

ISSUE THIRTY-FIVE, OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2018

# PRAYERCONNECT

Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

Prayer through  
Suffering

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# PRAYERCONNECT

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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. National Day of Prayer, Church Prayer Leaders Network, and Harvest Prayer Ministries 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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The Book of Acts is loaded with demonstrations of power and miraculous answers to prayer! The early believers boldly asked God for

Kingdom-shaking release of the Spirit's power to transform lives and advance the gospel. "Prayer and Power: Lessons from Acts" and other back issues are available from [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).



# PUBLISHER'S NOTE



## Seven Topics to Broaden the Prayers of Your Congregation

Here is a principle that many Christian parents learn as they teach their kids to pray: *Kids pray what they know*. In other words, when children start learning to pray, they focus only on what they know about, what's in front of them. So they pray for a parent, a grandparent, or their pet.



A wise parent broadens the child's scope of intercession by suggesting additions to the list: a playmate who does not know Jesus yet, a neighbor who is hurting, the missionary who was at church last Sunday, or even personal feelings of emotional pain. This grows both a child's Kingdom heart and his or her understanding of all the prayer possibilities.

Adults are no different. We, too, pray what we know. If an adult believer has never been taught various topics of prayer or heard someone praying for something different than a personal need in a public gathering, he or she may never experience a full prayer life.

When I was 10, I remember watching our congregation switch gears from the norm in a worship service, and instead spend a long time praying for missionaries who had just been taken captive by the Viet Cong. My prayer horizon broadened permanently to include global evangelism and missions.

Most churches—if there is any prayer beyond the invocation, offering, and benediction—focus on needs of the congregation. Why not provide a variety of prayer targets, rotating through a number of topics that will stretch your people? Here are some suggestions:

1. Pray for other churches in your community. This teaches unity and broadens the congregation's awareness of the body of Christ.
2. Pray for your community and for God's blessing on it. Pray over those issues that the community struggles with.
3. Pray for neighbors living near the church. Pray for their salvation, that they will be blessed by your congregation's presence.
4. Pray for church plants in your area or in your denomination's district.
5. Pray for global mission subjects—for missionaries your church supports, people groups, or teams going on short-term mission trips.
6. Pray for our nation! Anytime something has happened that shakes people in our nation, use that as an opportunity for prayer.
7. Pray for the spiritual growth of your congregation. Use the prayers of the Apostle Paul to guide you.

Each time one of these prayer subjects is woven into your worship service, it broadens the "what they know" prayers of your congregation. Let your people see what is important to your church leadership.

—Jonathan Graf



# PRAYER

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When we pray, we realize our greatest need isn't changed policies but changed hearts - and we are first in line.

- Nick Hall

*From "Why prayer is the ultimate protest"  
National Day of Prayer May 5, 2017*

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evangelism

activism



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## Prayer Precedes the Next Great Move of God | By Dr. Ronnie Floyd

**P**rayer always precedes the next great movement of God in our lives, in our churches, and in our nation. There is no great movement of God that has ever occurred that does not begin with the extraordinary prayer of God's people.

### Prayer Is a Process

This past July, Jeana and I went to Israel, the Holy Land. When we take groups to Israel and reach the Garden of Gethsemane, we always give people

the opportunity to give us their names and some need for us to call out before God as we pray in that place that is so meaningful to believers.

During this recent Garden experience, in rapid fire before the Lord, we were faithful to pray in this way for a few hundred people who deeply desired God's intervention due to crisis or need. When we finished this hour in the Garden, I told Jeana I was absolutely exhausted. Even though it was not yet midmorning, the process of prayer exhausted me. Why? Prayer is difficult, especially when carrying the burdens of so many. Jeana said I was exhausted because I "preached my praying" that day with such great intensity.

My point is this: Prayer is a process. Prayer is hard work. Prayer requires discipline and focus. Prayer requires our best before the Father in heaven. In fact, why would we not want to give God our best?

### Prayer Leads to Results

When the process of prayer is observed, we expect to see God provide some amazing results. I look with anticipation for results like these:

**1. A great movement of God will begin.** When I pray, I start looking for a great movement of God to occur in me, around me, or even

through me. I do not look for this great movement in feelings but in concrete things we can point out to others, showing that God is obviously at work.

