

ISSUE THIRTY-THREE, APRIL-JUNE 2018

PRAYERCONNECT

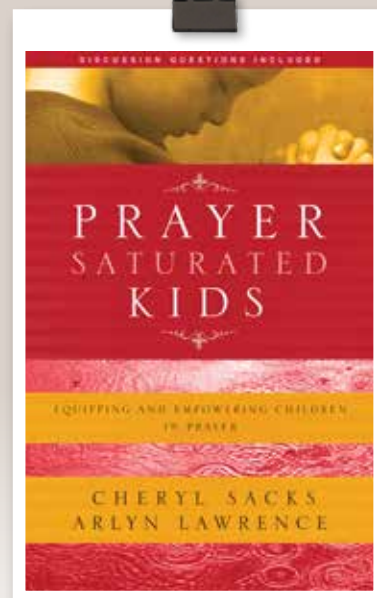
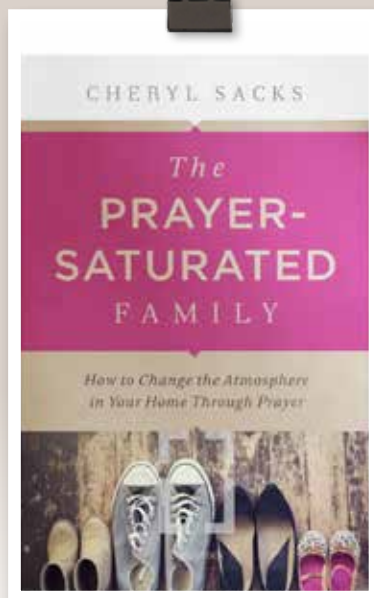
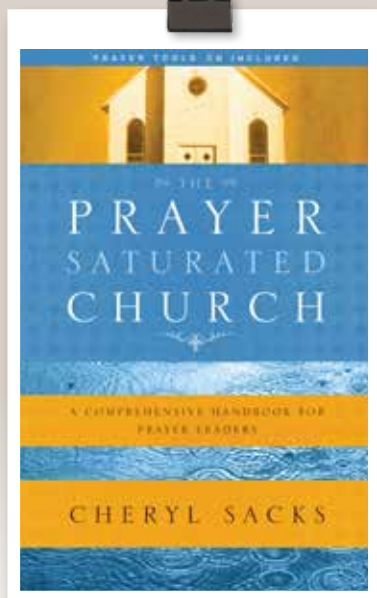
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Article Submissions

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

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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

The prayer movement in our nation has grown exponentially in the past few years, rich with many different expressions. But sometimes it's helpful to step back and recall some of the basic principles of prayer. It's good to have a refresher! "Prayer 101: Back to Basics" highlights the foundations of prayer that have stood the test of time. This issue and other back issues are available at prayershop.org.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Changes to *Prayer Connect*?

You may have heard by now or read the news article on page 8 ("National Day of Prayer Accepts Ministry Acquisition") that *Prayer Connect* is part of the gift that Harvest Prayer Ministries recently gave to the National Day of Prayer Task Force (NDOP). You might be wondering, *How will this affect my subscription and the magazine?*



Your Subscription

First, rest assured that the details of your paid subscription remain the same. Your renewal date doesn't change. The magazine will still be delivered as it has been. Since our websites are also a part of the gift to NDOP, you will renew your subscription and look at back issues of the magazine in the same place.

You will still hear Joanne's cheery voice if you call our phone numbers since Joanne and I are also becoming employees of the National Day of Prayer Task Force.

Look and Content of the Magazine

There will be some changes here, but you will still recognize the magazine you read and love! Our editor Carol Madison and art director Bridget Rennie remain with the magazine. The team that currently plans each issue will also remain intact, but we will add another member from the NDOP staff to this team.

You will notice the NDOP logo or name in a few places where Harvest Prayer Ministries has been: the masthead, in some ads, and on the back cover in the "mail to" window.

Editorially, the magazine will continue to cover the broad gamut of prayer and be a resource that encourages, discipled, inspires, and challenges our readers to grow prayer in their lives and churches. But because the new mission of the NDOP is to raise up "unified, public prayer for America," you will likely see more content—ideas, news, a column on revival and awakening, and articles—that deal with praying for the nation. We will also devote one issue per year (probably January) to the theme of the upcoming National Day of Prayer.

There are no plans to make *Prayer Connect* the "house organ" of the NDOP. The NDOP has been challenged by its board to broaden its ministry into being about more than just one day, but to use its influence to help individuals and churches grow in prayer so the Church can become a strong, unified voice for revival and spiritual awakening.

Prayer Connect Will Grow!

I am so excited by this acquisition! The days we are in dictate that ministries and churches stop ministering in their own "silos" and work together in unity to grow the Kingdom. Our decision to join NDOP is largely due to that belief.

Together we can reach ten times the people we currently do. Besides the great ministry blessing, this will mean greater health and life for *Prayer Connect*!

—Jonathan Graf



Iran Poised for Political, Spiritual Freedom

Iranian-American Pastor Reza Safa, a former radical Muslim and founder of the Farsi-language Christian network TBN Nejat Television, has issued an urgent request for Christians around the world to pray for Iran and its people as political unrest rages in the Muslim-controlled nation.

Safa, whose TBN-affiliate network reaches deep into Iran with the gospel message, notes that the protests mark the second time in less than ten years that the people of Iran have risen up against the nation's oppressive Islamic government, which first gained control with the overthrow of Shah Reza Pahlavi in 1979.

Iran's economy is in shambles, with an unemployment rate that Iran's Interior Ministry estimates may be as high as 60 percent in some areas. Safa says that young people under 30 (who constitute more than half of Iran's population) are

particularly affected, which has helped fuel the anger against the government.

However, he adds, the recent uprisings differ greatly from previous ones. "Today in Iran the gospel is going forward as never before. Through outlets like TBN Nejat Television, the message of salvation through Jesus is impacting literally every major population center across the nation—despite aggressive efforts by Iran's government to stop it," Safa says. "Over the past several years countless thousands of Iranians have come to faith in Christ, so that today the nation of Iran is poised for positive change."

Safa emphasizes the importance of Christians around the world joining together to pray for the people of Iran at this crucial time. "It is important



to think in terms of the Church and salvation of souls when we read [of] historical events and political changes," he explains. "I believe that God is preparing an army of ex-Muslims to evangelize the Islamic world in the days ahead. If this is the time for a political change in Iran, our prayers today need to be that a proper and right government is established in this nation [whose people are] loved by God."

—Adapted from Christian News Wire
(christiannewswire.com).

Western Wall Prayers for Rain Answered

After thousands of Jews prayed for rain at the Western Wall in late December, desperately needed rain fell, raising the level of the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) one centimeter.

Israel has suffered five dry years in a row, causing the worst drought in 40 years. The country received only 45 percent of its multiyear average rainfall for September through November, and only two light rainfalls in December.

The dire situation led to emergency measures, both spiritual and physical. At the behest of Chief Rabbi David Lau, Jews and Christians around the world began adding special prayers for rain. Thousands answered Agriculture Minister

Uri Ariel's call for a special prayer session at the Western Wall.

"I call on the public to participate in this event on the 10th of Tevet," Ariel said when announcing the event. And he said, "Bring umbrellas because together we will tear open the gates of heaven." Those leading the prayers included the chief rabbis of Israel—Rabbi David Lau and Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef—and other prominent rabbis.

God answered those prayers quickly. Israel's Water Authority announced a few



days later that approximately one inch of rain fell overnight in Israel's Golan and Upper Galilee regions. The Kinneret's water level

rose .4 inches, bringing it to four and a half feet from the lower red line and 18 feet from the lake's maximum capacity. In addition, approximately six inches of snow gathered on Mount Hermon's upper slopes, and three inches fell on the mountain's lower slopes.

—Adapted from Breaking Israel News
(breakingisraelnews.com).

Oklahoma Teams Pray with President Trump

In November four University of Oklahoma (Norman, OK) sports teams, following national championship seasons, visited with the 45th President of the United States in the White House Oval Office.

The OU men's golf team presented President Donald Trump a crimson golf bag with his name on it, and the Sooners softball squad, coming off their second straight national title, delivered a personalized glove (complete with presidential seal) before meeting with the president to pray.

The Sooners women talked openly about the story of King David in 2 Samuel 3, and the way his 30 men and three warriors helped him triumph in battle. The women said this story spurred them on to winning the national championship in 2017, their fourth under coach Patty Gasso. The message was simple—if the players all supported each other, as King David and his three warriors did,



they could accomplish anything with God's help.

At the White House, according to OU Associate Athletics Director Kenny Mossman, the Sooners, led by catcher Hannah Sparks, asked to pray with Trump, and he joined them in prayer.

The Oklahoma men's and women's gymnastics teams also visited the White House. The men have won three-straight national titles and the women won back-to-back titles—three in the last four years.

—Adapted from The Norman Transcript (normantranscript.com).

Texas School Wins Prayer Victory

The Supreme Court has affirmed a victory for prayer at school board meetings in Texas. The justices declined to hear an appeal of a 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling, which upheld the right of student-led prayers before board meetings of the Birdville Independent School District. The district allows students to make statements before the meetings and most offer a prayer.

The Birdville school's superintendent, Darrell Brown, told the *Star-Telegram* that the district has been “vindicated” in its legal fight to support student-led prayers at board meetings.

“The speeches given by students at

the board meetings are their own—not something they are told to say,” Brown said in a statement. “Occasionally, students will open the meeting with a prayer. We believe the students have the right to express themselves in this manner if they choose.”

The 5th Circuit's panel of three judges determined earlier this year that a lower court acted correctly when it dismissed a lawsuit brought by a Birdville High School graduate and by the American Humanist Association. That former student said the prayers made him feel “violated and uncomfortable.”

—Updated from CBN News (cbn.com).

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National Day of Prayer Accepts Ministry Acquisition

In a Kingdom move to increase its reach and relationship with pastors, prayer leaders, and churches, as well as broaden the scope of prayer beyond a single day, the National Day of Prayer Task Force (NDOP) announces it has accepted a gift of the resource division of Harvest Prayer Ministries.

The acquisition includes PrayerShop Publishing, *Prayer Connect* magazine, and the Church Prayer Leaders Network (CPLN) and all the contacts, resources, inventory, content, and websites associated with these ministries.

"We are thrilled with this opportunity to see the ministry of the National Day

of Prayer Task Force expanded in every way," says Dr. Ronnie Floyd, NDOP president. "Our vision is to develop leaders, serve churches and denominations, and do all we can to create resources that will equip and help mobilize people to pray."

The NDOP Task Force plans to use the CPLN to equip its nearly 14,000 volunteers. *Prayer Connect* magazine provides the NDOP with a resource that can be the voice of the prayer movement in the United States. PrayerShop Publishing will produce and publish books and prayer guides. "As we see the desperate need in our nation for revival and

spiritual awakening," explains David Butts, president of Harvest Prayer Ministries, "we as little individual ministries have got to stop protecting our own turfs and do the Kingdom thing. We believe this strong discipleship-oriented resource division that reaches churches, pastors, and prayer leaders can both bless the NDOP by expanding its reach and can explode with broader ministry because of the larger reach of the National Day of Prayer."

