this?”

The resulting prayer walk involved 1,500 youth who walked from the north and south of Manhattan, meeting at Times Square and Grand Central Station. They wore simple t-shirts that stated, “God Belongs in My City.” (There are now a variety of t-shirts and hoodies available online.) Since 2009, the movement has grown to more than 40 cities and five nations. The fourth annual prayer walk in New York City took place October 27, 2012.

Those wanting to schedule a prayer walk through the streets of their city can go to *godbelongsinmycity.com*.

Collegiate Day of Prayer Observed Each February

For nearly 100 years, the Church in America observed a day of united prayer for God to awaken and revive college campuses. This tradition was reestablished in 2010 as the Collegiate Day of Prayer, observed annually on the last Thursday of each February.

The 2013 prayer observance on February 28 has a goal of 2,000 groups praying by name for all of the 5,584 colleges in the nation. More than 2,500 campuses had been adopted by mid-November 2012 by prayer groups representing all 50 states.

Throughout American history, colleges in America were repeatedly blessed and transformed by intense seasons of spiritual awakening. Many of the best universities in the nation have experienced

historical revivals in the First and Second Great Awakenings. Often these campus revivals fueled missions movements with students who experienced these outpourings of God’s grace.

With this history in mind, leaders of many college campus ministries are joining forces to invite God to do another great work on every campus. One of the prayer goals is for “students to finish the remaining task of evangelizing every tongue, tribe, and nation in this generation for the glory and pleasure of Jesus Christ.”

The Collegiate Day of Prayer’s leadership team is an interdenominational group of friends and ministry partners who are working together to call America’s churches and colleges to unite and



pray. Some of the ministries joining forces to lead the Collegiate Day of Prayer include Campus Renewal Ministries, America’s National Prayer Committee, Navigators, InterVarsity, Moms In Prayer International, 24-7 Prayer USA, International House of Prayer, and Cru.

For information on adopting a campus or joining this prayer movement, go to *collegiatedayofprayer.org*.



Syrian Pastor Writes Letter Pleading for Prayer

A Syrian pastor has written a letter outlining the state of the Church in that war-torn nation—and the Evangelical Alliance UK is circulating the letter to Christians around the world, encouraging them to pray. The letter says the Church is united in 24-hour prayer.

“We thank God because the Church is united across the country in prayer 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” writes the anonymous pastor, “praying for the glory of God to dwell in the Church, for an end to the bloodshed, for peace in the country, for keeping the Church’s faithful witness, to reach out to the suffering, to share the divine cure of the gospel, to speak the word of the Lord in all boldness.”

The pastor also writes that this turmoil in their country was unexpected.

They never imagined that the violence would displace millions from their homes and cause people to live in parks

and wilderness areas, with tens of thousands of deaths impacting families. “I can cry like Nehemiah because the walls of our cities are burnt and the people are in great trouble and disgrace,” continues the pastor. “The only good news is that the Church is moving wholeheartedly to help relieve some of the suffering, and the Lord is surely opening hearts to receive the gospel.”

Steve Clifford, general director of Evangelical Alliance UK, emphasizes that “Christians are caught in the crossfire and



are being driven from their homelands on account of their faith. This is a complex situation, but we need the media to tell the story of what’s really happening to the Church.” Clifford adds that the “maturity of suffering Christians in Syria should prompt us all to prayer and action.”

The Syrian pastor writes that the Church has decided to adopt the motto of a Lebanese pastor who lived through the heat of civil war in his own country: “Our loyalty is to Christ, our submission is to the laws of the land, and our love is to all.”

A copy of the letter can be downloaded at cryoutnow.org. Click on media gallery tab and drop down to newsletters.

North Korean Church Prays for American Church

Millions of Christians around the world united in prayer for the persecuted Church on November 11, remembering those Christians experiencing persecution in hostile or limited-access countries. But the founder of one organization that partners with the North Korean underground Church says that it’s the American Church, not the North Korean Church, for which North Korean Christians pray with concern.

Eric Foley, CEO of Seoul USA, says he was surprised when he first asked members of the North Korean underground Church how Americans could pray for them.

“They answered, ‘You pray for us? We pray for you!’ When I asked why, they responded, ‘Because Western Christians often put so much faith in their prosperity and political freedoms that they don’t know what it’s like to have to depend completely on God. And because of that,

they often do not get to know Him in all the ways He invites us to.’”

Foley is the author of the new book, *These Are the Generations*, a first-person account of generational imprisonment and Christian faithfulness of one North Korean family. The story begins with the experience of the family patriarch in World War II and continues through the imprisonment and escape of his grandson, one of the book’s co-authors. North Korean authorities captured and imprisoned the grandson, Mr. Bae, because he believed in God and evangelized a friend. Bae says being a Christian in prison is far from a pitiable situation. “It’s like seminary,” he says. “I prayed for others daily. My faith grew by leaps and bounds even as my body decayed.”

Foley’s hope is that Americans will not pray for persecuted believers but *with* them. “North Korean believers like Mr. Bae always tell me not to pray that they would be removed from persecution,

but that they would be faithful in the midst of it.”

MICHAEL IRELAND is a reporter with ASSIST News Service (assistnews.net).

Prayer Calendar

Seek God for the City
February 13–March 24
waymakers.org

Collegiate Day of Prayer
Thursday, February 28
collegiatedayofprayer.org

National Day of Prayer
Thursday, May 2
nationaldayofprayer.org

Global Day of Prayer
Sunday, May 19
globaldayofprayer.com

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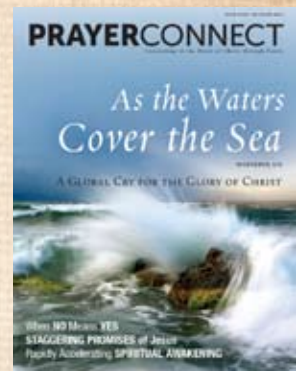
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PRAYER IN THE END OF DAYS

AS A NEW COLLEGE GRADUATE A FEW decades ago, I joined the editorial staff of a Christian magazine. Every Monday morning we had a staff prayer time—and every week our administrative assistant prayed the same prayer: “Jesus, please return soon.”

As a young—and I guess—immature believer, I confess her prayer bothered me every week. I simply could not understand why she was so eager for Jesus to return. Granted, she was nearing retirement. Her husband had passed away several years earlier, and she was struggling with cancer. Perhaps that was part of her heart behind her prayer.

But the imminent return of Christ was far from my thoughts. I was excited about the career that lay ahead of me. I was just getting started in my new life as an adult.

Why would I want Jesus to return soon?

NEW PERSPECTIVE

I understand her prayer now. And I don’t think it’s just because I’m getting older. As one who values intercession and has matured in my own prayer life, I believe I am more aware of the urgency of the day and the signs of the times that seem to be lining up with prophetic Scriptures. It is possible that the return of Christ is nearer than we think and that we are living in the “end of days.” I have now learned to pray in anticipation of Jesus’ return.

Peter gives timeless instructions about how we should live and pray as believers. He wrote: “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray” (1 Peter 4:7). We need to be fully aware of the signs around us so that we can pray effectively.

I am praying that God will graciously pour out His

Spirit in the greatest revival and spiritual awakening that we have ever known. I am asking the Lord to bring an end-times harvest of those who do not yet know Christ that surpasses anything our nation or world has ever experienced.

And I am praying that the Church of Jesus Christ will be awakened and ready for that day when we look to the horizon and witness that glorious moment: “For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:27).

WATCHING AND WAITING

In this issue, Bob Bakke writes that “what is happening today should compel us to be fully awake and carefully watching for signs of His coming.” He shows how we can pray confidently—yet in an attitude of waiting patiently on the Lord’s perfect timing.

Throughout biblical and church history, some men and women have positioned themselves to pray with watchful eyes similar to the prophet Habakkuk. Jacquie Tyre is one of those faithful intercessors, and she offers several ways to watch and pray in agreement with God for His purposes. And finally, David Kubal urges us not to be passive observers of the events of our time, but instead use our prayers to exert a powerful force on what transpires in our day.

I suspect the return of the Lord may be close. We might just have the opportunity to witness the heavens cracking open like lightning at the coming of Christ. I have learned to pray this simple prayer of anticipation: “Come, Lord Jesus.”

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.



THE LORD IS NEAR

Prayers of Preparation in Anticipation of Christ's Return

❧ BY BOB BAKKE ❧

UNLESS YOU'RE LIVING UNDER A ROCK OR IN A MONASTIC RETREAT, you can't escape the storm clouds gathering on the horizon of history. Storms always loom somewhere, but particularly ill winds are blowing today—and we can hear alarms sounding from every direction. Tensions are rising in every society.

In the United States various ideologies are clashing over who's to blame for the present difficulties and the best direction for the future of America. Grave global dangers are threatening, too.

Economists say we are facing a fiscal financial cliff. We're "sailing in uncharted waters," writes another in the *Wall Street Journal*. The "good faith and credit" of cities and entire nations are unraveling. Twice in recent months the U.S. has been downgraded as a lending risk, unprecedented since the country was founded.

IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT GOD EXPECTS CHRISTIANS IN EVERY GENERATION TO WATCH CAREFULLY FOR THE SIGNS OF JESUS' RETURN.

We've watched debt catastrophes in Greece and Spain, with Italy and France's foundations also eroding. Could our economy collapse, too?

Anxious Americans are seeing gun sales soaring. Violent religious and philosophical hatreds play out on the evening news.

Chaos and the threat of war hang like a dust storm in the air over the Middle East and North Africa. Governments are overthrown. U.S. embassies are attacked and ransacked. Churches are bombed. Followers of Jesus are killed in Nigeria and Kenya, and forced from ancestral lands in the Middle East.

Persian mullahs boast they have no fear of any enemy and that they can withstand a nuclear attack. They point, confidently, to the imminent arrival of the Mahdi, the Islamic messiah, whose arrival will be preceded by war. Fifty thousand missiles are aimed at Israel from neighboring Lebanon—tens of thousands more from distant Iran.

Meanwhile, jihadist groups are scouring the world for weapons of mass destruction—chemical or nuclear—to employ against Western interests. Israel's prime minister told the United Nations General Assembly that his country stands ready to strike Iran over its advancing nuclear weapons program, while secretly hiding his own.

At home, indicators within American Christianity point to problems. Kids who have grown up in our churches are abandoning their faith when they leave home. Pastors are abandoning their pulpits—or truth—or both. Americans, in general, are abandoning traditional religion. Local churches per capita are at historic lows.

Those who remain faithful to Christ feel as though their faith is under assault from entertainers, government officials, journalists, coworkers, classmates, teachers, neighbors, and family members. The blogosphere has become vile and slanderous. Powerful voices are labeling biblical Christianity as a hate crime. Freedom of speech is eroding.

DAYS TO BE WATCHING

Today's headlines echo the words of Jesus and the apostles when they spoke of the last days:

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines

and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains" (Matt. 24:4–8).

And these words from the Apostle Paul:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Tim. 3:1–5).

It's safe to say that God expects Christians in every generation to watch carefully for the signs of Jesus' return and to ask whether their generation will see the heavens open and Jesus descend. It is also safe to say that dynamics at play today align particularly well with the prophecies of Jesus' coming. We're watching these events carefully.

Last fall, I stood with friends on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple Mount, not far from where Jesus ascended to heaven. We recited the prophecies of Jesus' return. Our hearts stirred deeply within us.

But, to be honest, the earth has witnessed periods like this before. Today, militant Islam and a reconstituted Israel capture our attention. Thirty years ago, nuclear-armed communism compelled us to think the end imminent.