I believe one day soon in America, the next great move of God will occur. Yes, it could begin somewhere familiar to all of us, or, as some believe, perhaps a remote part of our country. If God truly shows up in a manner that unmistakably manifests His involvement, we will not care where it happens because the focus will not be on *where*—but on *Him*. Jesus is showing up! Therefore, with hopeful expectation, I am looking for this to happen one day soon!

Why? There are so many people praying, and when people pray, God moves among people demonstrably.

**2. Churches will experience spiritual revival.** This will become very exciting. Jesus loves His Church, and when our local churches begin to respond to Him by praying and calling out to Him for help, He will step forward in great power and might! It will be a God-sized and life-changing time.

Pastors will preach with such spiritual power from on High that people in many local churches will begin

wondering what happened to their pastor! Students and young adults will begin to emerge in and through their churches, responding to God's Spirit and stepping forward to lead these movements of the Spirit.

Churches will begin to grow. And when a church wakes up, the community will know it! When a church is on fire for God, the community will at least come and watch us burn. We cannot minimize what the Church can do when it is ignited by the power of the Spirit of God.

**3. The gospel will advance.** We should not forget this promise. In eternity, there will be redeemed people who are "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Rev. 7:9), giving praise to God eternally.

Before Jesus comes again, I believe there will be a powerful gospel explosion that will result in people across the entire world responding positively to the gospel. When we pray, we begin to live and lead in a way that *expects* the next great move of God, *expects* churches to experience spiritual revival, and *expects* gospel advancement to happen.

Prayer always precedes great movements of God, including the next great movement of God in our lives, our churches, and across our nation and world. Therefore, keep on praying and believing, but do so with great expectation!

Now is the time to lead. ☞



**DR. RONNIE FLOYD** is the president of the National Day of Prayer and senior pastor of Cross Church in Northwest Arkansas.



## Guatemala's Decision on Israel Bathed in Prayer

Guatemala was the second nation (behind the United States) to announce the relocation of its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. According to reports, the Christian faith of top government leaders made the difference—and Guatemala's decision to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem happened after much prayer. The country has had a long-term relationship with the state of Israel.

Many Christians in America believe the embassy announcement was long overdue,

even prophetic, and Guatemalan Vice President Jafeth Cabrera agrees.

"Yes, we do share that idea, that prophesy is coming to pass, and we are pleased that Guatemala is contributing to having that happen," Cabrera says. "We hope that it will soon be a reality." He said he prayed about the Jerusalem decision with his family.

"This was key to us making the decision to express our Christlikeness and to express our faith. We did pray. It was something that we meditated on and that we later shared with President

Jimmy Morales," he says.

Following CBN's interview, the vice president talked with Mike Evans (journalist and founder of the Jerusalem Prayer Team), who is rallying nations to move their embassies to Jerusalem. Evans says prayer has played a big role in the process.

"Oh, 100 percent it happened through the power of prayer. This didn't begin in the president's office. This began in the churches. The churches rallied in Guatemala. They started interceding and touching heaven regarding this," Evans says.

—GARY LANE, CBN News ([cbnnews.com](http://cbnnews.com))

## Tennessee Tent Revival Meetings

A spiritual revival continued through the summer in Northeast Tennessee, with more than 200 people accepting Christ after 12 weeks of meetings. It's called the #GreenevilleAwakening, and it's being held under a big tent near Greeneville, TN.

"We've taken the Word of God and showed them how to be saved . . . people from all walks of life, all social statuses," evangelist D.R. Harrison told *CBN News*. "It's just been amazing to see the power of God move in these last days."

Harrison said he originally was scheduled

to preach a one-week revival beginning April 15 at the Greystone Freewill Baptist Church. He said in week three, the crowds increased to standing room only.

He explained that it's not a Baptist revival. People from several denominations are attending. "There have been Methodists, Presbyterians, Nazarenes, Church of God, Baptists. It's just been a community-wide revival," he said. "The hunger that people have had for this has been outstanding. It's just been unbelievable."

The evangelist said that because they were running out of room at the church,



he and the pastor began to pray, and God opened a door. A North Carolina man provided an 80' by 140' vinyl tent that seats approximately 1,500.

People from several states are attending. "That's our prayer—that revival would just spread across America," says Harrison.