Officially, the acquisition occurred March 1, but the two ministries will complete the transition after the 2018 National Day of Prayer on May 3.

Christian High School in Prayer Legal Battle

A Florida-based Christian high school is appealing a district court decision that forbade it from having a prayer broadcasted before its football team's 2015 championship game. Cambridge Christian School of Tampa and University Christian School of Jacksonville were denied the right to offer a prayer over the loudspeaker when they faced each other at the Citrus Bowl stadium in Orlando.

The First Liberty Institute filed a brief on behalf of Cambridge (whom they are representing) before the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. In the introduction of the brief, First Liberty argued that the Florida State High School Athletic Association's (FHSAA) denial of the schools' request for a loudspeaker prayer was a matter of "view-point discrimination."

FHSAA head Roger Dearing told the

schools that the Citrus Bowl "is a public facility, predominantly paid for with public tax dollars, [making] the facility 'off limits' under federal guidelines and precedent court cases."

—Adapted from The Christian Post (christianpost.com).

South Africans Pray to Reconcile

In the South African Parliament, a momentous December prayer meeting will likely affect generations to come. The prayer focused on reconciliation—white people asking forgiveness from blacks, and blacks confessing their sins against the white community in recent years.

Many were reportedly brought to tears during an extended time of prayer and confession, after which farmer-evangelist

Angus Buchan addressed Members of the Parliament (MP) and other dignitaries about the need for faith in South Africa. The meeting took place in the Parliament's former main chamber, where many discriminatory laws were passed.

In an April 2017 gathering, 1.7 million Christians converged on a farmer's field to pray in repentance for revival in South Africa.

—Adapted from Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il).

Prayer Calendar

Global 4/14 Day of Prayer
for Children
Saturday, April 14
global414day.com

National Day of Prayer
Thursday, May 3
nationaldayofprayer.org

30 Days of Prayer for Muslim World
May 15-June 14
30daysprayer.com

Weekend of Prayer for
Children at Risk
June 2-3
viva.org/pray

PRAYER

AND THE Holy Spirit



Every month I meet with a group of prayer leaders who share a similar responsibility of leading their church's prayer ministries. Some are volunteers. Some are staff. But all have the same intercessor's heart and a desire to see the prayer movement flourish in their churches.

Each time we meet, I ask the same question: "What is the Spirit saying to the Church?" I know these are leaders who pray, seek God, and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. I'm always curious about what they are sensing, so we spend time in prayer and invite the Holy Spirit to direct our group.

It is no surprise that often a common theme will emerge—a sure sign of the presence and prompting of the Spirit.

A couple of weeks before the end of 2017, the Holy Spirit once again took over our conversation. One person started by saying she was trying to establish a prayer room in what is now designated the "green room" next to the worship center. She was encouraging a strategic name change to give that room a different focus.

Another observed that the prayer room in his church was often used by musicians as a storage area for their instrument cases on a Sunday morning. He was stirred to reestablish consistent use of that space for prayer.

A prayer leader from another church had just noticed how dusty their prayer room had become, indicating lack of use. She resolved to revive it.

Still another bemoaned the fact that their beautiful prayer room is often locked—even on Sundays—for security reasons because of their church size.

I inserted a bit of hope because my church had recently done some "refreshing" of the prayer room. We replaced badly worn furniture, drywalled around ugly pipes, and added a fresh coat of paint. We sensed a new chapter in our prayer ministry had begun.

As our group of prayer leaders continued talking, we quickly realized that the Spirit was speaking to us! Together, we sensed His instruction to be diligent in facilitating a renewed vision for prayer in our churches, and that He was preparing to accelerate the prayer movement in 2018.

No one in our group wondered if all our experiences were just coincidental!

IT'S SUPERNATURAL

When you believe in partnership with the Spirit, you want your prayers to be divinely authored and supernaturally breathed. None of us wants to operate in a vacuum with only our own thoughts and ideas. We want to be directed by

God. And that happens through the supernatural leading of the Holy Spirit. But making space for the Spirit must be intentional.

In this issue, Kay Horner discusses common indicators of Spirit-empowered prayer. She describes ways a Spirit-led life is anything but typical and ordinary. Leighann McCoy tackles various interpretations of the term *pray in the Spirit*, and promotes a common-ground understanding of allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers. Doug Small delves into that reassuring passage of Romans 8:26–27 and explains ways the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes on our behalf—even with groans!

All this reinforces my belief that God is preparing to accelerate the prayer movement this year, and He wants us to facilitate this new vision where we worship. These days on Sunday mornings you can find me in our church's refurbished prayer room, feeling refreshed, praying with friends, and eager for the Spirit to supernaturally partner with us.

Get out a dust cloth. Rearrange some furniture. Allow the Spirit to breathe new life into your prayer room or closet.

What is the Spirit saying to *you*? Listen well.

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.



Indicators of the Spirit at Work in

BY KAY HORNER

We began our weekly prayer meeting one evening with a time of fellowship and laughter before we prayed together. Everyone seemed unusually jovial *until* we had prayed for a while.

We suddenly began to sense a heaviness in our hearts, accompanied by an urgency for repentance. Eager to listen and follow the leading of the Spirit together, we began to repent for various things, such as inequities in race, gender, culture, and nationality, as well as other injustices within the Church and nation. We experienced an unprecedented awareness of the way things that break *our* hearts must wound the heart of God even more deeply.

The strong shift in the atmosphere had to have been Spirit-led. Essentially, God's Spirit was working through our prayers to move us from praying

about our agendas to praying in alignment with His will.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED SUPPLICATION

How the Father's heart must be grieved by the biases and opposition to the Christian faith in society today. We live in a world that wants to condemn or demean Christianity, ban or bind our influence, and literally destroy us if it could. However, we do not need to despair as those who have no hope. Knowing we are heirs of God's abundant promises by faith, we can pray for the fulfillment of these promises. And we can join Christ in His mission to love and evangelize those who oppose the gospel.

When prophesying the consequences for all

WELCOME

Holy Spirit



Life and Mission

nations that come against God's people, Zechariah said the Lord would focus the Jewish people's attention on the crucified Messiah—the One they vehemently rejected. God would bring true, godly sorrow that would lead them to repentance.

The Lord, speaking through the prophet, specifically said, "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son" (Zech. 12:10).

This verse describes the Holy Spirit's activity in *our* lives, as well. It also defines who He is—the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29) and intercession or supplication (Rom. 8:26–27).

Another prophet, Joel, prophesied about this abundant, refreshing outpouring of God's Spirit, like water poured on thirsty ground. (See Joel 2:28–32.) And Peter confirmed it on the day of Pentecost: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: *'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people'*" (Acts 2:16–17, italics added).

The Lord has poured out His "Spirit of grace and supplication," so how should our lives reflect Him today? How is He the power behind our mission? Perhaps, one of the best ways to answer those questions is to look at the early Church in the Book of Acts after the initial outpouring occurred.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED PRACTICES

We may tend to isolate ourselves from the New Testament Church, feeling as though they lived in a different world. It's true they didn't have Facebook or Instagram to openly display their lives. Neither did they have our technology for virtual prayer meetings, shared requests, or inspirational gospel messages online.

However, Luke gives a bird's-eye view of how they maintained fellowship and consistent prayer lives even in the face of

persecution. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). The original language indicates a continual devotion and commitment to these practices.

In their book *Leaders that Last*, Gary D. Kinnaman and Alfred H. Ells examine those four characteristics¹ (see my application in italics):

- **They kept devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching or truth.**

Whether we are praying individually or in a group, devoting ourselves to the Word of God is foundational for confirming the ministry of the Spirit in prayer. Here's a clear indicator that the Spirit is at work: when inspiration or insights shared align with the principles of God's Word.

- **They kept devoting themselves to fellowship . . .** that is, sharing life together, having everything in common. They were committed to deep interpersonal, interdependent relationships.

In a loving, safe atmosphere, people can humbly share what they are sensing from the Holy Spirit and respond to His convicting power that brings repentance and restoration.

- **They kept devoting themselves to the breaking of bread,** that is, they met from house to house and ate with one another. In the context of Middle Eastern life, to eat with someone was to accept that person fully into one's life and family. To eat together was more than just sharing a meal. It had overtones of a covenantal act. Moreover . . . many New Testament scholars believe, that the early Christians shared the Lord's Table with one another at those meals.

More than ritual, the Eucharist [communion] conveys the meaning of thanksgiving and gratitude. One of the clearest indicators that the Spirit has been at work is when the "covenanted" body of Christ is filled

with profound thanksgiving for what they have seen Him accomplish.

- **They kept devoting themselves to prayer.** They invited the presence, blessing, guidance, and grace of God into every activity.

They helped nurture one another's faith. They experienced a greater dimension of guidance and grace through the Holy Spirit's working in and among them. The early Church knew they could not divorce the work of the Spirit from united, prevailing prayer.

Notice, they kept devoting *themselves* to these aspects of Spirit-led living. No authority or leader forced them. They chose to continue to grow in grace and cultivate a deeper knowledge of this newly received power of the Spirit.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LIFE AND MISSION

Have you ever heard of "oatmeal days"? Oatmeal days are usual days—the typical or normal expected of somebody or something. Routine. Yet what's usual for me is not necessarily usual for you. A typical day for a New York businessman differs greatly from a day in the life of an Alaskan Eskimo.

How does Scripture define the usual or typical life for Spirit-led believers? Some of Christ's parting words to His disciples describe what would become typical for them:

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mark 16:15–18).

Later, Peter highlighted what life should be like for those serving God in the last days: “The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. . . . As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:7, 10, NASB).

If anyone could testify of the multifaceted grace and mercy of God, it was Peter. The same one who denied Christ became the bold disciple who, on the day of Pentecost, proclaimed this new dimension of Spirit-empowered living. He not only talked about the mysteries of God, he faithfully demonstrated this new lifestyle.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAY

In the Acts 3 narrative, soon after his powerful Pentecost sermon, we see Peter and John continuing their Jewish custom of prayer in the temple. An unnamed “lame man” was being carried to his usual place among other crippled beggars near the temple entrance. Lame from his mother’s womb, he had probably been a temple beggar all his life.

- Could he have been sitting near the temple when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to be dedicated?
- Was he there when Jesus, at the age of 12, was discussing the Scriptures and confounding the rabbis with His wisdom? Or later when He drove out the money changers?
- Had he heard the accounts of his fellow beggars—the blind and the lame—Jesus healed in the temple? (See Matt. 21:14.)
- Is it possible this lame man had tried to be healed by Jesus during one of the Lord’s many visits to the temple?
- How many times had Peter and John passed this same man seated at his usual gate, making his usual plea for alms?

However, this was no “oatmeal day” for Peter and John. Something unusual

had transpired in their lives since those days when they thought all hope had been crucified on Calvary. The same Peter who had fearfully denied Christ now boldly proclaimed Him. Here’s the difference:

- Peter and John had an encounter with the resurrected Christ.
- They spent time praying and fasting in an upper room until they were

filled with the promised Holy Spirit.