Seventy years ago, the axis of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan threatened. And in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Roman Catholicism convinced Protestants that Jesus' return was near, as Catholic nations commanded vast armies and navies—all controlled by the city on seven hills (see Rev. 17:9).

Even though we've been wrong about Jesus' return in the past, God has still graciously answered our prayers for

His greater glory. In each of the above periods God sent revivals, even though it wasn't yet the new age to come. My friend David Bryant calls these revivals "approximations of the consummation." In other words, as we are stirred to prayer because of the events of our day, God answers by giving us a taste of what the return of Jesus will be like.

YET GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS

Why does God answer our prayers if we are wrong about the timing of Christ's return? Because as we pray, we humbly confess that when it comes to the mysteries of God and the foretelling of history, our eyesight isn't very good: "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a [poor first-century] mirror," Paul wrote. "Then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I

am fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

But God also answers our prayers because both the Bible and history give explicit evidence that God stands ready to pour out His Spirit in troubled times if His people pursue Him in holiness. Whether Jesus comes in the next 24 hours or 24 months, or in the 24th century, one thing is crystal clear: *What is happening today should compel us to be fully awake and carefully watching for signs of His coming.*

In this there is no doubt. The Church and the nations of the earth need an out-pouring of the Holy Spirit that foreshadows the Lordship of Christ over all things.

HOW THEN DO WE PRAY?

With these things in mind, then, let me recommend how we should pray in light

of the promise of His coming:

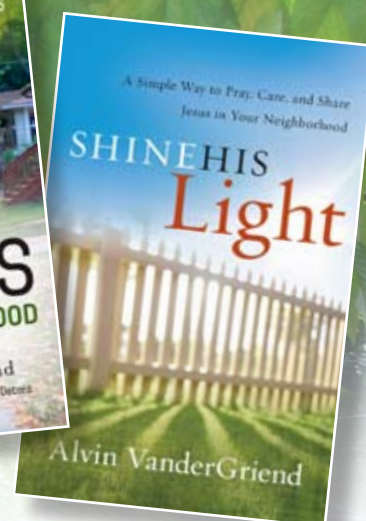
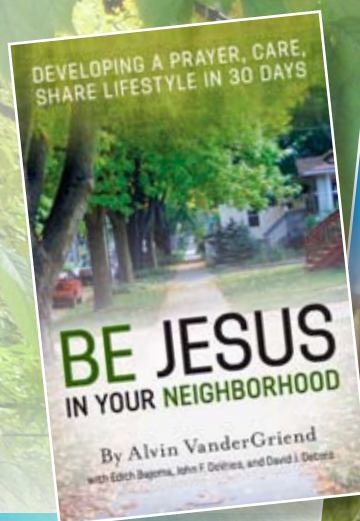
1. Pray Confidently. God promises that "the Lord himself *will* come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16, emphasis added). There is no doubt about the final outcome. We pray with confidence that other glorious "approximations" will come to us regularly between now and then.

2. Pray Expectantly. Expectancy brings with it excitement or unusual awareness. I once read an account of a fishing village that waited expectantly each year for the migration of great schools of fish. When the alarm sounded, everyone dropped what they were doing and ran to the boats and the nets. The villagers knew the call would come and they lived expectantly. Daily, while in their gardens or kitchens, or while

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PRAYING FOR ISRAEL

BY DAVE BUTTS

It is no surprise that Israel is a source of division and contention, both in the world and in the Church. It has always been so. For reasons, one could look to the unique geographic place of the nation, a bridge of land between warring empires for millennia. Or you could consider the exclusive monotheism of the Jewish faith that set it apart through the ages. Modern analysts perhaps look to the deep-seated antagonism between Jew and Arab as an outgrowth of tribal hatreds born centuries ago.

Though all of these points are true, I believe there is a spiritual source—literally, a demonic one, which underlies the controversy. From the beginning, the great adversary Satan has hated the Jewish people. They were the ones chosen by God through which the purposes of God were to be carried out on planet Earth. Through the Jewish people, God's redemptive plan for mankind was to be enacted, thereby assuring Satan of defeat. The persistence and ferocity of anti-Semitism through the centuries can only be explained by a supernatural force. Satan has tried to destroy the out-working of God's grace by destroying the people upon and through which God would demonstrate His greatest grace.

So what does it mean to pray for the peace of Jerusalem? First, I would suggest that a prayer for the peace of Jerusalem is not confined to a city alone, but includes the whole nation of Israel. In Old Testament times, the capital city of Jerusalem represented the entire nation. When times of trouble came, much of the nation came inside the walls of Jerusalem for protection. How then do we pray for Jerusalem (Israel)?

Certainly there is an aspect of protection from war, violence, and terrorism that we all desire for Israel. While it appears prophetically that there will be a time when God's hand of protection is withdrawn for awhile from Jerusalem, until then we are to pray for God's peace. This aspect of peace involves a cessation of hostility and attack. If, in spite of our prayers, it appears that the violence still occurs, we can only imagine to what extent there would be unbridled violence without our prayers.

In one way, Jerusalem will never completely know peace until the Prince of Peace comes to reign in the city. When

the Messiah comes (again), He will establish Jerusalem as the praise of all the earth, the place from which He will reign over the earth. There is, however, a peace that comes to the human heart when Jesus is made Lord of that heart and life. I believe it is essential that we pray for the peace of Christ to come into many hearts in Israel. It is this peace that will comfort and endure, even through times of great trial and tribulation.

Praying for Israel is ultimately about asking God to use this tiny nation to bring Him glory and to use the Jewish people to bring about His purposes as He has so many times in the past. God uses our prayers for Israel to advance His Kingdom and to bring honor to His Son, Israel's largely unrecognized Messiah.

Because your prayers for Israel are such a critical part of God's end-time purposes, they are to become more intense as the time approaches. I believe the day-and-night prayer movement that began several years ago and continues to intensify is a sign of the approaching end of days. This 24/7 prayer movement is an act of obedience and fulfillment of the command of Scripture: "You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isa. 62:6–7).

Prayer

God of Israel, how amazed I am at the way You have brought Your people back into the land of promise. In our day, we have watched with our own eyes as You have restored Jerusalem to Your people Israel and, against all odds, have brought into being a nation that many have said could never exist again. Now, Lord, pour out that spirit of grace and supplication upon Jerusalem. May Jesus be recognized as Messiah by His own people. Bring peace to Jerusalem as the Prince of Peace is enthroned upon the hearts of the Jewish people and all who dwell in the land.

DAVE BUTTS is president of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the chairman of America's National Prayer Committee. This excerpt is from his book *Prayer and the End of Days*, available at prayershop.org.

tending their sheep, their ears were listening for the alarm to ring.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:42–44, “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

3. Pray Preparedly. Make sure you are prepared to meet Christ. Don’t just pray about other people. Make sure that nothing stands between you and God. I know a lot of people who chatter away about the last days, but who, I suspect, are not ready to meet Him, nor are their family members or friends.

Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:37–42, are sobering:

“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. . . . Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”

And in Matthew 25:1–13, through the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus continues His warning about the urgency of the day and the need to be prepared. Five foolish virgins didn’t prepare for the return of the bridegroom. But the other five kept oil ready to fill their lamps at a moment’s notice. The bridegroom invited those prepared into the wedding banquet; the foolish ones had the door slammed in their faces. No pleading could convince the bridegroom to recognize them and open the door. Jesus concluded this parable by

saying, “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

4. Pray Patiently. As with revivals of the past—and the great missionary and church-planting movements that emerged from them—God may want to accomplish many great things before the coming of His Son. Even today we are witnessing great harvests of souls—the largest in the history of the Church. This age of the

Holy Spirit is yielding remarkable fruit.

James, the brother of Jesus, offers perspective for us, too. Writing to Messianic Jews frustrated over the delay of Jesus’ return, he said, “Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because

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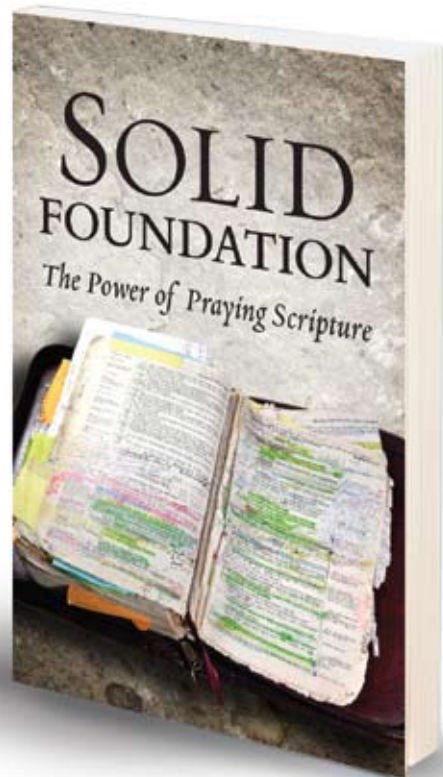
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the Lord's coming is near" (5:7–8).

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5. Pray Unitedly. Find other believers and pray with them. In the 1740s, Jonathan Edwards preached a series of sermons on the millennial reign of Christ. Out of this series came not only an influential book, but the launch of

The Concert of Prayer—a prayer movement that became the common denominator to hundreds of revivals, three international awakenings, and the explosion of international missions.

In one of the key passages, Edwards addresses Revelation 8, in which the Lamb of God takes the scroll from His Father and opens the seven seals—that

is, when God inaugurates the consummation of history. Instead of an explosion of activity, however, we read the following: "When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (v. 1). Everything in heaven stopped. In silence heaven waited.

But why did heaven wait? We soon learn this:

Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, *with the prayers of all the saints*, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake (vv. 3–5, emphasis added).

In other words, when it came to the end of all things and the return of Christ, heaven waited for "the prayers of all the saints." There is an unprecedented movement of united prayer across the earth. Upon the evidence of Revelation 8, Edwards was convinced the second coming of Christ would be preceded by a great and global movement of prayer. In private, he speculated that it would be sometime soon after the year 2000.

Could he be right about the date? We may think so. We'll keep an eye on the eastern sky. Was he right about the power of united prayer with regard to the purposes of Christ? Absolutely.

May the certainty of Jesus' return keep us on our knees. Our generation will thank us for our prayers. **PC**



BOB BAKKE is the senior teaching pastor of Hillside Church, Bloomington, MN. He was the North American director for the Global Day of Prayer and now serves on the executive leadership team for OneCry.