—Adapted from CBN News ([cbnnews.com](http://cbnnews.com))

## Scalise Recalls the Prayers and Power of God

Rep. Steve Scalise, R-LA, one year after being shot in the hip during a softball practice with congressional teammates on June 14, 2017, reflected on the incident. "You can't explain some of the things that happened on that ball field except that God performed real

miracles," he told CBN News.

A gunman fired several shots, striking Scalise. "I went down, I crawled away and then eventually my arms and legs just gave out," Scalise explains.

Scalise says, "I prayed and asked [God] for very specific things. At that

point this calm came over me because I felt God was going to take care of me."

Capitol police officers assigned to Scalise fired at the shooter. Although the officers also were wounded in the process, they eventually took the shooter down.

Some of the answers to his prayer



include the presence of Congressman Brad Wenstrup, R-OH, a former combat surgeon, who immediately treated Scalise to stop the bleeding. When EMTs arrived, they quickly loaded Scalise into an ambulance, then diverted him to a nearby helicopter. “They said maybe one more minute and I wouldn’t have made it,” Scalise says. “I would have died in the ambulance, there’s no doubt about it.”

When Scalise reached the hospital, he had no blood pressure. He lay unconscious for three days before waking up. Even in the hospital, he faced danger

after developing a life-threatening infection.

“They weren’t sure whether I was going to make it those first few days, but finally I did and thank God for the miracles and for the prayers from all around the country,” says Scalise. “[There was an] unbelievable, overwhelming amount of prayers and support from people I know and I don’t know, and I’m so thankful for that.”



Less than four months after the shooting, Scalise triumphantly returned to Congress, praising the Lord for sparing his life. Although his recovery has been remarkable, challenges still lie ahead.

Facing rigorous physical therapy multiple days a week, he asks for continued prayer for healing. “Please pray that my nerves that have been injured from the attack can come back and function. A lot of them are, and I’m so blessed to be able to do the things I do now.”

—**ABIGAIL ROBERTSON**, adapted from CBN News ([cbnnews.com](http://cbnnews.com))

## Supreme Court Reverses Ruling Against Prayer

The United States Supreme Court has reversed a lower court’s ruling against a Kansas woman who sued police for telling her to stop praying during a search of her apartment.

Mary Anne Sause of Louisburg filed suit against two police officers when they entered her home to search it following a noise complaint. A concerned Sause asked one of the officers if she could pray. According to Sause’s complaint,

an officer allowed the prayer but shortly after she started praying silently, the second officer in her home ordered her to “get up” and “stop praying.” She complied immediately.

A district court ruled against her, and in June of last year a three-judge panel of the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the lower court ruling, concluding that “while the conduct alleged in this case may be obviously unprofessional, we

can’t say that it’s ‘obviously unlawful.’”

The Supreme Court ruling concluded that the Tenth Circuit decision should be reversed due to unsettled issues regarding “the free exercise issue” and “the officers’ entitlement to qualified immunity.”

The First Liberty Institute’s president Kelly Shackelford says, “No American citizen should ever be ordered by government officials not to pray in their own home.”

—Adapted from The Christian Post ([christianpost.com](http://christianpost.com)).

## Nigerian Christians Pray for End to Carnage

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) held a national prayer session in July, praying against the “barbaric

killing” of Christians at the hands of radical Muslim herdsmen. Nigeria is reeling from deadly rampages that have left as many as 6,000 people dead.

“The church wants the carnage to stop,” said CAN President Rev. Supo Ayokunle. He explained that the ongoing killings, since the first of the year, are



turning Nigeria into a “deserted land.”

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja Metropolitan See, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, asked for Christians to unite.

“There is no need to allow divisions to make it difficult for us to work together for things that are good.”

There is not yet much information on the victims or whether the attackers are connected to groups such as Boko Haram or the Fulani herdsmen, who have been killing Christians in the country.

—Adapted from The Christian Post ([christianpost.com](http://christianpost.com)).