- They were a part of a unified community of believers who consistently spent time in fellowship, in the study of the apostles’ teaching, in breaking bread, and in prayer together.
- They left their usual day-to-day existence for a power-packed life of miracles and supernatural signs.

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Out of this environment steps Peter, who tells the lame man, in the name of Jesus the Nazarene, to rise up and walk. Peter then grabs the man's right hand and raises him to his feet! Peter's words are no magical incantation or Christian cliché. He speaks in the authority, the right, and the might represented in this name above all names!

On a usual day, the lame man encounters the unusual power of a miracle-working God. What happens next? The man's feet and ankles immediately become strong. He enters the temple courts, "walking and leaping and praising God" (v. 8). Imagine the experience of getting to go into the temple for the first time in his life. We would be doing some jumping,

shouting, dancing, and praising God, too!

A crowd gathers in amazement, and Peter sees this as an opportunity to preach about the name and power of Jesus (Acts 3:13–16). In Acts 4, we learn that "many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand" (v. 4). That doesn't include the women and children.

Imagine how a sovereign God had been preparing for this harvest of souls for years! He chose this unusual day to work through His Spirit-empowered followers to accomplish His agenda—to set at liberty those who were bound.

THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED MEETS THE UNEXPECTED

We are living in a crucial time. God wants us to position ourselves for the wind of the Spirit to blow into our lives. He wants to cleanse and empower us to speak forth the truth in love to our families, neighbors, cities, and world. God is looking for those whose minds are set on living Spirit-empowered lives as a witness to a broken, hurting world.

What God wants to birth in us may be new and unexpected. The psalmist David wrote, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved" (Ps. 62:5–6, KJV).

When we consistently walk in a loving, prayer-filled, obedient relationship with Him, the Holy Spirit can come upon us and overshadow us. And, even more exciting, He can literally reside in us and work through us. **PC**

¹ Gary D. Kinnaman and Alfred H. Ells, *Leaders That Last: How Covenant Friendships Can Help Pastors Thrive* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 68.



KAY HORNER is the executive director of Awakening America Alliance (awakeningamerica.us), which provides a broad umbrella under which the body of Christ can unite in seeking contemporary spiritual awakening.

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A weakened Church seems to make little impact on society.**

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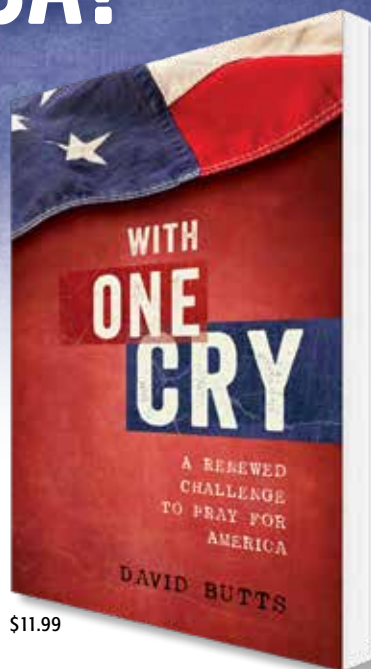
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MOBILIZING UNIFIED PUBLIC PRAYER FOR AMERICA

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Therefore, I am asking you to become part of our task force for the National Day of Prayer and help us mobilize millions of people to pray for America on Thursday, May 3, 2018. There are three ways you can join us:

- Participate in an existing observance of the National Day of Prayer in your community.
- Create a new observance in your community that will mobilize more people to pray for unity in America.
- Begin to pray now for Thursday, May 3.

Engage with us, pray with us, and get involved!
Save Thursday, May 3, 2018, on your calendar for the National Day of Prayer.

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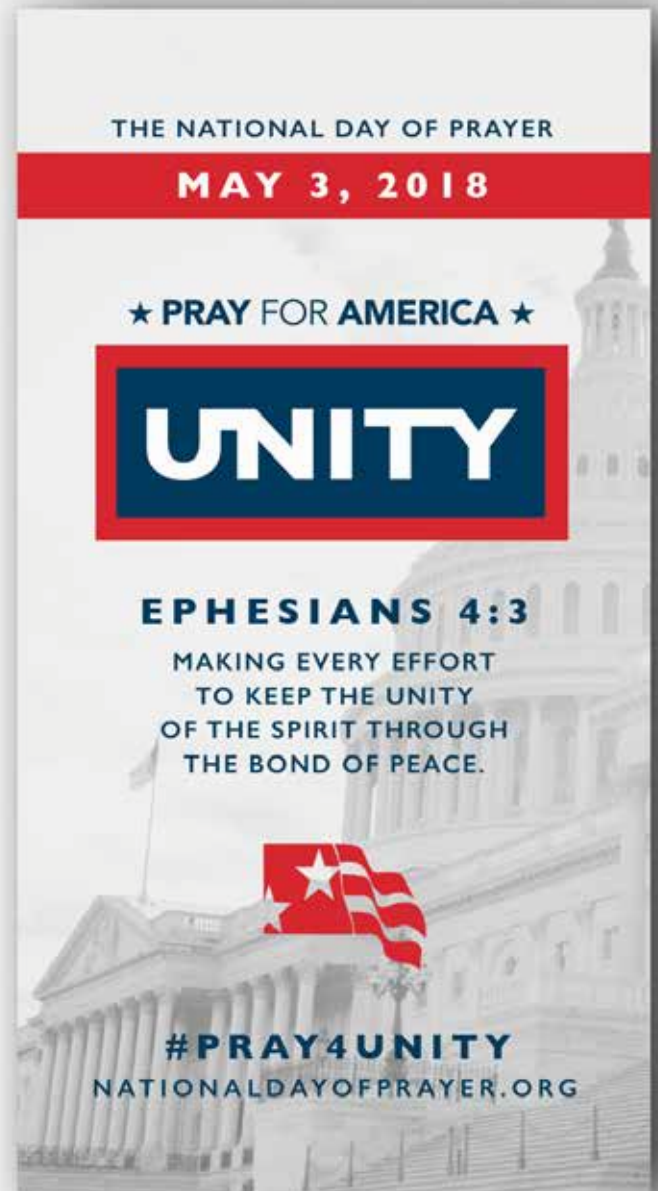
This year, we also celebrate the 30th anniversary of Congress and President Ronald Reagan amending the 1952 law, and establishing the National Day of Prayer as *The First Thursday of May*.

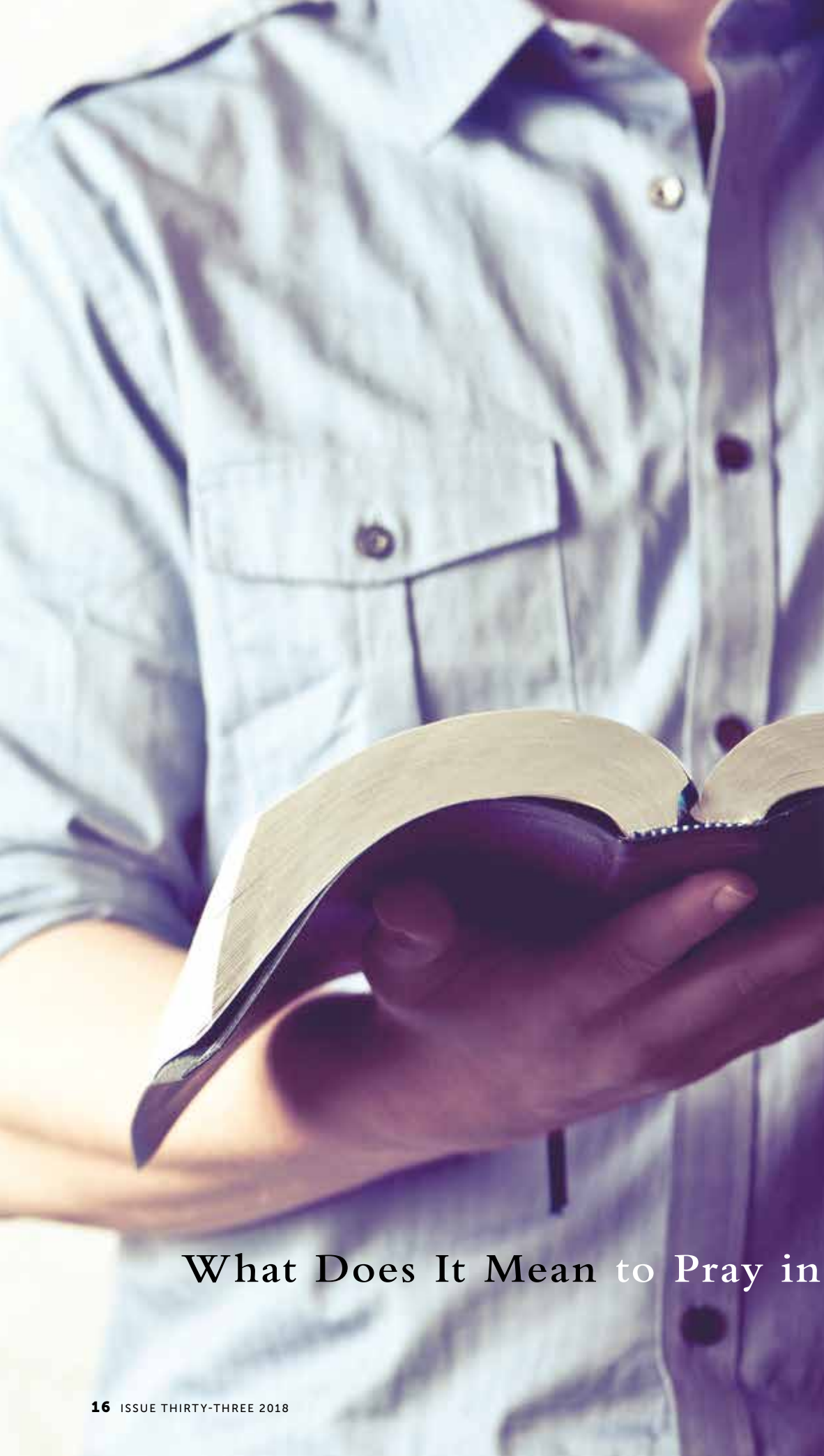
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Now is the Time to Lead and Pray for America,

Dr. Ronnie Floyd

President, National Day of Prayer Task Force
Senior Pastor, Cross Church





EXE

What Does It Mean to Pray in the Spirit?

BY LEIGHANN MCCOY

Prayer is perhaps the most misunderstood and least exercised privilege of the believer and the Church. I'm convinced the devil works extra hard to keep things this way because prayer is the one thing we do that terrifies him most.

When we pray, God's power flows from heaven to earth. And when God's power flows, God's purposes prevail. His Kingdom advances and Satan's schemes to stop Him are wrecked. This is the kind of prayer that causes demons to scatter. Deuteronomy 28:7 illustrates this warfare principle: "The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven."