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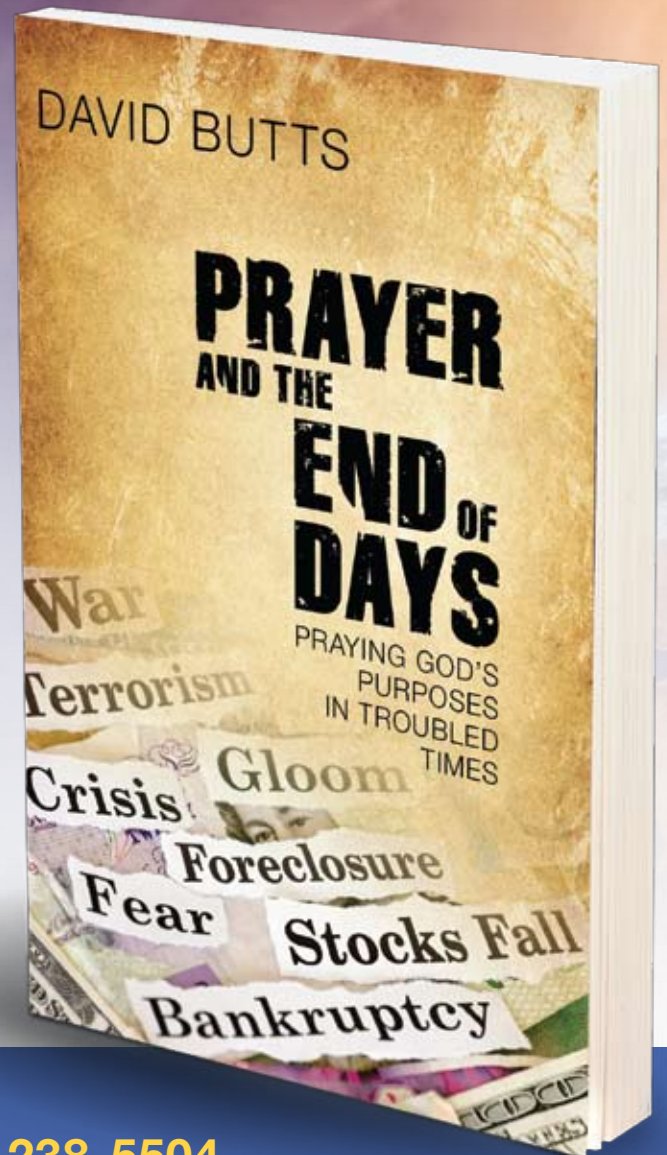
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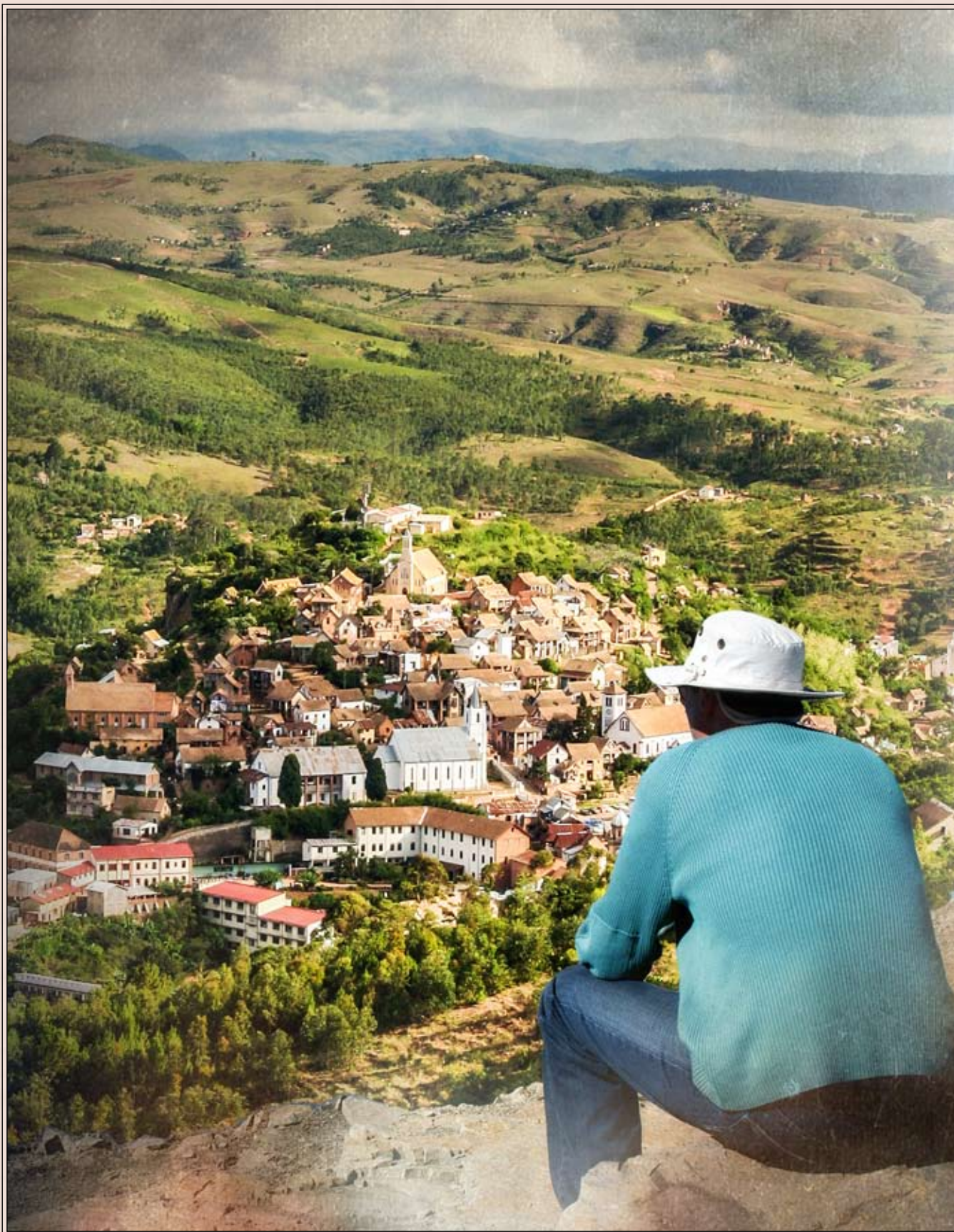


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WATCH AND PRAY

In Daunting Days, How Will You Answer the Call?

❧ BY JACQUIE TYRE ❧

THE YEAR WAS 1727. THE PLACE WAS HERRNHUT, GERMANY. The people were a band of Moravian refugees taken in by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a Lutheran aristocrat. It was an unlikely mix of people and circumstances except for the love of the Lord that drew them all to watch and pray. As these men and women studied the Scriptures, prayed, and grew spiritually together, God began revealing His will, wooing them into a deeper consecration of devotion to Him.

Count Zinzendorf, while watching over the Moravians, began to study their history, searching out their past to know them better. Along the way, he discovered a rich history of the Word, of prayer, and of prophetic destiny. Zinzendorf discovered documents that spoke of a prophetic word given by John Hus in 1627, declaring that in 100 years Hus's "hidden seed would sprout forth in revival."

AS WE JOIN THE LORD IN PRAYER, WE ARE ENTERING INTO A PLACE OF AGREEMENT WITH THE WILL OF HEAVEN.

Hus had sown seeds of the gospel in the Moravians, and these people had been protected through the years by leaders such as John Amos Comenius and now Count Zinzendorf. The “hidden seeds” were ready and prime for awakening!

Zinzendorf believed this prophetic word, and he gathered 300 Moravians to watch and pray. God answered with a powerful outpouring of revival fire that gave way to a 110-year, 24/7 prayer vigil to watch and pray for God’s purposes to be fulfilled each day. Out of this vigil came an explosion of missionaries sent to evangelize the lost and to plant churches. They went forth into the world in an unprecedented fashion, and they continue to have an impact on the world today.

TAKING UP THE CALL

This story of Zinzendorf’s call to “watch and pray” encourages and challenges *us* to take up that call as well. However, we may ask questions such as these:

- How do we watch?
- What are we watching for?
- What exactly are we to do with what we see, hear, read, and perceive while we watch, and how does it apply to prayer?

WATCH TO SEE WHAT THE LORD WILL SAY

In my journey as a watchman, the most important aspect has been what I will call the “Habakkuk 2 Watch.” Habakkuk 2 starts out with the prophet declaring his posture and intent:

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts;
I will look to see what He will say to me.

It is important to remember that Habakkuk is in a faith struggle. The people of Israel are facing challenges at the hands of the Chaldeans, and Habakkuk is wrestling with the way things are going for the people of God. In his wrestling, he turns to seek the Lord, to “watch to see what He will say.”

In all of our watching, no matter what the situation, we begin and end with seeking to know what God is doing—or what He desires to do. Jesus instructed His disciples to “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Seeking the Lord first will protect us against all manner of distraction, discouragement, and deception.

So how do we watch? We watch by seeking the Lord’s face (2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 27:8; Hos. 5:15), by meditating upon the Word of God (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2, 63:6), by listening for His voice (Deut. 32:1–3; Psalm 95:6–8; John 10:3), and by observing the things around us with eyes of faith (Deut. 28–30; 1 Chron. 12:32; 2 Chronicles 6; Mark 4:26–29).

When we have discovered what He is doing, then, as Henry Blackaby says in *Experiencing God*, we simply join Him in what He is doing. As we join the Lord in prayer, we are entering into a place of agreement with the will of heaven. Our prayers rise with faith-filled confidence toward His will being done on earth as it is in heaven according to the Lord’s model prayer (Matt. 6:9–13).

WATCH TO SEE WHAT THE ENEMY IS DOING

While watching the enemy is definitely a secondary assignment, it is nonetheless important. Unfortunately we can fall into the enemy’s trap of focusing on his diabolical activities to the point of discouragement, fear, and giving in to defeat. We must keep our eyes on the Lord while observing what the enemy is doing.

In Nehemiah 4, when the people of God faced an onslaught of their enemies’ fierce and unrelenting mockery, threats, and accusations, they devised a strategy. Nehemiah 4:9 says, “We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.” In their watching, they exposed the plans of the enemy. And by faith and determination to fulfill the purposes of the Lord, they completed the building of the wall.

Even in the midst of grave opposition, the children of Israel, under Nehemiah’s lead, stood with the purposes of the Lord. In Jeremiah 1:12 the Lord says, “I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.” As we agree with the Lord, even in the face of the enemy’s resistance, we enter into a partnership with Him and “watch and pray” to see His Word fulfilled.

WATCH TO SEE THE WORLD AROUND YOU

David, long before he was king of Israel, watched and prayed. The Philistines had risen up against the children of Israel, and fear had gripped the armies of the Lord under the rule of King Saul. Young David came into camp and observed the threats of the enemy and the fear of the people. Then, out of the place of knowing the Lord's delivering power, he saw the situation with a different perspective and asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

David ultimately stood before Goliath with a slingshot and five smooth stones, and he brought deliverance to the nation. As David watched with eyes of faith-filled confidence in the greatness of his God, he could see beyond the dangers to the hope of God's power (1 Sam. 17).

In Acts 16:16-18, Paul encountered a girl with a spirit of divination. This young girl followed them around for days, proclaiming words of truth, yet she greatly annoyed Paul. For days, Paul would have been very well aware of the people and events that were going on around him. He was watching in the natural and in the spirit realms, and something did not seem right. While Scriptures do not specifically say that Paul prayed about what was going on, certainly he was in communion with the Lord throughout this entire ordeal, seeking to know what he should do. Eventually, in the time determined by the Lord, Paul turned and commanded the evil spirit to come out of her. And God powerfully delivered her!

Today, as we look at the circumstances of the world around us, it can become annoying, overwhelming, and even terrifying at times. However, the Lord makes His grace available to us to watch with eyes of faith and pray for discernment to know how to respond in His wisdom and power, even as David and Paul did.



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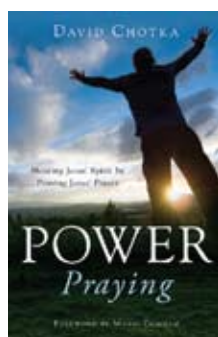
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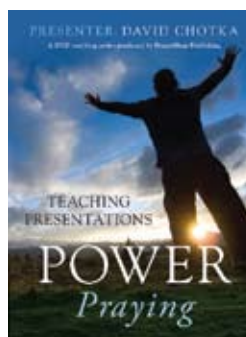
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WATCH TO SEE THE REDEMPTION OF THE LORD

Simeon and Anna, in Luke 2:25–38, demonstrate that watching for redemption is a key element of answering the call to “watch and pray.” Simeon was an anointed man who lived his whole life watching for the “consolation of Israel.”