### Prayer Calendar

Day of Prayer for Peace  
of Jerusalem

**Sunday, October 7**  
[daytopray.com](http://daytopray.com)

Days of Prayer for the  
Persecuted Church

**Sunday, November 4 and 11**  
[idop.org](http://idop.org)

Weekend of Prayer to End Slavery  
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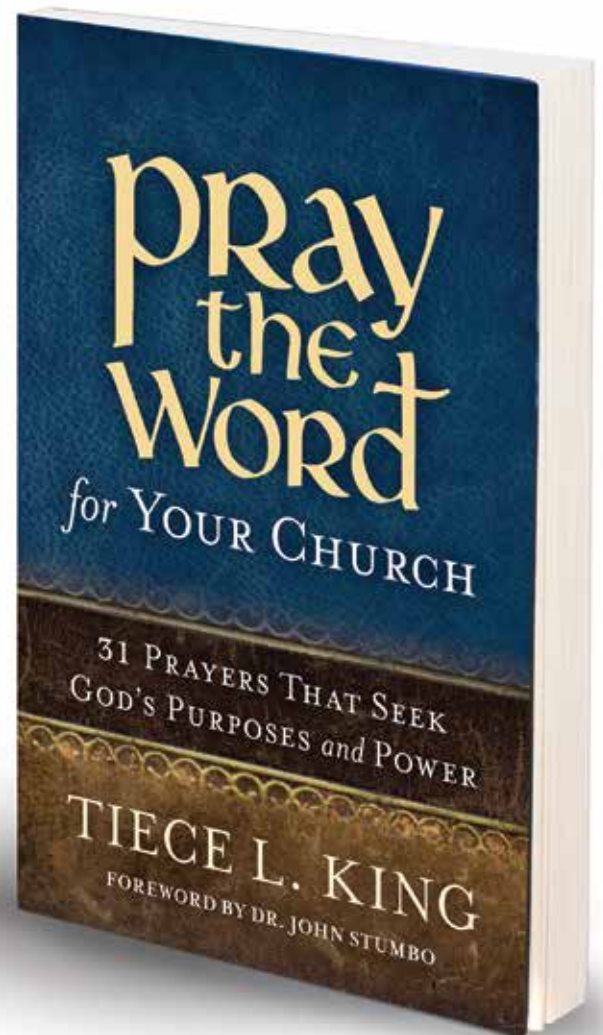
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—Dr. John Stumbo, President,  
The Christian & Missionary Alliance

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# WHERE ARE YOU GOD?

## Prayer through Suffering

I remember where I was when a thought ran through my mind: “Deb’s cancer is back. But don’t be afraid. It’s going to be OK.”

*Was that You, Lord?* I wasn’t sure. But I prayed for her anyway.

Later that week at our Wednesday House of Prayer at church, Deb announced that her cancer had returned. I admit I was taken back. Why did God alert me in advance? And what did He mean by *it’s going to be OK*?

Our church prayed fervently for Deb’s healing. But over the course of several months, we watched her cancer treatments fail. A few elders and intercessors met with Deb and her husband in her home to pray with her. She shared her fears and cried with us. We continued to pray.

I don’t think I’ve ever prayed for anyone’s healing more than I prayed for Deb. I fasted and prayed right up until the morning of Deb’s death. So much suffering. So much pain. And for me, bewilderment. How could this be OK?

Deb’s memorial service was packed with people. I sat with the overflow crowd in the lobby and watched on a monitor. I was still struggling.

And then our pastor’s profound message on the providence of God startled me into a new way of thinking. He said

that every person was there because of His providence. Did you live in Deb’s neighborhood? God’s providence. Did your son play hockey with her sons? God’s providence. God orchestrated every relationship in Deb’s life for that moment: for the gospel to be shared and for every person to have opportunity to surrender to Jesus.

I realized it was OK. Deb was secure in Christ. Her strong faith, positive countenance, and love for Jesus spoke volumes. God uses His people to bring glory to Him. This insight reframed the way I pray for those suffering: I pray they will understand God’s deep love and purposes—in life or death.

### In This Issue

Some time ago, we assigned an article on suffering to Bishop Harry Jackson and his wife Vivian. We were shocked when, a few weeks later, she suddenly passed away. In time, we cautiously approached Bishop Jackson, asking if he wanted to be released from his assignment.

He still wanted to write it, but now from his own experience of suffering. Pray for him as he continues to adjust to life without his wife.

Dana Olson, a cancer survivor and pastor who has prayed for many through suffering, discusses ways he learned to pray with more insight as he traversed his own cancer journey.

Johnnie Moore writes from his perspective as an advocate for persecuted believers around the world, and how they are sustained by prayer.