Paul encouraged the Ephesians to pray the kind of prayer that is alert to the opposition believers experience in this world: "*Pray in the Spirit* on all

occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Eph. 6:18, italics added).


Paul reveals a key to Kingdom-praying with the phrase, *pray in the Spirit*. Jude also exhorted us to pray in the Spirit: "You, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and *praying in the Holy Spirit*, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life" (Jude 20–21, italics added).

What did Paul and Jude mean when they wrote this? Let's look at various interpretations.

ON THE ONE HAND

Some Pentecostals use the term, *pray in the Spirit*, to mean prayer released through the spiritual "gift of tongues." To pray in the Spirit is to yield complete

EXERCISING PRAYER



that Scatters Demons

control of your physical tongue and vocal chords to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to express His heart through your voice. Those who experience “prayer in the Spirit” report that this is a powerful and delightful way to pray.

As scriptural basis, they cite Romans 8:26–27: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.”

In other words, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans that are too deep for words, thus praying from the inside of us, here on earth, to the inside of God sitting on His throne in heaven. Those with this view call this exercising their “prayer language.”

Even though the pray-er doesn’t

know what is being said, the experience itself is supernatural, and the accompanying peace that praying in the Spirit releases assures the pray-er that whatever was said was “spot on.”

What a marvelous exchange this must be!

ON THE OTHER HAND

Other evangelicals believe that prayer in the Spirit is prayer inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit without His taking over their tongues and vocal chords in an unknown language. Prayer in the Spirit, then, is the experience of the Holy Spirit’s power directing their thoughts so that they pray with supernatural discernment and perspective.

Those with this view believe that to pray in the Spirit is to pray, knowing what is being said, and then being encouraged by that understanding. As biblical basis, they cite 1 Corinthians 14:13–14: “For

this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”

Paul indicated that praying in an unknown tongue encourages the Spirit but leaves his mind “unfruitful.” More “conservative” evangelical pray-ers testify to experiences in prayer that are both powerful and enlightening as they come out of their prayer closets knowing exactly the conversation held with the Lord.

Both groups—Pentecostals, who enjoy their prayer language, and evangelicals, who enjoy their conversations with the Lord—have powerful prayer lives. Because of this, I pose the question, “Does it really matter which interpretation you follow?”

I find my heart resonating with Paul’s words when he continued, “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing

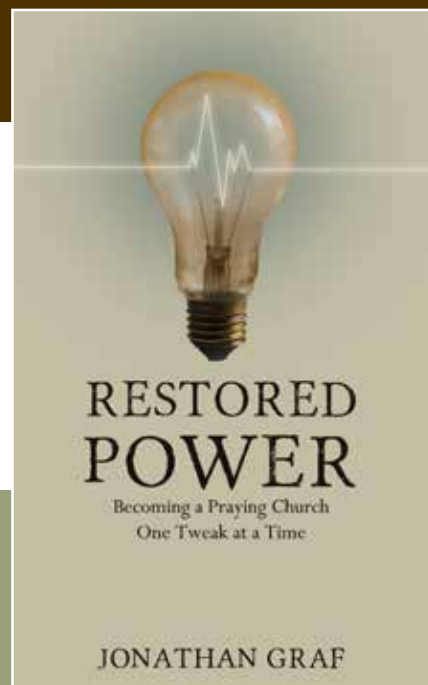
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with my understanding” (v. 15).

The important thing is to pray! And I believe that even our interest in prayer indicates that the Spirit is leading us—and therefore our prayers themselves qualify as being “in the Spirit.” Let me explain.

THE SPIRIT’S ROLE IN PRAYER

In John 14 Jesus introduced us to the third Person of our triune God. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God that has come to stay with us until this world passes away. We are united with God the Father and Christ Jesus His Son in heaven. The Holy Spirit keeps us connected to God while we are living our earthly lives. (Read John 14 to get a better understanding of the Holy Spirit and His role within us today.)

Because prayer is the lifeline of our relationship with God, to “pray in the Spirit” is to experience the power of the

Holy Spirit as He motivates us and guides our prayers. The following describes in more detail how the Spirit works.

1. The Spirit is our prayer motivator.

In the natural (as opposed to the supernatural), we are not compelled to pray. Without a Spirit-infused connection with God, there’s no need to pray. Our flesh does not naturally seek intimacy with God.

Unfortunately, many of us are unaware of the difference our God-connection makes in our everyday lives. Familiar phrases indicate our predicament of living in the natural as we strive to experience the supernatural: “You’re on your own” or “Make the most of it.”

In their natural limitations, unbelievers “make do.” If they’re smart, they learn from their mistakes and fail forward. They apply lessons learned so they can make wiser decisions in the future.

But those of us who are “in Christ,” have the Spirit of God living in us

(Col. 2:9–10). And the Spirit of the living God reminds us that we are never on our own (Phil. 4:13). Our resources are unlimited (Phil. 4:19). So we never have to “make the most of it” because God has given us His Word to help us navigate life. And we find ourselves full of hope even in the darkest valleys.

The Spirit reminds us that God has promised to respond when we pray. The Spirit Himself led each person reading these words right now to do just that. The Person of God, dwelling inside, stirred that desire to connect with God through prayer. It’s the Spirit who motivates us to pray.

2. The Spirit is our prayer guide.

I love the way Paul explained the part the Holy Spirit plays when we pray. From Romans 8:26–27 we also see some incredible things the Holy Spirit does on our behalf:

- The Spirit helps us in our weakness.



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- The Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know what we ought to pray.
- The Spirit feels for us so deeply that words cannot contain the depth of His love.
- The Spirit searches our hearts, and He also knows the mind of God. So the Spirit makes a divine connection with our human hearts and God's perfect will.

The longer I walk with the Lord, the more aware I am of the vast difference between His perspective and mine. The Holy Spirit, if we let Him, will guide our thoughts as we pray. He takes the reins in prayer when we surrender our minds and hearts to Him.

When we pray, we can first confess what we *do* know: that God is Lord, He has supreme power in the universe, and He knows all things and does all things well. And then we can confess what we *don't* know. It's pointless to waste our emotional energy and time in prayer telling God how to do things!

When we read the Bible and allow the Spirit to guide our prayers, new thoughts will come, new insights will be revealed, and new prayers will begin to form in our hearts.

This is praying in the Spirit.

AS EASY AS BREATHING

Because I've had cancer, I'm familiar with the CT scan. When you have a CT scan, you lie down on a shelf and then ride in and out of a circle of cameras that scan you internally. As you ride through the circle, the machine speaks aloud (in words you can understand):

"Breathe in."

"Hold your breath."

And just when you begin wondering if you might pass out, the machine says, "Breathe."

Prayer in the Spirit is like spiritual breathing. When Paul and Jude encouraged believers to pray in the Spirit, they were urging a heightened awareness of the Spirit's nudge to pray and a sensitivity to

the Spirit's direction in their prayers.

In other words, they're telling us to quiet ourselves when we enter our prayer closets and let the Spirit of God tell us when to breathe. Here are some ways to do that:

- Breathe in. Focus your thoughts on the majesty, power, love, and wonder of God.
- Hold your breath. Ponder those thoughts about God's character. Let them adjust your perspective on whatever concerns you have.
- Then breathe out. Exhale your praise and worship to your Mighty God.

Remember that the best way to know the heart and mind of God is by reading His Word.

- Breathe in His heart and mind revealed through Scripture.
- Exhale your requests as you allow the Word of God to align your petitions with His best.
- Breathe in the assurance that God hears you when you pray.
- Hold your breath by letting the Spirit immerse you in peace.
- Finally, breathe again, knowing that whatever you've prayed is now secure in His hands.

Whether you breathe in a language with words you understand or a language indiscernible to your human ears, the most important thing is to yield your limited understanding to God's magnificent knowledge. Submit your lesser agenda to His much better ideas.

Pray in the Spirit and watch those demons scatter. **PC**

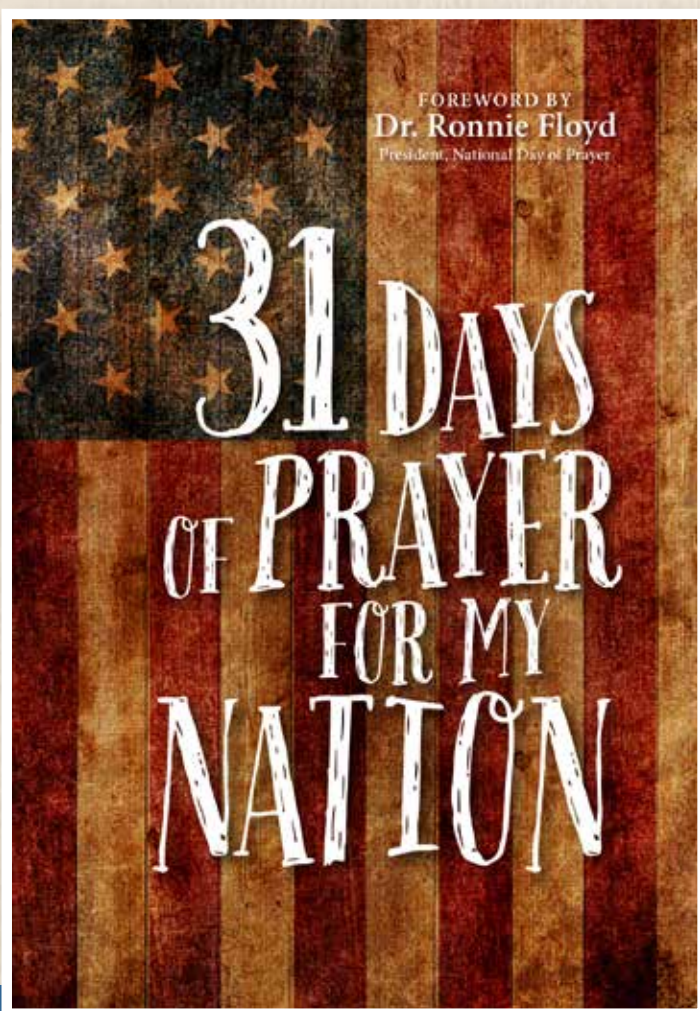


LEIGHANN MCCOY is the prayer minister at Thompson Station Church in Thompson Station, TN. She and her husband Tom (senior pastor) have led their congregation to be prayer-powered and Spirit-led. Her recent books are *Spiritual Warfare for Your Family* (Bethany House) and *Taking Responsibility for the Choices We Make* (Dayspring). Her website is leighannmccoy.com.