The Holy Spirit had revealed that Simeon would see Israel’s Messiah before Simeon died. And upon seeing the Christ Child, Simeon knew his own purpose on the earth was being fulfilled.

In a similar fashion, Anna, a prophetess who did not leave the temple but served the Lord “night and day, fasting and praying,” was looking forward to

the “redemption of Jerusalem.”

In the Old Testament, Daniel saw from Scripture and understood that the fulfillment of the 70 years of judgment, prophesied by Jeremiah, was near. So he set his face toward the Lord to pray “in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes,” for the Lord to redeem Israel from captivity according to His word (Dan. 9:3).

PRAYER, TERROR, AND END-TIMES WARFARE

BY DAVE BUTTS

There is no doubt that we live in an age of terror. The threat of terrorism affects us every time we go to an airport or large sporting event. It affects the policies of nations and the daily lives of individuals. Nations are mobilizing to face this increasingly dangerous threat.

What is the Church’s response to terrorism? It certainly affects us. In some places, the Church has become the target of terror attacks. In order for the Church to fully engage this threat, we must see the spiritual aspect of what is happening. Read the following passage of Scripture from Isaiah, and see if it does not apply to terrorists today:

“Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace” (Isa. 59:6–8).

Terrorism is not merely a matter of physical struggle. It is a spiritual battle as well. This type of blind violence is indicative of Satan’s handiwork. Jesus said of Satan in John 8 and 10 that he is a liar, a thief, and a murderer. His intent is to steal, kill, and destroy. In Revelation 12, the devil is described as one who leads the whole world astray. He is filled with fury because he knows his time is short.

Because the struggle against terrorism is one aspect of the cosmic war between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the prince of this world, Christians must step up to the forefront of the battle. As in all of our warfare, prayer becomes a major weapon in our arsenal.

Rees Howells and a group of English intercessors gathered

regularly to watch and pray over the major battles and events of World War II. There were numerous occasions when God showed them what must happen in advance of the events themselves. These faithful intercessors prayed strategic prayers that changed the direction of military events.

God has called His people to be watchmen. We are not to be passive observers or victims in the war against terror. We are to watch and pray. When we read the newspapers, we pray. As we watch the news, we pray.

In this kind of battlefield mentality, our prayers must be militant as well. We must pray for a hedge of protection for those on the front lines of battle. We ask God to protect the innocent. It is at times like this that we ask the Lord of the hosts of heaven to move out against the enemies of God. We pray that the purposes of God will be fulfilled in the midst of these threats.

Our prayers will make the difference in the fight against terrorism. In the darkness of our current situation, God is calling His people to be light. Through our watchful prayer, we release the powerful light of Christ into the battle. Truly, the battle is the Lord’s: “This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s’” (2 Chron. 20:15).

Prayer

O God, help me to watch and pray. Keep my eyes focused on You. Show me other believers that I can pray with over the condition of our nation and the world. Give me insight into the spiritual battles that erupt into acts of terror and violence—and lead me into Spirit-led times of intercession that release Your power into these situations.

Then there was Josiah. It was prophesied years before his birth that he would deliver Israel. After the young Josiah became king, the priest Hilkiah brought the recovered Book of the Law to Josiah. When the king heard the words of the law, he repented and commanded that the priests go and inquire of the Lord for him. They went to Huldah, a prophetess who could watch and see what the Lord was doing. After seeking the Lord, she instructed Josiah to pray and worship. His prayer and worship unlocked a great awakening and reformation in the land (2 Kings 22).

In each case, these men and women discerned what the Lord was about to do on the earth, and they set their hearts to watch and pray for the fulfillment of His Word.

Throughout Church history, there have been those who have positioned themselves to watch for the redemption

of the Lord to come forth powerfully in their generation and beyond. Men and women of centuries gone by, people such as John Hus, Count Zinzendorf, Father Nash (a partner and prayer warrior of Charles Finney), the hidden prayer warriors of the Welsh Revival, and countless others, saw beyond the natural into the redemption of the Lord. They set their faces to pray for the fulfillment of what they saw by eyes of faith.

WILL YOU ANSWER THE CALL TO WATCH AND PRAY?

Today, the Lord is stirring many to watch and pray over our cities, our states, and the nations of the world. Will you answer the call to watch over the seeds of awakening and pray for the “hidden seeds” of our generation to spring forth in a mighty revival? Will you look to see what the

enemy is doing and pray in agreement with God’s purposes that His Word be fulfilled? Are you willing to observe the daunting situations of our day and pray in bold faith for God’s will to be fulfilled? Will you watch intently for the redemption of the Lord to break in with transforming power? Will you pray expectantly for His presence to awaken, revive, and redeem for His own name’s sake?

With eyes of faith, watch. With hearts filled with His Word, pray. “Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed! For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told” (Hab. 1:5). **PC**



JACQUIE TYRE is the president and founder of Kairos Transformation Ministries (kairostransformation.org) and CityGate Atlanta. She is the author of *Ready for Revival*, available at prayershop.org.

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PRAYING THE NEWS IN CRITICAL DAYS

Exerting a Positive Force on Current Events

BY DAVID KUBAL

I REMEMBER BALANCING ON A TEETER-TOTTER AS A KID. What a surprise when a mischievous friend jumped off the other end, plummeting me to the ground!

As an adult sharing a teeter-totter with my own kids, I had to be careful not to, as we used to joke, “send them to the moon!” Eventually I discovered that the teeter-totter could be adjusted so that even my smallest child could lift me off the ground. I watched my son as he delighted in the power of being able to boost someone much larger than himself.

My kids loved the opportunity to influence the direction of motion and change the outcome. They were no longer passive teeter-totter victims.

What a fitting image to bring to the discipline of praying through the news. When it comes to God’s desire to answer prayer and change circumstances, what provides the

TODAY WE SEE OUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL EXERTING AND RELEASING HIS FORCE UPON AMERICA AND THE WORLD IN CALCULATING WAYS.

“fulcrum,” the leverage for His activity? How can we adjust the fulcrum of prayer so that we are not passive participants, but we can, instead, exert a positive force on current events?

Definition:

ful•crum \ n.

1: The point on which a lever is balanced when a force is exerted.

2: A thing that plays a central or essential role in an activity, event, or situation.

Many people much older and wiser than I am have told me that, within their lifetimes, the United States has never been in such a desperate state. Today we see our adversary the devil exerting and releasing his force upon America and the world in calculating ways (1 Pet. 5:8). Yet, there is also a “fulcrum” for change that can provide a platform for God’s opposing force of goodness and grace.

Several steps are necessary to fully let loose God’s blessing upon America during a time of austerity. As we seek God’s compassion and also search for leverage to intervene in this desperate hour, the Book of Daniel provides a model for a three-part fulcrum.

1. LOOK at the Signs

“I, Daniel, understood from the Scripture. . .” (Dan. 9:2).

Understanding the “signs of the

times” requires a habit of looking at the news through the lens of Scripture. What has God said through the Bible that has timeless application for today? It is so easy to allow the culture’s slow erosion of values to affect our understanding and replace a biblical worldview. These influences creep in through such things as entertainment and our culture’s push for “tolerance.”

Imagine a pair of high-tech reading glasses that would superimpose related Scripture verses over events we are watching on TV. Or picture a downloadable app that would reveal Scripture verses related to article headlines.

The weekly email alert from Intercessors for America is one such pair of lenses that delivers scriptural insight and news updates as a prayer resource.

However, this is no substitute for relying on the Spirit of God to direct and shape our individual awareness. A heart immersed in the Word of God, a heart that invites the Holy Spirit’s “high-tech lens” to correct its vision, is a heart ready to pray the news.

In 1865, President Lincoln understood the need to use the lens of Scripture as he called the nation “to confess [our] . . . sins and transgressions in humble sorrow . . . and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.”

Understanding how to pray for issues takes time and research. This can be an

overwhelming task because it’s difficult to research every issue. But, knowing our limitations, we can rely on the Holy Spirit to help us when our knowledge is in short supply.

Those who persistently pray through the headlines may find great rewards. In Manchester, KY, the site of a modern-day revival, churches united to pray for the headlines, and each week the town newspaper reflected the many answers to prayer. From one headline to the next, those who were praying praised God for the reports of drug dealers arrested and community corruption exposed.

As we pray for Christ to come, here are some practical ways to, in effect, “re-write” the headlines through prayer. Our prayers, combined with action, can help create headlines that honor God instead of reflecting a decline in godly values:

- Create a list of political leaders and pray for them daily. (Download a list of the top 130 U.S. officials at getamericapraying.com/prayerguides.php.)
- Take a course on politics to better understand the process of government.
- Consider running for political office.
- Get involved in the local political process and attend open government meetings. (Learn about who is praying with state governmental authorities through the Congressional Prayer Caucus: cpcfoundation.com.)

2. TURN to God

“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting” (Dan. 9:3).

God spoke to Daniel’s heart and said the only prescription for the day’s events was to turn to the Lord. The sequence here—Daniel’s prayers, his pleading, and his fasting—is significant.

There is a subtle, yet important difference in these three actions.

1. The first word, the Hebrew word for *prayer*, is *tefillah*, and it conveys the notion of judging oneself. In the Hebrew

mind, the ultimate purpose of prayer is transformation. God does not change. We do. *Tefillah* is the method God gave by which individuals can change and thereby establish a new *relationship* with God and a new destiny in life.

2. To “plead,” *tachanun*, is to ask or to move someone to favor by petition. That is, Daniel made a specific request to the Lord for a specific outcome. He could do this because he knew what God wanted. It has been said that praying is presenting a wish list to God, while interceding is knowing the will of God and asking until it comes to pass.

This is what Daniel did. He knew the mind of God and asked for His will to be accomplished.

3. Daniel did all of this in an environment of humility, denying himself through the discipline of fasting. The Hebrew word for “to fast,” *tsuwm* means to cover the mouth. As a prerequisite for turning to the Lord, Daniel understood that when he elevated his spirit above his flesh—the need to pray over the need to eat—he would see greater results.

This is how we are to pray the news and witness God’s blessing in turning to Him. Again, Manchester, KY, is an example of what can happen when people humble themselves and pray, with some even fasting. The Clay County High School principal reported that in the mid-2000s, 90 percent of the high school students used drugs. That’s a staggering number! Then 63 churches joined together, prayed, pleaded, (again, some fasted), and marched in the city.

This was the turning point, and God came to town. Over a period of months, the drug epidemic receded. Meth labs were destroyed, addicts received care and counseling, and lives were put back together. (For an article describing this community transformation, see *Prayer Connect*, vol. 1, no. 1.)

As we pray for Christ to come and heal our land, here are some practical ways we can *turn to Him*:

- Daily confess personal sin and ask

the Lord to bring conviction and transformation to your own heart.

- Subscribe to blogs or prayer ministry alerts. (Intercessors for America’s alerts can be found at *getamericapraying.com* and Capitol Hill Prayer Partners’ updates at *chpponline.blogspot.com*.)
- If your health allows, fast on a regular basis. Invite others to join you.

Many people participate in a First Friday Fast.

3. CONFESS *All Sin*

“We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws” (Dan. 9:5).

Daniel boldly confessed someone else’s
continued on page 31

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PRAYING THROUGH TOUGH TIMES

BY DAVE BUTTS

We live in a hurting world. From the small frustrations of everyday life to major tragedies, we will experience varying degrees of pain and suffering. The question is, "How will we handle these difficulties?"