### Roadmap Prayer

In Philippians Paul writes of his personal desire to know Jesus more intimately and experience resurrection power—by sharing in Christ’s *sufferings* (3:10). Paul even provides a roadmap: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6–7, NLT).

I’m not eager to invite suffering into my life. But I know that through prayer I can experience Christ’s love, peace, and resurrection power—regardless of the outcome.

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





By Dana Olson

# FAITH ON

# TRIAL

## Strength Under Tension

**B**ummer. After all, it was the Fourth of July—and instead of sitting at a picnic table eating a burger, I was sitting on an exam table in the heart hospital's ER, waiting.

For weeks I had noticed odd symptoms. Previous tests had shown nothing (or so I thought). But now, after my heartbeat went from “marching band snare drum” to “funky jazz drum solo,” I landed on this bench, awaiting results from high-tech picture-taking. The young ER doctor looked perplexed as he entered. “Tell me about this mass on your spleen.”

“I don’t know anything about my spleen,” I replied, stunned. Apparently previous testing had shown an obvious abnormality, but I had not been notified due to office error.

Uncertainty followed. My “busy pastor” schedule was cleared, more tests conducted, consultations held. Multiple diagnoses were considered as I alternated between my own bed at home and a woefully inadequate hospital bed. Finally,

a fuzzy picture became clear: non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma cancer and an extensive blood clot. My life changed dramatically.

### Prayer Lessons

In the three years since, many have asked what I learned from hearing the *C* word, going through surgery, and experiencing rapid hair loss. It’s taken a while to figure that out.

I preached two out of every three Sundays during chemo. My hair loss presented no great challenge. I spent lots of time in a big chair and special bed—both purchased by caring friends. Mostly, I tried to keep going, day by day, but with extra rest. I took my meds—and still do.

One hymn I’d sung from my youth meant the world to me. I sang it to myself again and again:

Jesus, I am resting, resting  
In the joy of what Thou art;  
I am finding out the greatness  
Of Thy loving heart.<sup>1</sup>

The time to build up your “faith bank account” is today. Don’t wait until trials come. While facing a threatening diagnosis, relational breakdown, profound disappointment, disillusioning failure, or devastating loss, the withdrawals come fast and furious. You will need to have banked faith to draw upon.

Here are truths to help you prepare:

**1. God is in control.** You can trust Him. That doesn’t mean circumstances always turn out well. Life isn’t like the smiling, late-night TV preacher who offers health and wealth. Cancer can kill. Life presents an extensive variety of hurts and heartaches. To deny that is to deny sin’s profound impact on humanity.

Jesus says, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Our God is Lord of heaven and earth. He holds the future. He makes all grace abound to you, whatever the circumstance—in life and death, in joy and sorrow, in pain and pleasure.

**2. God sees.** In Genesis 22, the gospel comes alive on a mountain at Moriah. Abraham obeys the Lord and takes his beloved son Isaac and prepares to offer him to the Lord. But the Lord intervenes. God provides a ram as a substitute for Isaac, and Abraham names that place “The LORD will provide” (v. 14)—in Hebrew, *Jehovah Jireh*, which

means, literally, “God sees.” The passage is a neon sign pointing ahead to Jesus, the divine Substitute who died on the cross in our place.

God sees you in your heartache. He sees your suffering. And when God sees, He provides.

His provision comes in expected and unexpected ways. The God who sees you in your distress might send a wave of Holy Spirit comfort, or an old friend to sit with you, or a passage of Scripture to point you to hope, or someone from your church who shows up with your favorite meal. He might send a job offer, a check from an old friend, or a bag of groceries. God might send a counselor, a favorite uncle, a neighbor, or a stranger. Watch how He faithfully provides.

**3. God cares.** I’m no fisherman, but I know that effectiveness requires learning to cast the line into the water. Similarly, in our suffering, God tells us, “Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). This marvelous verse’s context reminds us that such humbling of ourselves (v. 6) requires vigilant watchfulness (v. 8). We dare not give in to the devil’s scheme, tempting us to despair and turn our backs on our heavenly Father. Instead, we press in to Him. We call upon Him. We pray earnestly. *We cast and keep casting!*

Why? Because God cares. He showed His merciful care for us by sending His Son to be our Savior, Redeemer, and Friend. He continues showing believers that loving care every day, for His Spirit dwells in us and is our Comforter.