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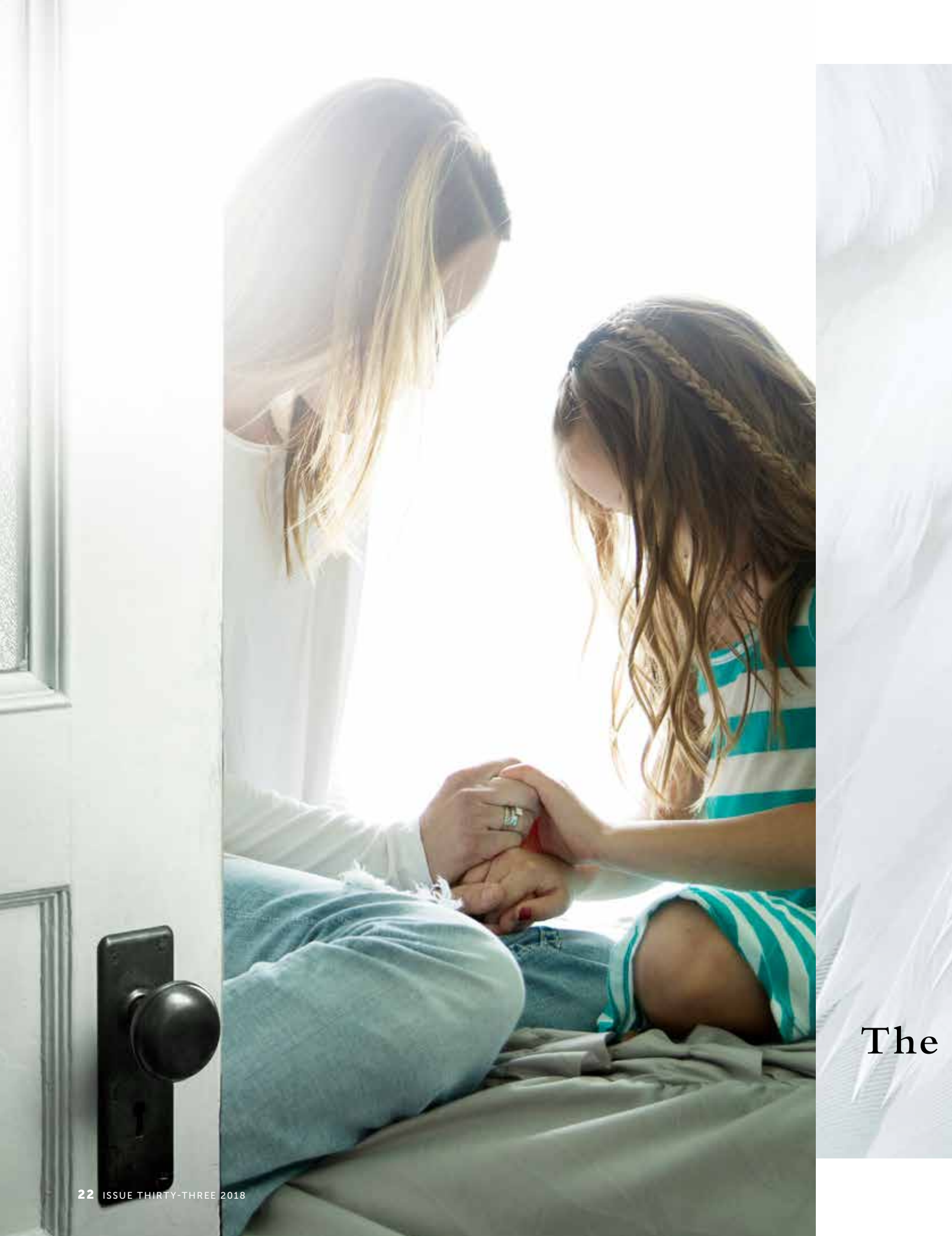


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The

BY P. DOUGLAS SMALL

I was about five years of age when my grandmother took my sister and me by the hand and parked us in her bedroom. She sat me on a little cot next to the bathroom door. I can still hear the click of the lock as she closed the door. What emerged from behind that door was the captivating sound of prayer. She had locked herself in with God.

I have no idea how long she prayed. I have no idea what precipitated her need to stop and pray. I only remember the passion. Words. Then sounds. Tears. Fervor. Groans. Moans. Indescribable and indistinct speech. Prayer—but like nothing I can recall before that time.

I knew in that moment a presence had filled that little frame house. There was more than me, my sister, and my grandmother in that place—God had come!

When she emerged, she resolutely held her head

high. It was as if she had been in another world. Her cheeks were stained with tears. Her lips quivered. She was in the Spirit. The experience marked me. It is as fresh as yesterday.

I had encountered, through the prayer life of my grandmother, “The Holy.”

A NEW NORMAL

“A prayerless life is one of practical atheism,” wrote Gordon Fee. That being true, much of American Christianity is functionally atheistic. And if serious praying is scarce, then praying in the Spirit is on the endangered species list.

In contrast, prayer “without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17, KJV), unbroken communion with God, should be as normal to the Spirit-filled believer as breathing.

Before Jesus left the earth, He promised to ask

WHEN THE SPIRIT Steps In

Promise of Romans 8:26–27

the Father for the Holy Spirit to descend on the Church. (See John 14:16–17.) He went to a prayer meeting in heaven and sent His disciples to a prayer meeting on earth. This is the model—simultaneous, synchronized prayer, linking heaven and earth.

With the descent of the Spirit, believers could now pray in a manner not possible before Christ’s ascension and enthronement. Out of His redemptive work at Calvary, believers can pray with a new heavenly status. As Jesus prayed in heaven, the disciples prayed in the Upper Room. Parallel prayer, heaven and earth in agreement, connected by the Spirit: this is the prototype of normal Church life.

PARTNERING WITH THE SPIRIT

In the New Testament, a Spirit-led partnership emerges. “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:32):

- Jesus entrusted a praying church into the hands of the Spirit, and the Spirit directed and empowered witnesses (Acts 1:8, 15:8).
- Their speech and spiritual insights came by the Spirit (Acts 2:4, 17).
- Apostolic commission arose at the Spirit’s direction (Acts 13:1–3). He permitted, forbade, and compelled (Acts 16:6–7).
- Jesus placed priority on the Spirit’s immediate presence with the disciples even over His own, “It is *expedient* for you that I go away” (John 16:7, KJV, italics added). In Jesus’ assumption of the role of heavenly High Priest and Intercessor, the Comforter came, and the divine heaven-earth dialectic was put into place.
- The disciples were to do nothing without the Spirit. He came to complete Christ’s work and glorify Jesus. He is the “in us” intermediary, providing a direct link to the Father, through Christ, now the Head of the Church. “[The Spirit]

will receive what he will make known to you” (John 16:14). The idea is forceful—the Spirit will *aggressively accept what is available* from Jesus in heaven and bring word to the disciples on the earth.

The original Greek here means *up* and *declare*. The Spirit *tells*, from all the way *up*, what is processed in the throne of heaven. He gives the word from the top! Jesus said that the Spirit whispers “only what he hears,” heaven’s secrets, telling things “yet to come” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit’s breath is our animating life (John 6:63). Yet we lack a view of the Spirit’s role that’s dynamic, and we fail to understand that all His work dances around prayer—everything!

Jesus was a child “through the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18). He was baptized, led, and even driven by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:12). What He knew, He knew by the Spirit (Mark 2:8). In prayer, the Spirit anointed and empowered Him (Luke 4:14, 17–19). And, *by the Spirit* of God, Jesus drove out demons (Matt. 12:28).

If Christ prayerfully depended on the Spirit, how much more should we? He “offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears” (Heb. 5:7). We know little of such praying.

In the Upper Room, as the disciples prayed, they were “filled with the Holy Spirit.” They spoke “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4, KJV). With this divine partnership, the synchronization—essential to mission—was now operative. As the Holy Spirit interceded from the earth (through the Church), He joined Jesus, who was interceding in heaven.

A new paradigm emerged—a holy collaboration with the Father, in Christ, by the indwelling and enabling Spirit. Suddenly the surrendered, unruly tongues of the disciples gave voice to the Spirit, heralding the news that the risen Christ sat enthroned in heaven, rightful heir to King David’s throne. A new era had begun.

PRAYING WITH THE SPIRIT

Paul describes this collaboration with the Spirit in Romans 8:26–27 (NASB):

The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Today’s world requires deep prayer that’s possible only by our joining the Spirit’s intercession—at times with “inarticulate groans.” In such prayer-speech, the Spirit can “utter mysteries” to God on our behalf, expressing the inexpressible (1 Cor. 14:2, 14–16, 18). Searching our hearts, He speaks to the Father as our representative, our attorney-advocate.

By such inspired prayer, the Spirit “helps” us. In the Greek, the literal meaning is that He takes hold of us at our side, jointly sharing and assisting in our praying. His help corresponds exactly to the need.

The context also sheds light on what “we should pray for.” It carries the idea of an exchange. The Spirit interacts with heaven on my behalf. At my side and knowing my heart, He takes my wish (my flawed prescription for a problem) and substitutes God’s will. Simultaneously, in the switch, He strengthens my faith.

It is precisely when we know neither *how* nor *what* to pray that the Spirit prays effectively. When both vision and voice fail us, the Spirit perceives and pronounces. He illuminates our perception and binds our will to God’s. What we say in the Spirit leads to a seeing that becomes a knowing—first in the heart and ultimately, in our intellect. Such moments in prayer are a bridge across a humanly impassible terrain.

Such intercession is beneficial, yet not primarily for personal benefit. It’s for Kingdom causes. The word *intercede* means to align. It describes a “happening,”

a fascinating moment in prayer when the Spirit lights upon us. The image is that of the Spirit bending over, hovering, to confer a benefit and, in the same moment, aligning us more fully with God's will.

These moments come with sound effects—groaning and sighing. The word used here is a graphic term describing sounds that humans make when they are under heavy burdens or pressure. In the midst of grief or frustration, the inexpressible is expressed. The groan substitutes for what is unutterable, indescribable, and beyond the momentary capacity for language. Overwhelmed by the swirl of trouble and confusion, the difficulties are too deep for human words, so the Spirit helps. He prays with us, through us.

The Spirit of Truth expresses our inner desires, speaking honestly. Yet it is not exclusively the Spirit praying. Such prayer requires our collaboration and articulation. It is our voice, our tears, our hands lifted, and our hearts open. Our capacity for speech is inadequate. We cannot collect in our "rational" minds the thoughts we need to express our feelings, hurts, or hopes. That limitation is precisely why the Spirit is so helpful.

At times, forces against us are formidable, superhuman, and demonic. When we do not know how to pray as we ought, we lean on the Spirit!

A FINAL NOTE

Through travailing prayer, births come. However, travail only delivers what intimacy has conceived. Not all prayer should be intercessory groaning and travail. Yet there is no delivery of the child of promise without it.

In the end, the eschatological synchronization will be complete. Earth and heaven will say the same thing. "The Spirit and the bride [together] say, 'Come!'" (Rev. 22:17, brackets added).

Until then, we and the brooding Holy Spirit are partners. God works in no other way. Our alignment in prayer enables the partnership that advances God's Kingdom. Our tasks require more than human

energy, and the "Spirit" of Jesus needs a body through which He can speak and act—the body of Christ, the Church. The empowering connection comes by prayer.

God-encounters, such as Romans 8:26–27 describes, is beyond the grasp of our conscious, calculating minds. But in them we experience God—not on the grounds of intellectual logic—but rather in a dimension beyond human conception. Mystery places God beyond, over, and above either the rational or merely emotional understanding of Him as utterly other, unknowable, and past understanding. He is One whose ways are not our own.