Those who follow Jesus will follow Him to the cross. Suffering becomes a part of the Christian life that allows us to draw even nearer to our Lord. This triumphant lifestyle in the midst of this world's suffering allows us to draw near to those who are hurting and bring them in prayer to the Savior's healing hand. Jesus tells us very clearly, "In this world you will have trouble." But He doesn't leave it there. He continues on to say, "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Our world is obviously in a time of increasing sorrows and difficulties. What will be our reaction as the people of God? In a self-centered and self-absorbed culture, sufferings and difficulties are to be avoided at all costs. When tough times do impact our culture, the tendency is to run from them, complain about them, or sink into depression. The Church is not immune from that pervasive attitude.

As we approach the end of days, it will be absolutely essential for the Church to embrace wholeheartedly the spiritual discipline of suffering. Tough times are coming! Paul wrote to Timothy and warned, "There will be terrible times in the last days" (2 Tim. 3:1). Jesus said graphically, "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive" (Matt. 24:22).

In spite of clear warnings in Scripture, the modern Church moves ahead with next to no preparation for these tough times in the days to come. It is time for clear teaching on endurance, suffering, and overcoming prayer. A prepared and prayed-up Church will be a triumphant Church, even in the midst of troubled times.

At least part of our problem is a theological one.

Many, perhaps even a majority, of the Church today hold to a pretribulation rapture view of the end times. They believe that before the seven years of the Great Tribulation, the Church will be removed (raptured) to be with the Lord.

Without weighing in on the accuracy of this position, I simply want to point out the potential danger of the Church counting on missing the tribulation, and then perhaps having to face great difficulties without adequate preparation if that view is wrong.

Even if the rapture takes place before the Great Tribulation, there will be (and are, in fact, today) terrible times that the Church must face. We must not allow an escapist mentality to rule us. "Don't worry about tough times, the rapture is coming, and we won't have to deal with it." I fear the Church will not accept its responsibility to pray and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit through the times of crisis that are upon us.

To the many who believe that Christians will miss the last seven years of human history because they will be taken away by the Lord in the rapture, I say, "Praise God!" But just in case that timing is inaccurate, be prepared to move through those days in powerful prayer, depending on the power of God to use us to accomplish His purposes through our intercessions. It is not the wrath of God we will face in those days; we are protected from that. If we are here through those days, it is the wrath of Satan that we will face, though not without the strength of the Lord as our shield.

Prayer

Lord, we long for Your appearing. As the nations and the very earth itself convulses in anticipation, please give us Your lasting peace in the midst of troubling times. Help me to endure any hardship for Your sake. I want to be like You, Lord Jesus, as You endured the cross for the joy set before You. May You be my strength and my shield in every situation.

sin in addition to his own. This is called “identificational confession.” He identified himself with those who had committed trespasses, and he refused to let his own pride or apathy become a roadblock to repentance.

We can do the same. Often, it is not our natural thought to confess someone else’s sin, but God allows us—just as Old Testament priests did—to stand before Him, to shoulder the burden, and to take responsibility for our communities.

Daniel did not confess his people’s shortcomings with arrogance. Instead, he humbly identified with these weaknesses. This kind of humility attracts the presence of God.

One of the first things the pastors did in the Manchester, KY, revival was to confess their sins and repent of being more interested in their own church programs than in the Kingdom of God. This simple confession, years in the making, acted as a crucial fulcrum for revival.

Another president of the United States, James Buchanan (president from 1857 to 1861), acknowledged our nation’s need to turn to God in humility this way: “Let us, then, with deep contrition and penitent sorrow, unite in humbling ourselves before the Most High, in confessing our individual and national sins.”

President James Madison once asked the nation to confess its sins as he called Americans to acknowledge and identify with “the transgressions which might justly provoke the manifestations of His divine displeasures; of seeking His merciful forgiveness, His assistance in the great duties of repentance.”

As we pray for Christ to come to our land, here are some practical ways to pursue this “great duty of repentance” in our nation:

- Seek the Lord to understand community strongholds.
- Walk in a spirit of forgiveness and humility with others.
- Invite others to join in repenting on behalf of the community and the nation.

- Organize a prayer meeting that extends beyond your church.
- Visit the Sentinel Group’s website (glowtorch.org) and learn how prayer is changing many communities.

As we pray for our nation and nations around the world, may we be encouraged to understand the scriptural “fulcrum” created when we *look, turn, and confess*.

Regardless of circumstances or national crises, this three-part fulcrum will bring greater glory to our Lord as we exert a positive influence upon our nation. **PC**



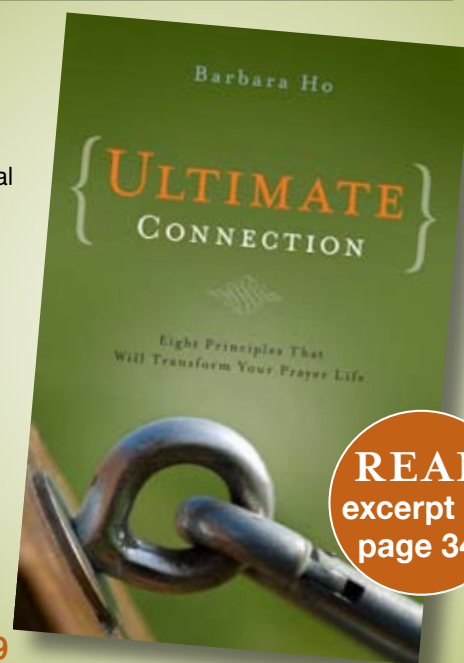
DAVID KUBAL is president of Intercessors for America, a ministry uniting believers in effective prayer and fasting for America (ifapray.org).

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**READ
excerpt on
page 34.**

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A BIBLE STUDY

Prayer in the End of Days

BY SANDRA HIGLEY

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

FOR CENTURIES, UGANDA HAS BEEN AT THE MERCY OF WITCHCRAFT, satanic allegiances, and bloodshed through the likes of Idi Amin and Joseph Kony. In desperation, the Church in Uganda has prayed fervently for the spiritual transformation of their nation.

In 2000, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni dedicated the nation to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Then in October 2012, the president led his nation in a nationally televised service of repentance for the sins of Uganda and again dedicated it to the one, true God. This response by the president is the culmination of years of intercession by nationals who have been led by God to tear down Ugandan spiritual strongholds.

The ultimate destiny of every nation is to declare that the returning Christ Jesus is Lord! What an amazing privilege for the pray-ers involved in Uganda to see with their own eyes the fruit of their focused intercession before Jesus' return. No matter what your thoughts are about where we stand on the eternal timeline, we will eventually greet Jesus as nations who have either rebelled or bowed our knees to Christ. To the latter end we pray.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Bob Bakke reminds us that God expects us to watch carefully for the signs of Jesus' return and says that "dynamics at play today align particularly well with the prophecies of Jesus' coming." Read the following passages and compare them with the stories in today's news. What evidences do you see that the Lord's return may be soon? (Isa. 2:2; Matt. 24; Luke 17:26–27; 1 Thess. 5:1–4; 2 Thess. 2:1–12; 2 Tim. 3:1–9; 2 Peter 3:1–9)

Read Daniel 9:2–3. As we watch, we need to position ourselves to understand what is going on around us. In looking at Daniel, who "understood from Scripture" the signs of the times, David Kubal points to Daniel's example: turning to God in prayer, petition, fasting, and identificational confession. Read and discuss each of these elements as you look at the following Scriptures.

- **Prayer** (*tefillah*—personal transformation): Psalm 27:4,8; Isaiah 45:3; Jeremiah 29:13, 33:3; 2 Corinthians 3:16–18; James 4:8
- **Petition** (*tachanuwn*—pleading for others): Exodus 32:7–14; 1 Samuel 12:23; Job 42:7–9; Ezekiel 22:30; Acts 12:1–19; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1–4; James 5:13–18
- **Fasting** (*tsuwm*—elevating our spirit above our flesh): 1 Samuel 7:5–6; 2 Samuel 12:16; Ezra 8:21–23; Esther 4:15–16; Isaiah 58:2–11; Daniel 10:1–3; Matthew 6:16–18; Mark 9:29 (KJV); Acts 14:23
- **Identificational confession** (humbly identifying yourself with those who have sinned) Leviticus 26:14–17, 40–42; Ezra 9:1–15; Nehemiah 1:1–11; Isaiah 53:12; Daniel 9:2–23

Jacquie Tyre also asks us to take up the call to "watch and pray," looking to see what the Lord will say, what the enemy is up to, and what is going on in the world around us. As we do this, we can be assured of the results. Read the following Scriptures and finish the sentences to show the sequence of events we

can expect as we "watch to see the redemption of the Lord": Amos 3:7—God never does anything until _____

Deuteronomy 29:29—Once God reveals something to us _____

Romans 10:17—When God's message to us has been revealed, it produces _____

Matthew 17:20—Faith produces the power to _____

Isaiah 55:11—When all this is released by God, it _____

"When it [comes] to the end of all things and the return of Christ, heaven [waits] for 'the prayers of all the saints,'" Bakke reminds us (Rev. 8:1–5). Think of it—heaven is waiting on you! This is your destiny—how will you fulfill it?

ACTION STEPS

Prayerful preparation for the Lord's return demands a personal response. Read the following passages about preparing the way for the coming of the Lord and identify specific things you can do in the spiritual realm to follow suit (Ps. 50:23; Isa. 40:2–4, 62:10–12; Mal. 3:1–5; Matt. 3:1–11, 21:1–9; Luke 10:1–16).

Now pick out one thing you've listed and put it at the top of your prayer "to do" list this week. One at a time, add additional items each week.

Even so, come Lord Jesus, come! ☩

SANDRA HIGLEY is the editor of *Real Life Downloaded*, an online Sunday school curriculum supplement for youth produced by David C Cook Publishers. She is a regular contributor to *Prayer Connect*.

Ultimate Connection Praying Out Loud

By Barbara Ho

ate Connection

I WAS SIX MONTHS PREGNANT AND MY WINTER JACKET no longer fit. As my husband Danny and I walked through Sears and Roebuck, we noticed what seemed to be the perfect coat. It was \$69 and with tax it would cost \$75. It might as well have cost \$1,000. Danny was in seminary and we barely had enough money to pay our monthly bills. We left the store empty-handed.

In the car driving home, we lifted up the situation to the Lord. On the way back to our apartment, we stopped to check our mail. To our amazement, there was an envelope in our mailbox. No, it did not have cash in it—that would have been spent on more pressing bills. It contained an anonymous gift certificate to Sears for \$75. We got back in our car and bought my beautiful new coat!

I was 23 years old then—and answers like that to prayer have led me to a life of learning to call out to God. I've seen countless answers to prayer. Some have yet to be answered. But I have never seen God fail me, not once! I may not have been privy to everything He was doing at every exact moment, but in hindsight I must say that in every situation God has always been faithful. He has never deserted me but instead has worked each concern for good. He has always been true to His Word!

I believe in prayer. I'm convinced that prayer does move the hand of God. Yes, it changes who we are, but it also changes our world, sometimes in a powerful way. As much as I believe in prayer, I believe more in Him to whom my prayers are sent. He speaks; we listen. He moves; we obey.

**Crying
Out to Our
God Who
Answers**

spiritual blessing

There's a **spiritual blessing**

that comes with speaking words of faith aloud.

The Power of Crying Out

Throughout the Bible, God often led His people to cry out. Time and time again He led them in battle this way. Think back on when Joshua directed his people, by the power of God, to collapse the walls of Jericho. How did they do this? Joshua 6 tells us that God brought down the walls with a shout.

Have you ever wondered why He had the people shout? Of all things to have them do, why that? Because lifting our voices takes faith. Sometimes just stating facts aloud validates the reality of whatever the situation is. It somehow makes it real. Have you ever deliberately not spoken something out loud in the hope that silence would keep it from being true? I know I have.