The cynic says, “God doesn’t care about you.” The cross screams otherwise.

**4. God prepares.** Suffering is a kind of preparatory school. God is preparing us for Himself. And He is preparing a place for us to spend eternity with Him. This is our hope in suffering: “If I go [and He *has gone*] and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3, brackets added).

## SURVIVING ISOLATION

**E**ight years ago, I traveled to Ethiopia to meet the little boy God called our family to adopt. I received Miles with open arms. Three years later, those arms were covered in scars, scratches, and bite marks. Every interaction with this child, who has the challenge of autism, was physically painful. And I landed in the darkest place my heart and mind had ever been.

I spent a lot of time at home with Miles, isolated from people. God used my isolation as an invitation to stand in the gap, praying for my husband, my pastor, and my friends in ministry. God sealed on my heart the words, *Not on my watch*. I made it my mission to pray for hundreds of marriages, families, and ministries every month. God used that time to fill my heart with love for “my people,” so I felt connected to their lives and ministries—even though I was still isolated.

Besides calling me to pray for marriages and ministries, God also invited me to change the way I was praying for Miles. In Matthew 11, Jesus sends word to John the Baptist, saying, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me” (v. 6, NIV 1984).

When I first read those words, it was like Jesus was saying, “Jackie, I know what adding Miles to your family has done. I know that caring for him is hard. But I’m not coming for you. I’m not rescuing you. Do not lose faith because of Me.”

I no longer pray that Miles progresses emotionally out of the terrible twos or that he will one day be potty-trained. My prayer is that, no matter what, I will not lose faith because of Jesus.

Nothing has challenged me to keep my eyes and heart fixed on Jesus more than the gift of Miles, who has the *gift* of autism. Caring for Miles is the hardest thing I’ve ever done—and it is the greatest privilege of my life!

**JACKIE HARMON** is a member of Cross Church, Springdale, AR. She blogs at [keithandjackie.blogspot.com](http://keithandjackie.blogspot.com).



For us to be with God requires holiness. Our holiness requires the divine washing by Christ's precious blood, followed by the divine surgery transforming us from the inside out to be God's holy people. The whole process is the great grace-work of justification (in a moment) and sanctification (over a lifetime). Suffering is part of God's sculpting work in our sanctification. But the destination—the very presence of God Himself—is worth every bit of the suffering.

### Prayer Strategy

So why and how can we pray with confidence in the midst of painful suffering?

- Because God is in control, let your prayer be filled with praise and adoration to the One who alone is God: "Hallowed be your name." Let your prayer reflect your sweet submission to your Father in heaven. "Your will

be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (see Matt. 6:9–13).

- Because God sees, and when He sees He provides, ask God for the daily bread of His sustaining grace, whatever that might be. Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (see Mark 10:46–52). We have a wonderful privilege to answer Jesus' question, praying, "Father, here's what I long for You to do for me."

Keep in mind, the answer will not always come quickly. Often God wants to work in us through the waiting! But if we trust Him for His timing—and if we stay patient—we will see His hand and His heart in due time.

- Because God cares, keep casting! From the midst of pain, don't be afraid to honestly tell the Lord what is on your heart. Any burden

can be transferred from our broken hearts to His broad, strong shoulders. As you cast your cares upon Him, remember that the committed believer's greatest desire is always this: that Jesus Christ be magnified. Paul reminds us, "Do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

What seems like silence to us may in fact be God's strategic timing, using our suffering for His glory in some remarkable way we don't see now. In my case, I believe my cancer and complications were tools in God's hand, working powerfully in me and in our church. We are taking steps of faith today that I believe are answers to heart cries during my illness.

We too easily focus only on ourselves. *God's* agenda is far larger and more complex. Nevertheless, from your suffering, don't stop casting!



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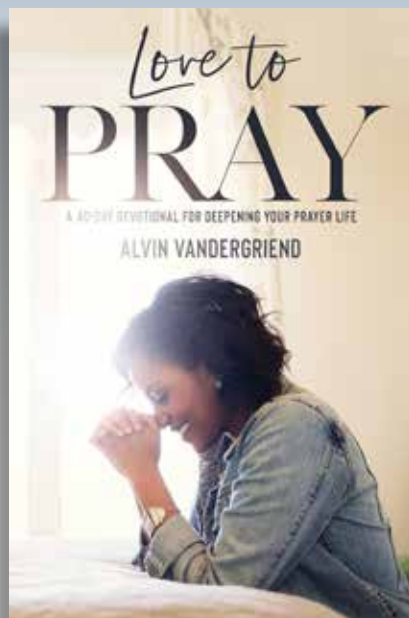
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One more cast may yield the big fish of God's awesome answer to your prayer.