An encounter with the Spirit in prayer changes everything. Harvey Cox says the experience "reaches beyond . . . creed and ceremony into . . . what might be called 'primal spirituality,' that largely unprocessed nucleus of the psyche in which the unending struggle for a sense

of purpose and significance goes on." Cox writes of the practice of "the language of the heart" taking over, calling it "primal speech."

Such was my grandmother's example. In such a moment, writes Cox, "The Spirit . . . is available to anyone in an intense, immediate, indeed, interior way." All attempts to express ourselves to God—art, liturgy, music, symbols—fall short. We all have inherent deficiencies, even with an elevated capacity for language. Therefore, the Spirit helps our weakness.

He prays. **PC**



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BY CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK

BIBLE Study

Supernatural Partnership

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

Praying in the Holy Spirit isn't as elusive to me as it used to be. Years ago, when I had just come on board as managing editor at *Pray!* magazine, I felt like a kindergartner in Spirit-led prayer. I remember saying with a sigh to one of my colleagues, "I just don't hear from the Spirit the way you do."

It seemed to me that this woman was always hearing amazing things from God. The Holy Spirit gave her such cool prayer assignments. The adventures she and the Spirit had together made me envy her—holy envy, I hope! At any rate, seeing what happened when she and the Spirit teamed up in prayer caused me to desperately seek God. *I need You to empower my prayers, God! Teach me to pray Spirit prayers and receive Spirit leading!*

One time, an out-of-the-box idea came to me concerning something we'd been praying about as a team. I shared it with the others, who generously affirmed me. They agreed that my suggestion would be an excellent way to move forward. I found myself uncomfortable with their affirmation. Though I had to admit that the idea I'd offered really was a great one, honesty forced me to acknowledge that I didn't possess that much brilliance or creativity.

But then came the aha! My colleague, the woman who had such rich Spirit experiences, pulled me aside. "Do you really think that you thought up that 'great idea' all by yourself?"

Her rhetorical question hit its target: The Spirit *was* helping me in my prayers! I just hadn't realized it was Him! He had guided me to pray according to the way God wanted to answer. He'd been partnering with me and I hadn't even known it!

He wants to partner with you, too. It's my hope that the theme of this issue and the Bible study that goes with it will guide you deeper into your own journey of Holy Spirit-empowered prayer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Kay Horner quotes from Zechariah where God promised to pour out a "spirit of . . . supplication" on His people. *To supplicate* means to plead. Compare Zechariah 12:10 with Romans 8:26–27. How can the Holy Spirit help us plead in prayer more effectively?

Review Leighann McCoy's key texts: Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 20–21. Consider how they apply to the who-what-where-when-why-how of praying in the Spirit. Answer as many of the questions as you can (as they relate to prayer).

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

Doug Small reminds us that the Holy Spirit "can 'utter mysteries' to God on our behalf." In a similar way, the Spirit can also share God's mysteries with us! Read 1 Corinthians 2:9–16 and describe the Spirit's role in sharing God's thoughts with us and our thoughts with God. Then explain why this is so necessary for prayer.

There are many ways the Holy Spirit can help us pray. Read the following passages and record the Spirit's roles and functions. Then consider how one or more of these can help you pray about something going on in your life right now.

John 14:15–27:

John 16:5–15:


Romans 8:1–17:

Galatians 5:16–26:

empowered by the Spirit for godly fellowship, service, and witness. In which of these do you most need the Holy Spirit's power? Confess your need to Him, ask Him to fill you anew, then ask Him to show you one step you can take in faith, trusting Him to give you the power you need. Write your action step below, then plan to tell your small group or a friend how it went.

Make a mental list of the things you usually pray about. McCoy says that "when we read the Bible and allow the Spirit to guide our prayers, new thoughts will come, new insights will be revealed, and new prayer will begin to form in our hearts." One day this week, begin your

quiet time by asking the Holy Spirit to give you *new* thoughts, insights, and prayer concerns. Read your Bible in a posture of listening and expectation. Write down anything you sense Him saying to you. How does this dependence on the Spirit's help affect the way you pray about your ordinary concerns?

Another day this week, go to God without any prayer list or agenda at all. Ask the Holy Spirit what *He* wants to pray about. Then pray in whatever way He leads. Make notes about what happens. 

CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK is a regular contributor to *Prayer Connect* and director of curriculum for Community Bible Studies.

ACTION STEPS

Horner writes about the necessity of being

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A PRAYER GUIDE FOR THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND BEYOND



A CRY FOR UNITY

No one will dispute that the United States is in trouble. Tension, rancor, and disunity abound between people, in government, and in the Church.

In light of this, it is timely that *Unity* is the theme of the National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 3. We encourage you and your friends to begin today to use these prayer points and prayers and join millions of other believers who are praying for unity in our nation.

1 PRAY FOR UNITY IN AMERICA.

- “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

The present spiritual crisis in America is calling us to pray for and take all necessary actions to come together as a nation.

- God is the only One who can bring unity, harmony, and oneness in America; therefore, we look only to Him in prayer.
- Call upon God to empower us to make every effort to live in unity, call for unity, and forward unity in America continually.

Father, we come before You now and cry out for America. We are in desperate need of peace in our nation. We humbly ask that You bring that bond of peace Your Word speaks of. Equip and encourage us as believers to keep the unity of the Spirit. May believers be a model of unity in these troubling days. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

2 PRAY FOR UNITY IN THE CHURCH IN AMERICA.

- “Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no division among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction” (1 Cor. 1:10, HCSB).

God is calling His Church in America to unify upon the authority of the Bible and the certainty of Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world.

- Ask God for thousands of local churches to unify as one body of Christ, agreeing together that Jesus Christ is our greatest need in America.
- Call upon God for Jesus’ Church in America to walk in unity, harmony, and oneness, so His Church would personify, call, and lead America to unity.

Lord Jesus, the Church is Your bride. We pray today that You will unify us in purpose, understanding, and conviction! We pray against division among us. We ask that You help us to recognize we are brothers and sisters in Christ. May Your Church in America once again be a spiritual force that can change this nation—and the world! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

3 PRAY FOR UNITY IN FAMILIES, WORKPLACES, COMMUNITIES, AND CITIES IN AMERICA.

“Also, the power of God was at work in Judah to unite them to carry out the command of the king and his officials by the word of the LORD” (2 Chron. 30:12, HCSB).

God's power upon us is the only source to unite our families, workplaces, communities, and cities in America.

- Call families, workplaces, communities, and cities to look to our only King, Jesus Christ, who is not only the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but also the Prince of Peace who can unify us.
- Pray for America's families, workplaces, communities, and cities. God's power is the spiritual energy that leads to forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and unity.

Father, we pray for unity in our families, in our workplaces, and in our communities. Your power at work in us is the only way we can experience true unity. May we look to You, Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, as the Giver of all we need to be agents of unity in our spheres of influence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

4. PRAY FOR UNITY AMONG ALL ETHNICITIES AND PEOPLE IN AMERICA.

"For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14, HCSB).

Since each of us is made in the image of God, we each bear His image regardless of the color of our skin or the uniqueness of our ethnicity.

- Through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, He has torn down the wall of division among all ethnicities and people.
- In God alone, we unify and live in peace with one another; standing as one people against all racial and ethnic division, denouncing it as sin and not God's will for us.

Lord Jesus, You are our peace. You tore

2018 PRAYER FOR AMERICA

NOTE: THIS PRAYER IS DESIGNED TO BE PRAYED IN UNISON AT EACH PRAYER GATHERING ON THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER.

Our Dear Heavenly Father, while we come to You in complete humility, we also come to You with boldness in the authoritative name of Your One and Only Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. In Jesus' name, fill us now with Your Holy Spirit and lead us as we pray in Jesus' name for America.

Oh God, we are burdened for our nation today. We turn from the sins that we have committed against Your Word and Your Name. We turn away from our contentious words and ways toward one other that have led us to division and polarization. We turn away from our disrespect and lack of dignity toward each other, and we turn away from our continual devaluation of all human life from the womb until death in this world. We also turn away from, and refuse to, participate in skepticism, criticism, and cynicism in our nation. We turn away from anything that divides us, and we

run toward the gospel of Jesus Christ that is the only thing that has the power to unite us together.

Lord, in this critical hour in our nation, we pray for unity in America. Only You can bring unity, harmony, and oneness in America. As Your Word calls us in Ephesians 4:3, "Making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace," we ask You to empower us to make every effort to live in unity, to call for unity, and to forward unity in America continually.

We pray for the churches in America to unify in Jesus Christ and to pray as one unified spiritual family for America. May Your Church pray for America passionately, perpetually, privately, and publicly.

We pray for God's power to unify families, workplaces, communities, and cities in America. By Your Spirit, lead us to forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and unity.

We pray for people of all ethnicities and races in America to come together as one, living in peace and unity together. Oh Lord, because each of us is created

in Your image, please give us the courage to stand against all racial and ethnic division, denouncing it as evil and sinful, while simultaneously coming together in unity with all persons knowing this is God's will for us.

We agree clearly, unite visibly, and pray extraordinarily for the next Great Spiritual Awakening in America. Oh Lord, wake up Your Church spiritually and convict Your people to agree clearly, unite visibly, and pray extraordinarily until the next Great Spiritual Awakening occurs in our generation.

Oh God, we stand together upon Your words in Psalm 133:1, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony." Through Jesus' name and by the Holy Spirit's power, we pray for all Americans to unify and to live together in unity.

In the mighty and majestic name of Jesus Christ who is the Only Savior and the Only Hope in this world, we pray. Amen.

DR. RONNIE FLOYD, President, National Day of Prayer Task Force; Senior Pastor, Cross Church

down the dividing wall between Jew and Greek. We need You now to tear down that dividing wall between races in our nation. Father, we repent of this heinous sin that has so stained Your Church in this nation. Through Your work on the cross, You tore down that dividing wall. Show us how to walk through the wall's rubble and reach out to, be in relationship with, and love our brothers and sisters of a different ethnicity. In Jesus' name, Amen.

5. PRAY FOR UNITY THAT WE WILL AGREE CLEARLY, UNITE VISIBLY, AND PRAY EXTRAORDINARILY FOR THE NEXT GREAT SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN AMERICA.

"All these were continually united in prayer" (Acts 1:14, HCSB).

Preceding the epic movement of God on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Jesus' followers were continually united in prayer together.

- Convict the Church in America to wake up spiritually, agree clearly, unite visibly, and pray extraordinarily for the next Great Spiritual Awakening in America to occur in our generation.
- Call upon God to bring spiritual awakening now in America, shaping the future of America, just as the Great Spiritual Awakenings in our history have shaped our spiritual heritage as a nation.