The Old Testament is not the only place that speaks of crying out to God. “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission” (Heb. 5:7). If Jesus cried out to God, I believe we should too.

Someone recently asked me if we need to pray out loud or if it’s enough to pray silently. Of course God does hear us when we pray silently, but I encourage people to pray out loud for several reasons.

1. Praying aloud helps make our times with God more interesting.

Our prayer times should be powerful and *enjoyable*! Praying aloud keeps them from falling into the category of the mundane

or purely mental. We should never pray simply because we know we should; we should also pray because we love this time with our Creator God. These times with God should be something we can’t wait to have. God wants to meet us when we pray. Now that’s exciting!

2. Praying aloud helps keep our focus on God.

Let’s face it: We’re human. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been praying and found myself planning my dinner menu, including writing down a list! It’s so easy to become distracted, and before we know it, our time is gone.

When I’m struggling with a drifting mind during my times with the Lord, I’ll often sing my prayers. I make up a tune to words that I want to pray. I do this to get myself over the hump of my distracted thinking. If that doesn’t work, I’ll try reading Scripture aloud. I’ll also spend time listening to worship music. I determine not to allow my undisciplined mind to control my prayer life. I take the control, and if singing my prayers or reading Scripture helps, so be it.

It’s easy to quit praying when things get tough. Consider the night Jesus was betrayed. He left three of His disciples to pray and watch as He poured out His heart before God. What did He find when He returned? They were sleeping. They weren’t able to focus and stay awake for even one hour to pray! I’m sure they did not know it was one of the most important nights of their lives. I wouldn’t be surprised if a bit of praying aloud or even a song or two might have been a big help!

3. Praying aloud professes words of faith.

Romans 10:9 says it’s not enough to believe in your heart Jesus is Lord; we also need to confess with our mouths that God raised Him from the dead. There’s a spiritual blessing that comes with speaking words of faith aloud. I recently heard a preacher say that we need to proclaim a positive future. He went on to quote Psalm 23:6: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (KJV).

I so agree with this. We can be sure the Lord always wants to work things together for good in our lives. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11). His mercies are new every morning.

Like many other good insights, the idea of speaking words of faith aloud has been distorted. I’ve heard it said that we have to be careful what we say because Satan will hear our words and use them against us. Although we do need to be careful of the words we speak, I don’t go that far! That can easily lead to paranoia. Should we then write our messages to one another for protection? Or better yet, should we all join a silent convent? This seems a bit drastic to me. That being said, our words do matter. We have to be careful of the words we speak. They do make a difference in our lives.

This is true when we pray, too. It’s important to verbally declare things, especially things of faith. Not only do we need to hear the profession of faith, but the enemy needs to hear it coming from our mouths. Every time Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, He rebuked him

out loud and declared the truth verbally. He could have just turned his back and ignored him. But He took another route. He lifted His voice aloud.

Why should we be any different? When God has spoken a clear promise to me, I will declare it when I pray, and I will always do this out loud. If God has promised me protection, I will pray, “Thank you, God, for the protection You are giving me, right here, right now!” Am I praying for an unsaved loved one? I may pray, “Thank you, Lord, that You love this person more than I ever could. Thank you that Your hand of mercy is on her life!” Often, just hearing my own words increases my faith. It may sound a bit crazy, but I verbally remind myself (and all angelic and demonic beings) that the victory is mine!

4. Praying aloud encourages others. Have you ever been encouraged hearing someone else verbalize victory over a prayer burden? I have. Just hearing another’s profession of faith will spur me on to keep my eyes on the Lord and to trust Him to bring victory.

For some of us, our personalities come into play. We may be more the quiet type. Maybe we don’t want to feel awkward. Not all of us are wired as David was when he danced before the Lord in (basically) his underwear. Although I don’t believe all of us will be people who will shout out in groups of people, I do believe we all should be willing to lift our voices to Him and leave our comfort zones. Many of us are more than willing to shout at sports events but shun the idea of showing any emotion in prayer and worship. You never know what God has in mind or how you could encourage someone else.

Have you ever asked yourself what stops you from crying out to God, really crying out to Him? I think sometimes it’s not realizing our desperation for the Lord. If you were in a situation where you felt desperate enough, I do believe you’d cry out for help. For example, if

you saw a child running toward a street full of cars, I can venture to say all of us would scream for the safety of the child, either for the child to stop or for someone to intervene. When we pray, do we really see how desperately we need God’s touch in the different situations we’re praying for? Maybe we should ask God to show us this need clearly.

What a joy to lift our voices to God! We should never allow our prayers to become too mental and routine. Again and again Scripture exhorts us to cry out to the Lord. I take that literally. Our desperation for Him often comes through as we lift our hearts, our hands, and our voices up to our Creator God. Lift your voice to Him. The blessings far outweigh the discomforts.

Keep On Praying!

What is it you need? Are you in need of healing? He’s the great physician. Do you feel you’re at the end of your rope, hopeless? His mercies are new every morning. Are you lonely, discouraged, feeling confused? He can meet your needs. No request you could ever bring before God is either too great or too insignificant for His touch. If it matters to you, you can be sure it matters to Him. “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). That includes everything!

The best part of surrendering to God is not what He can do *for* us—but *through* us. There is a world full of hurting people who need the touch of the Savior, and God can use you, through prayer, to make that eternal difference. Do you understand what this means? Your life can count for something beyond your little world. God has plans to use you in a powerful way and your prayer life is pivotal to that.

The Lord has an amazing life in store for us. He will meet us in prayer. His presence is available. Who knows what miracles we will experience in our lives? Not only is it possible to see the dead rise, the lame walk, and the blind see, but it’s happening, all over the world—

maybe not within our Christian circles, but it is happening! Although I have never personally experienced seeing a person rise from the dead as an answer to prayer, I have spoken with missionaries from around the world and American pastors who have.

I don’t know about you, but that excites me. I want to be used by God. I want my life to mean something. My daily prayer is that my life will be a poured-out offering to Him.

Make whatever adjustments you have to in order to put God first. And then expect Him to do the impossible in and through you! **PC**



BARBARA HO is an author and a marriage and premarital counselor. She and her husband Daniel are church planters in Houston, TX. This excerpt is from her

book *Ultimate Connection*, available through prayershop.org.



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Hea

If He Speaks, I Don't Want to Miss Anything!

By Cynthia Hyle Bezek



used to bother me that my praying was all monologue. It's not that I wanted to do all the talking. I genuinely longed to hear from God. In fact, I knew I *needed* to hear from God so that I wasn't simply leaning on my own understanding (Prov. 3:5). But it takes two to tango—or dialogue—right? And God didn't seem to be talking.

I studied the Scriptures to see what might be wrong. But from what I could tell, it seemed like hearing from God was a believer's birthright. Everything I read convinced me all the more that God intended prayer to be a two-way conversation. For example:

- “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jer. 33:3).
- “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).
- “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will

A person with long hair is sitting on a wooden bench in a field of tall, dry grass. They are looking out over a landscape with a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky is a clear, light blue. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

ministry

God's Voice

(Skywriting Optional)

teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26, NASB).

- “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15, NASB).
- “My heart has heard you say, ‘Come and talk with me.’ And my heart responds, ‘Lord, I am coming’” (Ps. 27:8, NLT).

Furthermore, it seemed as if nearly every major character in Scripture (and minor characters as well) heard from God. Sometimes He spoke through angels, sometimes in dreams and visions, sometimes from a burning bush or donkey, sometimes in a voice like thunder, and many times in ways Scripture didn’t spell out. But God talked—and He talked a lot!

I was frustrated. How was I supposed to trust in the Lord and not lean on my own understanding (Prov. 3:5) if every time I talked to God and tried to acknowledge Him in all my ways, I got silence for an answer?

Despite my discouragement, I continued to ask God to speak to me and guide me. But it felt as if I were talking to a stone wall.

Then one day I told a friend an idea I had for something we’d been working on together. I mentioned that I’d been praying about it. Her response stopped me dead in my tracks.

“Cynthia, do you know how often you say, ‘I prayed about it and then I got this great idea’? Do you really think all those ‘great ideas’ are *you*? Or do you think that might actually be God talking to you?”

Well, *there* was a radical idea! What if those “great ideas” of mine really were not mine at all? I felt both elated and

sheepish. My friend was right. God had been speaking to me all along—but I’d missed Him because I didn’t recognize His voice.

Recognizing God’s Everyday Voice

Since that eureka moment quite a few years ago, I’ve discovered that many people think God doesn’t speak to them because, like me, they simply don’t realize what God’s voice sounds like.

What *does* God’s voice sound like? In my experience, at least, God’s voice usually doesn’t sound like actor Charlton Heston. So when I expected God to speak to me in high drama—like He did in *The Ten Commandments* movie, or in some of the Old Testament narratives—I set myself up for missing Him.

I live post-Pentecost. The Holy Spirit indwells me. He and I can quietly converse anytime, anywhere—skywriting optional.

And here’s the thing that shocked me so much: His voice tends to sound very much like my own. When the Holy Spirit speaks to me, most often He simply interjects His thoughts into mine. The difference between His voice and mine isn’t one of tone, tenor, and timbre. He doesn’t use vocal cords, after all. He speaks Spirit to spirit.

Paul explains this concept in 1 Corinthians: “God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God’s deep secrets. No one can know a person’s thoughts except that person’s own spirit, and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit. And we have received God’s Spirit (not the world’s spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us” (2:10–12, NLT).

Understanding these principles of God’s communication methods made everything about hearing from Him easier—but also harder.

It’s easier because His voice was suddenly very accessible. The Holy Spirit’s living in us 24/7 makes communicating with Him even simpler than answering a friend’s phone call. I realized that God had been speaking to me all along—for years, actually. I just hadn’t known it. I knew He had guided and helped me. But I didn’t know that all those good ideas, impressions, reminders, promptings, reassurances, warnings, songs in the night, and words of truth and comfort had all come from Him! It seems so obvious to me now. But honestly, I’d missed it before.

It’s also harder. Because He speaks through our thoughts, we can’t distinguish His voice from our own as easily as we can the friend’s at the other end of the phone. So I’m afraid I have too often and too easily dismissed what He said. If I think they’re my thoughts, it doesn’t matter if I pay attention or not—or so it seems. But if it’s God speaking, then I don’t want to miss anything!

Discerning God’s Everyday Voice

So how *do* we know when it’s Him or when it’s just our own good ideas and wishful thinking? Three traditionally suggested “tests” usually go like this: Does the message line up with Scripture? Does it

give a sense of peace? Do mature believers concur that this word is likely from God?

These tests are good but not conclusive by any means. For example, Scripture tells us both to confront the brother who has offended us, but also that it is good to overlook offenses (Matt. 18:15; Prov. 19:11). So when someone has hurt my feelings, should I confront or overlook? Scripture isn't conclusive. So how do we know if we heard God right?

The peace test isn't entirely reliable either. How many times has God called you out of your comfort zone? Did you feel peaceful? Many times, when I have done something I knew God wanted me to do, I did it with heart racing, knees knocking, and palms sweating. The "peace" wasn't exactly a sense of calm and serenity!

As for the test of godly counsel, ask two godly believers if they think God is directing you to a certain course of action and, provided Scripture does not explicitly prohibit that action, you may get two opposing words of counsel.