Father, bring revival to Your Church and spiritual awakening to the people of our nation! Pour out Your Spirit afresh on believers of all stripes and streams. I don't believe You are done with the United States. But only a fresh outpouring from You can change America. Only a fresh outpouring from You can purify the Church. Only a fresh outpouring from You can bring Your transforming power into the hearts and lives of people—taking them from darkness to Your light. Raise up an army of believers who will cry out to You for such a revival and spiritual awakening! I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen. PC



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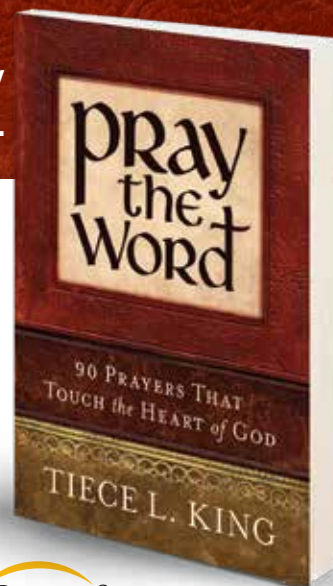
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DROUGHT,

DOWN

and DESPAIR

Elijah's Prayers and Ours

For

several years, my wife and I prayed about getting out of debt. School loans and a couple of poor decisions had led us into a sizable debt load. Through the financial ministry at our church, God alerted us to the seriousness of

the problem. We began to pray.

In the beginning, not much changed—primarily because we continued some bad habits. We longed to escape the uncertainty of living paycheck to paycheck. We longed to be able to give more generously. We longed to be able to save for retirement. Slowly, we began to make progress, but not transformative progress. We didn't receive the kind of answers to prayer we saw in Scripture:

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops (James 5:17–18, NIV 1984).

Elijah was just like us.

Sure he was, James, I've thought with sarcasm. I regularly face down several hundred prophets of the enemy, raise people from the dead, and pray droughts and torrential rain storms into existence. I would never hope to pray and see answers like Elijah did.

Certainly, God gave Elijah special assignments as part of his call as a prophet of the Lord—assignments He won't likely give us. But we're like Elijah in many ways:

- We have an assignment from God, including an assignment for intercession.
- We're human and subject to weakness.
- Above all, God loves us and cares for us.

We often read stories like the showdown on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:20–40) and think, *That's not relevant to me*. It's as though the heroes of those stories are inherently different from us. James refutes this. In fact, he insists that “the prayer of a righteous person [any righteous person] is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

Why? Because it's not about the one praying. It's about the God to whom we pray.

POUR

By Andrew Wheeler

THE FIRST PRAYER: **Drought**

Elijah first tells King Ahab that God said there would be no rain for several years. (See 1 Kings 17:1.)

James pulls back the curtain for us. Unknown to Ahab, Elijah *had actually prayed for the drought*.

Why? Elijah knew the warning in Deuteronomy 11:16–17:

“Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the LORD’s anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce.”

The spiritual environment in Elijah’s day certainly fit Moses’ description of God’s anger toward other gods. In fact, Ahab not only worshiped Baal, but he “did more to arouse the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him” (1 Kings 16:33).

A confrontation loomed. Baal’s followers would pray to their god for rain. And Jehovah would show Baal’s impotence by withholding the rain. Perhaps God’s display of power would bring His people to repentance and He could bless them again—as Solomon had prayed in the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:35–36).

THE SECOND PRAYER: **Fire**

About three years later, God told Elijah to present himself to Ahab, and He was going to send rain (1 Kings 18:1). The people had not yet repented and were still following Baal. So with the drought coming to an end, Elijah realized the necessity of a showdown to prove who was the one true God.

In the contest on Mt. Carmel we see Elijah’s heart as he prayed before calling on God to send fire: “Let it be known today that you are God in Israel . . . so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their

hearts back again” (1 Kings 18:36–37).

Elijah’s purpose in this prayer was the same as his purpose in the prayer for drought—to turn the people’s hearts to Jehovah. God answered immediately with fire that burned not only the wood and the offering, but also the stones and the water used to douse the offering.

This was no ordinary fire but a fire from an all-powerful God. And how did the people respond? By falling on their faces and repeating, “The Lord—he is God!” (v. 39).

THE THIRD PRAYER: **Rain**

After killing the prophets of Baal and telling Ahab about the coming rain, Elijah climbed to the top of the mountain and prayed for the rain in a dramatic and intense way. He bent down and put his face between his knees (1 Kings 18:42).

This time, God did not respond immediately. Elijah persevered in prayer, knowing that God purposed to bring rain. Seven times, with a sense of anticipation, he sent his servant to watch for some sign of rain.

Finally, a small cloud signaled the coming downpour (1 Kings 18:43–44). Having demonstrated His power by sending fire when Baal could not, Jehovah now demonstrated His power and His mercy by sending much-needed rain. God’s servant persevered in prayer, and the Almighty responded with the rain that Baal worshipers had failed to produce through three years of *their* prayers.

THE FOURTH PRAYER: **Despair**

Under threat of death from queen Jezebel, the prophet Elijah—who had just seen the mighty hand of God in both fire and rain—fled in fear. Despair comes through in his prayer: “I have had enough, LORD. . . . Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors” (1 Kings 19:4). God responded with food and water for a journey Elijah didn’t realize he was going to take—a 40-day pilgrim-

age to Mount Horeb.

There, God met with the prophet. Elijah described himself as zealous for the Lord, but he felt like he was the only one who still followed God. Again he prayed out of despair—despair for the Israelites who still had not repented, despair for the prophets who had been killed, and despair for himself (1 Kings 19:10, 14).

God answered this prayer also. He told Elijah that he was not alone. Jehovah still had 7,000 faithful followers. Despite the people’s general lack of repentance, God commanded Elijah to anoint his own successor—a sure sign God had not given up on Israel.

FOUR PRAYERS, **Four Answers**

Four prayers. Four times God answered, revealing His power. These prayers were powerful and effective, not because of the man who prayed them but because of the God who answered them. Each time, God answered for His glory and according to His purposes.

Since James holds up Elijah as an example of effective prayer, what can we learn from his experience?

1. *Effective prayer is not about us.* Whether Elijah prayed for drought, for fire, or for rain, his prayer was all about bringing God glory and bringing about His purposes. God’s answer didn’t depend on *who* was praying. God had purposed to bring glory to Himself and to bring the people to repentance. He gave Elijah the assignment of praying His purposes into reality.

So it is with us. We may think we are too insignificant to pray great things, even if God puts them on our hearts. But that kind of thinking makes prayer about us—and not about Him.

2. *Effective prayer is grounded in God’s will.* Much of our prayer—for ourselves or for others—is grounded in *our* will. We pray for an end to the trial we’re facing, for a job offer to come through, or for a friend to be healed. Our prayers focus on specific, temporal results rather

than God's overarching purposes.

Of course, God wants and even commands us to ask, seek, and knock—to bring our needs to Him (Matt. 7:7). There is nothing wrong with this. But it's easy for needs-based prayer to focus on *our* will rather than *God's*.

Truly effective prayer—whether for personal needs or Kingdom expansion—is grounded in God's will. Elijah knew God's will for the people of Israel—to repent. He knew God's specific warnings about the consequences of following other gods. So he prayed accordingly.

3. *God hears and answers even our prayers of despair.* We would love it if Elijah's story went from victory on Mount Carmel to victory over the evil queen Jezebel, to victory after victory. But then Elijah would not have been a "man like us."

Our stories don't work that way, so we need to know that God hears us

and answers us even in our defeat and despair. He shows us through stories like Elijah's that He is always with us, that He hears and answers all kinds of prayer, and that He is ready and powerful to restore us.

SOMEONE LIKE US

A little more than two years ago, my wife and I felt God leading us to uproot our lives and move to Tennessee, to be near my parents. My natural inclination was, *We can't do this. We still have too much debt.* But we started down the path and prayed that God would open doors as He saw fit.

God provided in many ways: our townhouse sold quickly, we moved to a less expensive neighborhood, and an annual bonus enabled us to retire all our debt. Most recently, we appealed the denial of my wife's disability claim—and won! In less than two years, God

answered prayers from more than 20 years of our marriage.

What made the difference? Several things positioned us to see God's blessing. But most importantly, we began to pray beyond our own situation and focused on ways we wanted to bring honor to God with our finances.

I still don't *feel* much like Elijah. But, in reality, the God I pray to, worship, and serve is the same God who answered Elijah's prayers with such power and mercy. I'm learning—slowly—to pray with the faith of Elijah and to await God's answers with confidence. **PC**



ANDREW WHEELER served in the prayer ministry of Willow Creek, IL, Community Church for more than 20 years, leading prayer teams and co-directing the prayer ministry at the Crystal Lake satellite. He is a featured blogger on *pray.network* and author of *Together in Prayer: Coming to God in Community* (IVP, 2009).

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Dreaming Up Prayers in the Backyard

When Lisa Miller and her family moved into their new home in Bloomington, MN, some of the first people they met were the neighbors living behind them. Their yards backed up to each other. Lisa found herself quickly developing a friendship with Rae Lynn Sandvig. As they spent hours chatting at their shared “backgate,” they discovered they both believe in Jesus and the power of prayer. And those backgate chats eventually led to a deeper friendship, a partnership, and a new prayer ministry.

Years earlier, when Lisa graduated from college, she began working as a labor and delivery nurse at an inner-city hospital in Denver, CO. She often felt sad, knowing many of the newborns went home to difficult situations. She determined to pray for every baby as she walked that little one from the delivery room to the newborn nursery. She knew she couldn’t do anything about his or her future, but praying over each child was a gift she could offer.

When Lisa and her husband Bill had two children of their own, she put together a spiral bound set of pictures and scriptural prayers as a gift for Bill.

Eventually she took the gift back and began praying through the prayers herself, wearing out the prayer cards over the years.

Lisa shared this personal life treasure with Rae Lynn, and the two began dreaming about how to re-create Lisa’s cards and encourage others to pray faithfully and consistently for their children.

Their backgate conversations soon led to the creation of their ministry called Backgate Prayers. Inviting a graphic designer to join their team, Lisa and Rae Lynn began creating prayer card sets of 20 prayers, each personalized with the names and photos of their customers.

Backgate Prayers launched a website, and Heidi Wilson became one of the first to order a set of prayer cards personalized for her own children. Their names, Charlie and Ariana, are written into the prayers.

Heidi had prayed for her kids many times before. “But I recently have been able to prioritize it in my life,” she says.



“Having a newborn again definitely makes life crazy and hectic, but there is also a lot of time to think during feedings and naps. Usually, I found myself on my phone checking social media or emails. But these cards have been a great reminder to use the time to pray for my kids.”

The cards have brought breadth and depth to Heidi’s prayers, with biblically based prayers ranging from salvation to character to spiritual growth to “giftings.”

Heidi adds, “There’s nothing . . . more precious than to pray Scripture over your children.”

For more information on Backgate Prayers, go to backgateprayers.com.

Turning Your iPad into an Intercessory Prayer List

The most effective prayer plan is the one you will use. If you do not have a plan to pray, usually you will not pray consistently and effectively. If you do not have a plan that helps you stay current, on task, and specific, then I suggest you consider trying this one with your iPad.