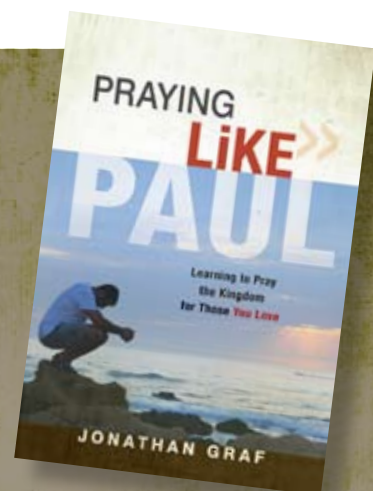
So, although these three tests are good to a point, for me, at least, they don't settle the matter.

Over the years I've discovered some other tests that have helped me. These aren't air tight either, but taken together, they can greatly increase my confidence that I am hearing God accurately.

- *What is the tone of the voice?* When I talk to myself, I'm not always kind. My tone of voice can be nagging, demanding, and critical. And when the enemy talks to me, he is even worse. He condemns, discourages, shames, and threatens. However, God's voice is not like either of those voices. Our Father is compassionate, gracious, and slow-to-anger. His purpose is to lead us into life. Even when addressing sin, He does it in a way that invites and supports. His tone of voice encourages us.
- *Is it higher and wiser?* Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "My thoughts are nothing like

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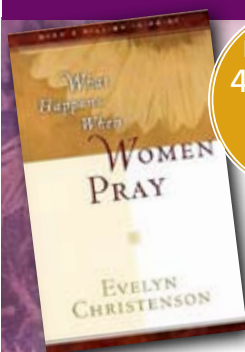
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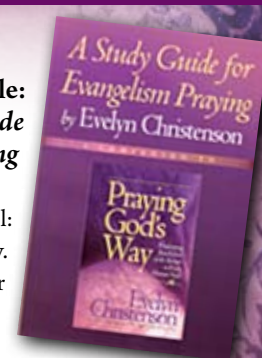


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your thoughts,' says the Lord. 'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts'" (NLT). When God speaks to me, it's always a "high-road" thought. It is *good* in its essence. Furthermore, it is sometimes a creative idea that I probably wouldn't have come up with on my own. A word of caution here, though: Sometimes God's still small voice is saying simply, "Abba, Father." I should never discount those simple words of love and comfort even though they don't seem very out-of-the-box. Those tender words of Fatherly assurance may be some of the highest and wisest words we'll ever hear.

- *Does it reflect wisdom from above?*

James tells us that "the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere" (James 3:17, NLT).

- *Will it stand up in life's storms?*

Jesus' words hold up through severe weather. He said, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" (Matt. 7:24–25). If I put these words into practice, what will be the probable five- or ten-year outcome? Will it bring measurable growth in faith and godly character for me and those potentially affected by these words?

Ultimately, hearing God with confidence is an act of faith, just like every other aspect of the Christian life. There is no foolproof test that guarantees what I have been hearing is 100 percent correct. But I am learning to trust the Good Shepherd, who promises that His sheep hear His voice. My hearing Him accurately is more important to Him than it is to me, so I keep listening and trusting Him to help me hear Him right. And I can say this for sure: Living this way is far better than it was when I leaned on my own understanding! 

CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK

served as managing editor and editor of *Pray!* magazine from 2002 until it ceased publication in 2009. She is author of *Prayer Begins with Relationship* and *Come Away with Me: Pray! Magazine's Guide to Prayer Retreats*, both published by NavPress. Her prayer blog, *Let's Talk*, is available at prayerconnect.net/blogs/lets-talk.

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Blessing Prayer Service Can Remove Barriers

It is common for a church to offer after-service prayer for those who want prayer for a specific need.

Trained intercessors, elders, pastors, or prayer leaders make themselves available at the front of the church for people to come and receive prayer at the end of the worship service.

But it is also common for people to feel intimidated or self-conscious about coming forward to receive prayer. So although everyone in the congregation most likely has a prayer need in his or her life, only a small percentage feel comfortable enough to seek prayer support.

One way to help overcome these barriers is to offer a special “blessing prayer service” once or twice a year. By orchestrating a special time for everyone in your church to take advantage of this prayer

opportunity, many “reluctant” members of your congregation may welcome prayer for themselves and their families.

Steve Hawthorne of WayMakers describes prayers of blessing this way: “Prayers of blessing are usually expressions of God’s intended goodness prayed by ordinary people who pray in the power of having their hearts aligned with God’s heart. Blessings bestow a future. Prayers of blessing are always prayers of hope!”

Pastors can design a special service by preaching on what it means to receive a biblical blessing—and then let the congregation know there will be a special extended time following the service to allow everyone to come as a family to receive a prayer of blessing. Encourage parents at the end of the service to get their

children from child care and bring them back into the worship center. This can prove to be a very touching and powerful family prayer time.

Teams of elders and intercessors can make themselves available at stations throughout the worship center, which will help reduce long lines in the front. Training ahead of time can prepare the leaders to pray simple blessing prayers, using passages of Scripture as the basis of how they pray. This is not a time that families need to share specific needs—but instead they can simply come to be blessed. Most blessing prayers in Scripture deal with three broad areas: *peace*, *increase*, and *God’s presence*.

For additional information on training prayer leaders to conduct a blessing service, email editor@prayerconnect.net.

Written Prayers Become Lifelines

When I met 11-year-old Emily, the two of us bonded so much that she seemed like a granddaughter. I enjoyed watching her grow into a fine young Christian woman.

Emily was a good student—until her senior year of high school. Ten days before graduation, Emily still had an incomplete in one subject. Her mother lamented to me, “Emily wants to save the world, go to college, get married, have babies—and then finish high school.” She pressed a hand on each of my shoulders and pleaded with me: “Pray!”

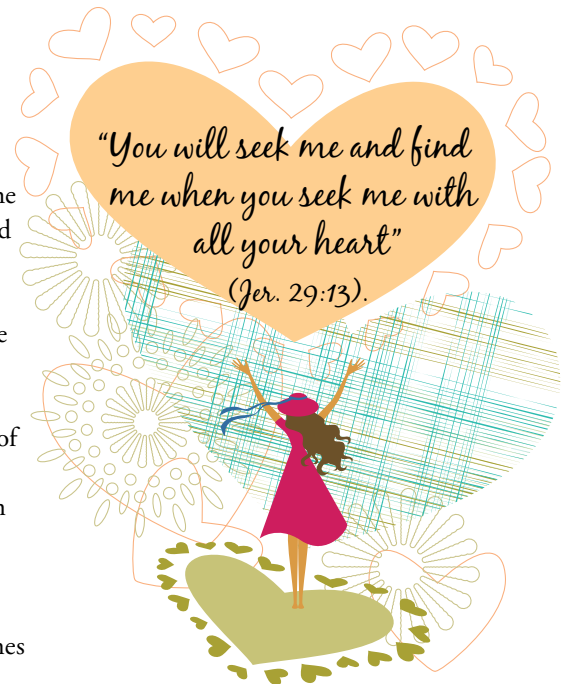
After seeking God for wisdom, I had an idea. I wrote Emily a note and said, “Emily, I wish we could get together to pray in person, but I know that time is of the essence. Instead, I wrote out a prayer from my heart and I

ask you to pray with me.”

I formatted the prayer to fit inside the heart I drew around the words. I referred to the Scripture passage: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). Then I wrote out a prayer for Emily:

Dear God,

I come to You on behalf of one of Your dear children. I love Emily so much, but I know You love her even more. You know the desires of her heart, including her desire to serve You and show Your love to others. Those things are good, but sometimes our zeal for the future gets in the way of tending to the mundane tasks of the present. The future will not unfold without fulfilling the requirements of the present.



Lord, I know the young adult years can be challenging. It’s hard to shape a future without the experience of the past. I pray that You will help

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Emily to put her past, present, and future into perspective. It's easy to look at the big picture to the point of neglecting to put together the pieces of the puzzle that are required to move on.

When Emily was a little girl, she said she had a lot of fear until You came into her life and home. She then had a sense of peace. Lord, I pray that You will restore that sense of peace into Emily's life. Still her mind so she can focus on whatever she needs to do to complete her high school requirements before graduation.

Lord, please thwart Satan's attempts to derail Your plans for her future. Remove any anxiety that is hindering her ability to function. Send the power

of the Holy Spirit to surge through her veins and program her mind with creative ideas that will amaze her and her teachers. Help her prove to the world that she can do all things through the strength You give her.

In Jesus' name, amen.

After Emily graduated, she thanked me for the prayer. "I read it over and over," she said.

If you know of someone in crisis, write out a prayer for him or her. You might put it on a heart-shaped piece of paper or similar design to express your love and commitment to pray. It could become a lifeline and encouragement for someone who needs an extra lift during a difficult time of life.

Whom Do I Call in a Crisis?

In any given city or town, there are most likely people in crisis who would make a phone call to talk to someone—if they knew that a crisis phone line were available. But most churches cannot train enough people to staff a crisis line 24 hours a day.

The Prayer and Crisis Referral Network (PCRN) is a 24/7 prayer and crisis referral line that can come alongside churches and communities to provide this service. Linda Morrison, president of PCRN, explains that this growing network can connect churches and ministries to local radio stations or other forms of advertising that can publicize a central number to call during a crisis. Each church or ministry can find ways to advertise their own prayer line with their own separate number.

Trained PCRN prayer counselors answer the calls and pray immediately with those in need. They can then refer them back to the local church or ministry for follow-up if desired. The prayer line is anonymous, so callers can feel



assured of confidentiality.

Already this ministry serves as the prayer line for radio stations in Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Missouri. They also work with a denominational prayer leader to service some of the churches in his denomination. The compassion ministry Somebody Cares uses PCRN's services in three different cities. Through these partnering ministries, PCRN fields 40,000 calls per year from around the nation and the world.

Partners provide a "love offering" to offset the expenses of the ministry. To find out more about establishing a crisis prayer line partnership, go to prayerand-crisisreferral.org.





On Earth as It Is in Heaven

Aglow International, one of the largest global prayer networks in human history, mobilizes millions of believers to pray via the Internet (aglow.org/prayer), Facebook (facebook.com/aglowinternational), and Twitter (twitter.com/aglowprayer). We encourage you to take time to uncover all the layers of the many prayer initiatives and resources.

As a Kingdom movement, Aglow is committed to seeing God's will done on earth as it is in heaven. Their prayer network is "a focused, heaven-to-earth lightning rod for strategic prayer targeted to significant global issues."

Started in 1967 by a small group of women, Aglow has more than 4,600 groups meeting globally, reaching out to both men and women of every creed and culture. More than 22,000 Aglow leaders minister to families, communities, and nations, reaching an estimated 17 million people each year. Indigenous leaders oversee Aglow groups in nearly 170 nations. Here is a sampling of what you will find on their site:

Prayer for Muslims. Aglow works to unveil the belief structure of Islam while loving the Muslim people by reaching out with news of a God who loves them. There is a powerful free brochure available on the website called *How to Pray for the Muslim People*.

Prayer for Israel. Another intercessory mandate is to recognize the importance of standing in loving support of Israel and the Jewish people, while helping to bring awareness to the Body of Christ concerning God's plans and purposes for those people He calls "the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2:8). A free brochure gives specific, targeted suggestions for praying for Israel.



Weekly Conference Prayer Calls.

Since June 2008 women and men who have a heart to stand with Israel and reach the Jewish and Muslim peoples of the world have joined together on a weekly conference prayer call. This call can only be accessed by registering and logging in to a secure site.

Prayer Initiatives and Resources.