I use both an iPad and iPhone, which

come with an app called Notes. I use the Notes app to turn my iPad into an intercessory prayer list. If you have an iPhone, it will sync with your iPad, providing you have accessibility on both devices. Androids have similar apps. The brand of the product is not important; the functionality is.

Using my iPad provides me with simplicity because I can easily access my

device and edit the Notes app. With an electronic prayer list, it’s easy to change or adjust any part of the list. And the Notes app allows me to keep my list current.

What Is on My Daily Prayer List?

I have used all kinds of prayer plans through the years. Nothing keeps me more focused, on task, and effective in



prayer than a current, relevant prayer list. Here are a few of the commitments I have in daily prayer.

• **Asking God to prepare my heart:**

Daily, I make myself available for God to prepare me to pray. I spend moments praising God, followed by moments of thanking God for what He has done for me. I then move into a time of spiritual evaluation, confession of sin, and acknowledging His finished work on the cross for forgiveness of my sins. Then I approach God, asking for His spiritual covering and armor upon my family and me. I call out the names of each member of my family, asking God to put His armor of protection upon each of us.

• **Asking God for the filling and anointing of the Holy Spirit:**

I believe in the filling of the Holy Spirit daily and even momentarily. While I do not understand fully the Spirit's anointing, I know I need it upon my life and in everything I do. I ask God to anoint me for preaching, teaching, leadership, decision-making, vision, writing, and relationships—all with His gladness.

• **Asking God for empowerment to walk in the authority of the Great Commission:**

I believe in the Great Commission and committing

the rest of my life to doing everything I can so that each person in the world is told about Jesus Christ. Therefore, I pray for God to give me the authority to personally fulfill it: pastorally, in leading my church; nationally, in leading the National Day of Prayer Task Force; and globally, through writing, sending, speaking, and influencing others to reach the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

• **Asking God for a mighty spiritual revival in my church and in America:**

I believe God wants to send a mighty revival upon His Church and ignite a spiritual awakening in America. I plead with the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon us powerfully.

• **Asking God's leadership upon the leaders of our nation:**

Daily, I call out the names of our country's president and vice-president; our state's governor, senators, and congressmen; and the mayors of the major cities in our region of Northwest Arkansas.

• **Asking God for wisdom and favor upon the leadership of our region:**

When the economy really turned sour years ago, I began to pray, by name, for 40–50 leaders in our region who help shape the finan-

cial future of our region, even our state. These include some in America and a few throughout the world.

• **Asking God to provide healing and restoration for people who are ill and those who have lost loved ones:**

I keep this list current, and it holds me accountable to pray for people with major needs. As soon as I hear about such a need, I place that person on this list, and 90 percent of these people never know unless I tell them.

There are many more things I work through in prayer daily. However, this gives you some ideas about how to transform your iPad or other device into an intercessory prayer list. Its simplicity, usefulness, and relevance will be refreshing.

DR. RONNIE FLOYD is president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. This article is adapted from his blog post at ronniefloyd.com.

Will You Pray with Us?

Thank you for partnering with us in prayer. Several years ago, we realized that if we are going to publish an effective magazine on prayer, we need to be the first to ask for intercession from our friends! So please join us in these requests:

- Please pray for the financial stability of *Prayer Connect*. Pray that the transition to National Day of Prayer will grow the magazine quickly.
- Pray that this will be a breakthrough year for us in seeing the magazine placed in the hands of pastors and prayer leaders across the nation. Pray that God will use *Prayer Connect* to help unify the prayer movement.
- Pray for Bridget Rennie (art director) and Carol Madison (editor) as they give leadership to the graphic and editorial production of the magazine. Pray for excellence and creativity, along with attention to detail.

We want the best product possible that brings glory to God and inspires the Church to pray!

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A Prayer Strategy for Human Trafficking | By Valerie Beck

More than 40 years ago, in a small store in northern Minnesota, a blond-haired, blue-eyed little girl stood mesmerized by trinkets in one aisle as her mother shopped in the adjacent one. Unexpectedly, a woman with a small boy told the little girl that she needed to go with them. The girl balked quietly, but she was not accustomed to opposing adults, even strangers.

From the back seat of the stranger's car, the little girl wondered how her mother would find her. By God's grace, within moments the girl's mother hurried to the parking lot and noticed her precious child in the car right next to her own. The mother jerked the door open, freed the little girl, and welcomed her back into her arms—thwarting the enemy's plans.

That little girl was me—and God did something in my life that day. Through my near abduction and other experiences, God gave me a passion for those who are taken, lured, or even given away and sold for sex.

As prayer leaders, we need to understand the reality of human trafficking—and how we can pray.

Hidden Evil

Earlier this year, Minnesota hosted the Super Bowl. With any large event such as this, we can expect an increase in lewd behavior that includes purchasing women and children for sex. These hidden evils escape notice because often the transactions occur via the Internet. In Minnesota, more than 200 such ads were posted daily in the online marketplace. The profile of a “buyer” is a white, married male, age 30–50, who has disposable income and, usually, a history of pornography.

What can the Church do about all

this? We offer the only true hope and healing. Jesus extends His hand to all those who are broken, lost, and living apart from Him. This includes the men who are the sellers and buyers of sex, as well as the abuse victims.

Each person is made in God's image and is valued by Him. His Word reminds us of our true enemy. His Word also reminds us that our prayers change things. As prayer leaders, we need to engage our congregations in praying about sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. Here are some ways to take action through prayer:

1. Pray that the Church

- will be willing and prepared to engage in healthy and helpful conversations about sexual exploitation, pornography, and abuse (Rom. 8:1, 5).
- will remember the gift of grace and offer prayer support and biblical truth (Eph. 2:1–9).
- will be unified and viewed as a valuable and necessary resource in this battle (John 17:23).

2. Pray that traffickers and buyers

- will find their transactions interrupted and their wicked plans frustrated (Ps. 9:16, 10:15, 146:9).
- will see the reality of what they are doing and seek help (Phil. 2:3–4; 1 Cor. 6:18–20).

3. Pray that the sold and abused

- will be found and will receive the offered help despite fear, threats, and deception (Matt. 10:28; Ps. 72:12–14).
- will experience restored minds, bodies, and lives through Christ

(Zech. 9:11–12; Rom. 12:2).

- will follow through on treatment plans and learn to live in a new, healthy, and productive way (Eph. 4:22–24).
- will desire Christ alone and allow Him to fill their need for belonging, acceptance, joy, hope, and peace (Rom. 8:15; 15:13).

4. Pray that law enforcement and outreach workers

- will have a shield of physical and spiritual protection as they hear about and see the horrible violations done to the victims (Ps. 5:11–12).
- will be strengthened in Christ for the battle (Phil. 4:13).

In addition, pray that God will bring confusion into the enemy's camp so that his schemes are unorganized and ineffective (Deut. 7:23; Ps. 71:24).

We desire all involved to come to repentance, to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and to find healing and redemption in Him (2 Peter 3:9; Rom. 10:9–10).

Those who are broken in body and spirit cannot be repaired without our God who heals, restores, and provides true hope for both now and eternity. What the enemy means for evil—even the horror of sex trafficking—God can turn around for His good purposes (see Gen. 50:20).

If you suspect someone is a victim or perpetrator of human trafficking, call 911 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 888-373-7888. ☐



VALERIE BECK is the outreach and justice ministries pastor at Trinity Church in Lakeville, MN. She also directs the prayer ministries.



Walking in the Spirit | By A.B. Simpson

The mystery of prayer! There is nothing like it in the natural universe. A higher and a lower being in perfect communion. Marvelous bond of prayer which can span the gulf between the Creator and the creature, the infinite God and the humblest and most illiterate child!

How has this been accomplished? The three Divine persons have all co-operated in opening the gates of prayer. The Father waits at the throne of grace as the hearer of prayer; the Son has come to reveal the Father, and has returned to be our Advocate in His presence. And the Holy Spirit has come still nearer, as the other Advocate in the heart, to teach us the heavenly secret of prayer, and send up our petitions in the true spirit to the hands of our heavenly Intercessor.

The Spirit Gives Burden

The Holy Spirit lays upon the heart wherein He dwells the special burden of prayer. We often read in the old prophetic Scriptures of the burden of the Lord. And so still the Lord lays His burden on His consecrated messengers. This is the meaning of the strong language of our text, "The Spirit maketh intercession within us with groanings which cannot be uttered" [Rom. 8:26, KJV].

Sometimes this burden is inarticulate and unintelligible even to the supplicant himself. Perhaps some heavy shadow rests upon the soul, some deep depression, some crushing weight under which we can only groan. With it there may come the definite thought of some personal need, some apprehended evil that overhangs us, or some dear one who is brought to our spirit as somehow connected with this pressure.

As we pray for this [special] person

or thing, light seems to open upon the heart, and an assurance of having met the will of God in our prayer; or sometimes the burden is not understood; and yet, as it presses heavily upon us and we hold it up to Him who does understand, we are conscious that our prayer is not in vain; but that He who knows its meaning and prompts its cry, is granting what He sees to be best under the circumstances for us or others, as the burden may apply.

We may never know in this world just what it meant, and yet, often we will find that some great trial has been averted, some impending danger turned aside, some difficulty overcome, some sufferer relieved, some soul saved.

Trained to Obey

It is not necessary that we should always know; indeed, perhaps we should never fully know what any of our prayers wholly mean; God's answer is always larger than our petition, and even when our prayer is most definite and intelligent there is a wide margin which only the Holy Ghost can interpret, and God will fill it up in His infinite wisdom and love.

That is what is meant by the significant language of the text, "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" [Rom. 8:27, KJV]. The Father is always searching our hearts and listening, not to our wild and often mistaken outcries, but to the mind of the Holy Spirit in us, whom He recognizes as our true guardian and monitor, and He grants us according to His petitions and not merely our words.

But if we walk in the Spirit and are trained to know and obey His voice, we shall not send up the wild and vain outcries

of our mistaken impulses, but shall echo His will and His prayer, and thus shall ever pray in accordance with the will of God.

The sensitive spirit grows very quick to discern God's voice. That which would naturally be considered as simple depression of spirits comes to be instantly recognized as a hint that God has something to say to us, or something to ask in us for ourselves or others. He who thus walks with God soon learns the luxury of having no personal burdens or troubles, but recognizing everything as service for God or for others.

A Solemn Responsibility

This makes the ministry of prayer a very solemn responsibility, for, if we are not obedient to His voice, some interest must suffer, some part of His will be neglected, some part of His purpose frustrated, so far, at least, as our cooperation is concerned, and, perhaps, someone very dear to us will lose a blessing through our neglect or disobedience; or we ourselves find that we are not prepared for the conflict or trial against which He was providing by the very burden that we would not understand nor carry.

God has placed within our breast a monitor who is always looking forward to our needs and anticipating our situations; let us, therefore, be quick to hear and obey His voice, as He calls us to the ministry of prayer, and in so doing we shall not only save ourselves, but also many a heart that perhaps is not able to pray for itself. **PC**

A.B. SIMPSON (1843–1919) was a Canadian preacher, theologian, author, and founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination. Used by permission. The Archives of The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

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