On this site many teachings, brochures, and guides can assist your prayers with resources such as "Eight Keys to Intercession," "Prayer for Guidance in Times of National Crisis," and "How to Pray for Your Nation." Registration allows access to Aglow's current prayer initiatives. You can also find these regular features:

- **Capital Prayer.** If you have a heart for your nation, you are invited to join in this global effort to intercede for godly leaders and for God's purposes to be manifested on earth through righteous governments. Capital Prayer desires to establish a prayer group in every capital city in the world, focusing on praying for the government and its leaders as the Apostle Paul directed in 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "... requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made ... for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."
- **Global Prayer Targets** is published each month by Aglow headquarters.

The purpose is to unite intercessors around the world to pray regarding current global concerns.

Men of Issachar. Men of Issachar are men of prayer who draw on the wisdom of heaven for the creativity and solutions to the dilemmas of the day. Men of Issachar are challenged to pray for world leaders in specifically targeted ways:

- Identify key leaders in your nation and around the world, especially those who influence world government economy.
- Pray they will carry God's heart for people in the nations that their decisions affect.
- Pray for them as they make crucial decisions regarding how to respond to the threats of national security.
- Pray they will align themselves with God's intentions.
- Pray they will have fresh and powerful encounters with God.
- Pray for their protection.

Prayer Blogs. These blogs offer insightful and powerful encouragement and training tools in prayer. They can be found at aglowblogs.org/prayer. **PC**

What's Not to Like?



Here are some prayer pages on Facebook we encourage you to "Like." (Add www.facebook.com before the / on each address.)

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Facing the Fear Factor in Corporate Prayer | By Kaye Johns

The first time I faced praying out loud in a corporate setting, I was caught in a small group in the back of the room. A young minister instructed everyone to “circle up” for prayer, and I sat there with two other people, face-to-face with my fears. Two people prayed out loud in our group—but I was not one of them!

For more than 20 years now I’ve been leading prayer groups, but I still understand what it feels like to fear praying aloud. Through trial and error, I’ve learned some tips that might help you with the groups you lead. You will often encounter fearful people, so here are some suggestions to help them overcome their reluctance.

It’s important to help people pray out loud if they’ve never done it before. If you have a personal story you can tell about yourself when you were first learning to pray out loud, share it. If you talk about your own fears and intimidations, fearful people will see you as an ally. Then ask them to pick a number from one to five to describe their comfort level in praying out loud (one lowest, five highest). Give them a few seconds to think, and then organize them into groups of two or three to talk about what number on that scale best describes their comfort level in praying aloud. You’ll hear friendly chatter and laughter as they learn they are not the only ones who might be uncomfortable or inexperienced.

Give them some rules of thumb to help the prayer time go well. Emphasize the value of one-sentence prayers. I add humor by telling participants that “some people just don’t know where to put the period!” I also like to tell people to pray long prayers at home, short prayers in public.

Instruct people to speak up so others

can hear them. “If you bow your head,” I tell them, “your voice goes into your lap.” Then I demonstrate, drawing a few chuckles and making my point.

To alleviate people’s worries about what they will pray when it’s their turn, I help them understand the importance of praying softly or silently along with the person who is praying. Again, I add a touch of humor by getting people to admit that we all have tried planning our prayers in advance.

Plan ahead and rehearse exactly how you will lead people in prayer. This is very important, both for those who are nervous about praying out loud and for those who will likely take over because they are *too comfortable* praying aloud. Many acronyms work in leading a prayer group into God’s presence, but I often choose something simple, such as PTA—Praise, Thanksgiving, Ask.

Praise—Beginning with praise and worship helps people learn to verbalize prayers of worship. Many understand the concept of worshipping with the choir or worship team, but they have not learned to add times of worship to their prayers at home. To prompt their prayers of worship I often use a set of cards with names of Jesus. (Free downloadable masters on our website can be printed on cardstock or regular paper: prayerpowerministries.com).

Pass out the prayer cards with Jesus’ names, and make sure everyone has one or more. Explain that you will introduce

a time of praise and worship first, and they can praise God by His names on their cards. Ask them to complete this sentence, “Father, we praise You as _____.” Or “Father, we love You because You are _____.”

Thanksgiving—Prayers of thanksgiving are especially easy for people who may be uncomfortable praying aloud. Introduce a time of thanksgiving and ask each of them to thank God for one specific thing by completing the sentence, “Father, I thank You for _____.” Most people can come up with a few things—their families, friends, jobs, evidence of God’s blessing, His Word, salvation—whatever comes to mind.

Ask—Finally, ask God for what is needed. Let them know what your focus for prayer will be for this session (e.g., the church, the Sunday service, the mission team that’s leaving soon, pastoral staff) and go over the topics. Make it clear that you will introduce each topic, and you would like them to pray only about that one topic until you introduce the next one. This again gives parameters, helping those uncomfortable with praying aloud.

Among the many ways to lead corporate prayer, this one will work for those new to the experience. Whatever format you use, stay with it so people will know what to expect. Each time you pray, go over the ground rules and rehearse what you will do. Repetition is important to help people grow comfortable. Don’t rush the process, and count on God to bless it. ☞



KAYE JOHNS founded Prayer Power Ministries with her husband Jim in 1994. Their ministry website prayerpowerministries.com offers practical prayer materials, many as free downloads.



Prayer: The Mightiest Force in the World | By Frank C. Laubach

Today few doubt the power of prayer. Millions of people, however, are haunted with a guilty sense that while we have pursued scientific inquiry in other directions with enormous results [referring to the atomic bomb] we have failed to investigate and use the mighty energies which prayer can release. Especially in this most critical hour in all history, when we need to employ every resource there is, we have overlooked the greater resource of all.

We had better not neglect prayer now! This is not a time for confidence, nor is it a time for despair; it is the time to turn to God. It is the time for humility, penitence, desperate resolve, rectitude, obedience to the will of God in all-out sincerity! The future of the world depends on whether you, and enough others like you, pray widely enough and often enough.

A small group of men are making the plans for world peace, plus a few hundred who can reach their ears. All the rest of us, the hundreds of millions of us, are unable to offer our views. We must be silent, but we need not be helpless. [Even] the humblest of us can pray.

Millions of us ordinary people must pour an incessant white light of prayer upon world leaders day after day. We must lift the heads of leaders toward God so that they hear Him and will obey His will.

Inviting God to Speak

We do not “persuade God to try harder” when we pray; it is our world leaders, our statesmen and church men whom we persuade to try harder. We help God when we pray. When great numbers of us pray for leaders, a mighty invisible force lifts our minds and eyes toward God. His Spirit flows through our prayers to them, and He can speak to them directly.

We can do more for the world with prayer than if we could walk into Whitehall, London, or the Kremlin in Moscow, and tell those men what to do—far more! If they listened to our suggestions, we would probably be, more or less, wrong. But what God tells them, when they listen to Him, must be right. It is infinitely better for world leaders to listen to God than for them to listen to us.

Most of us can never enter the White House and offer advice to the president. Probably he will never have time to read our letters. But we can give what is far more important than advice. We can give him a lift into the presence of God, making him hungry for divine wisdom, which is the grandest thing one man ever does for another. We can visit the White House with prayer *as many times a day* as we think of it, and every such visit makes us a channel between God and the president.

A Critical Moment in History

Prayer is needed as it was never needed in all history. The men planning for a united world have been intensely patriotic *national* leaders, and their viewpoints are inevitably warped by their love of country. They love their own people passionately, and as a rule, have prejudices against other peoples, and so [they] instinctively grasp for national advantages.

A shower of prayers, gentle as snow, must fall upon these leaders in every nation to save them from being jealous, suspicious, greedy, prejudiced, full of resentment and hatred, and from driving bargains with weaker peoples—which will breed new wars.

If we pray for them ten seconds several times each day we shall be more likely to secure results than if we prayed once for half an hour. An excellent practice is to stop for ten seconds while reading the newspaper and pray for any person who is likely to affect world affairs. Suppose ten million people read their newspapers and prayed for every important person and event!

Changing the Course of History

Prayer is likely to be undervalued by all but wise people because it is so silent and secret. We are often deceived into thinking that noise is more important than silence. War sounds far more important than the noiseless growing of a crop of wheat, yet the silent wheat feeds millions, while war destroys them. Nobody but God knows how often prayers have changed the course of history. Many a man who prayed received no credit excepting in heaven.

Secret prayer for others all during the day is an acid test of our unselfishness. The highest form of communion is not asking God for things for ourselves, but letting Him flow down through us, out over the world—in endless benediction. **PC**

FRANK LAUBACH (1884-1970) published *Prayer: The Mightiest Force in the World* in 1946 with the subtitle: “Thoughts for an Atomic Age.” He wrote it after World War II, urging believers to pray for world leaders and peace. He and his wife went to the Philippines as missionaries in 1915, launching a literacy ministry.



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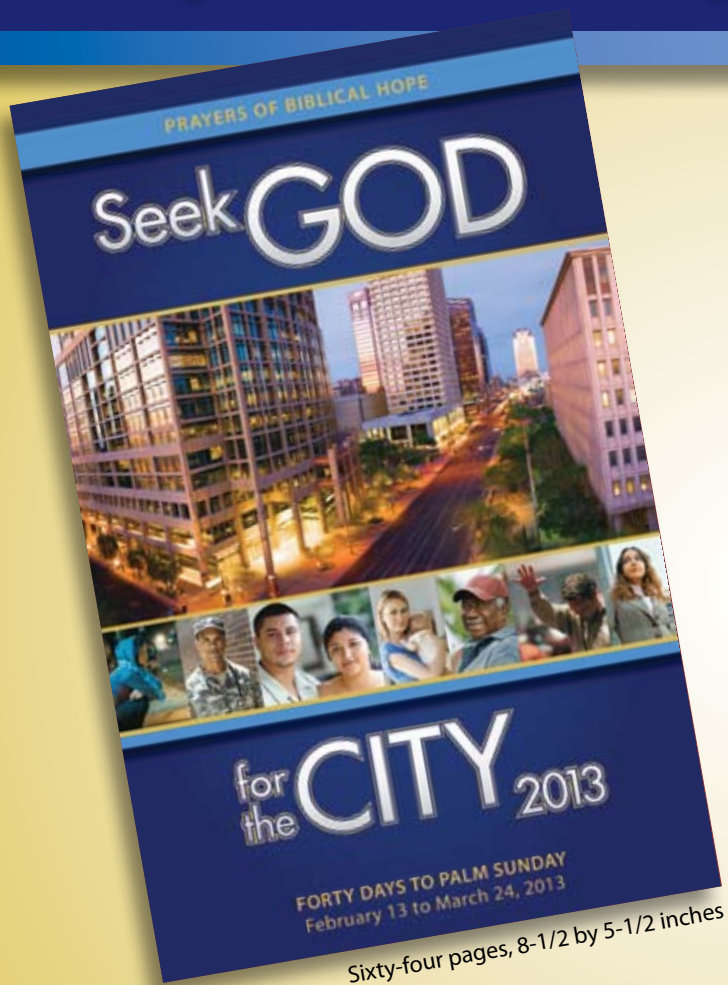
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— F.B. Meyer

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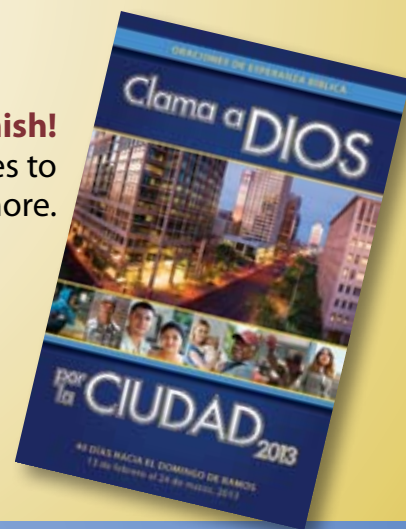
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