- Because God is preparing *you* and preparing *a place for you*, pray with hope. *Hope is faith applied to the future*. When you trust God today to do mighty things that will last forever, that is hope! When you pray big, expansive prayers that will be finally answered in the new heavens and new earth, that is hope-filled praying. When you pray, knowing that the final outcome will arrive with the return of Christ, that is hope on its knees.

Our cry for God to make us whole inherently applies to our holiness.

## Prayer Strength

Engineers work with the concept of *tensile strength*: the maximum stress that can be applied to an object under tension before it breaks. Cancer is only one of many possible tension producers in life. You can fill in the blanks for yourself. What has brought significant tension to your life? What has threatened to break you, in the past or present? What fiery darts have come your direction from the world, the flesh, or the devil? Whatever is putting stress on you, *keep on praying*.

Your prayer life can greatly strengthen your spiritual tensile strength. Trials will test you—and they are inevitable. But by prayer you can be prepared, can pray *through*, and pray *beyond* the trial. Build up your tensile strength now. Prepare yourself to pray through the difficulty.

Here are practical ways to endure the tension of suffering:

### 1. Keep on praying.

Don't stop. When you can't even put your prayers into words, sigh. Groan. The Holy Spirit Himself will intercede for you. Take Romans 8:26 to heart. Rest in the presence of God and in the joy of Jesus, your Savior and Friend.

**2. Stay in the Word of God.** Make the Bible your companion in suffering.



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Let the Psalms give expression to your own journey through pain, and God will meet you there. Both the psalms of lament and the psalms of adoration and praise can build your tensile strength. Where to start? Try Psalm 42:5:

Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

**3. Ask others to pray for you!** Yes, the Spirit of God will intercede for you, but so will brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't be shy. Ask for their intercession. Phone, email, or text: "I really need you to pray for me right now. It's hard." Let the body of Christ lift you up in your pain to the Father's throne of grace.

**4. Sing!** If you can't sing, hum. So

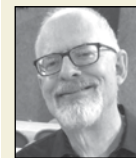
many Christian songs are prayers that can express our heart's yearnings during suffering. I recommend my favorite, "Jesus, I am Resting, Resting," but you undoubtedly have other songs, hymns, and spiritual songs that lift your heart and mind up to God. If you can't sing or hum, listen to the music of fellow believers who for centuries have made music out of their own journey with pain, songs such as "Day by Day":

Help me then in every tribulation  
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,  
That I lose not faith's sweet consolation  
Offered me within Thy holy word.  
Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting;  
E'er to take, as from a father's hand,  
One by one, the days, the moments  
fleeting,

Till I reach the promised land.<sup>2</sup>

How is your spiritual tensile strength? What is the maximum you can endure by faith? Are you ready for life's next great trial? Holy-spirit enabled prayer, aligned with the promises of God's Word, can prepare you for whatever the Father allows to come your way—from daily stresses to the ER on the 4th of July. **PC**

<sup>1</sup> Jean S. Pigott, "Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting," 1876, public domain.  
<sup>2</sup> Karolina Sandell Berg, tr. A.L. Skoog, "Day by Day," 1865, public domain.



**DANA OLSON** is senior pastor for teaching and preaching at Faith Baptist Fellowship, Sioux Falls, SD, and former director of Prayer First, the prayer mobilization ministry of Converge Worldwide. He is a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

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WHEN



By Bishop Harry Jackson

WORDS SEEM

TO FAIL

How to Pray for and Encourage Those Who Suffer

W

e don't like to talk about suffering. And since we don't fully understand God's purposes in it, we don't know how to act in crises.

At the writing of this article, I am only 50 days past the unexpected death of my wife of 41 years and three months. Dr. Vivian

Michele Jackson was a survivor of sexual abuse at age seven, domestic violence in her teenage years, a life-threatening blood disease before she entered college, sexual harassment in her college days, persecution for her stand for Christ as adult, and a ten-year struggle with blood cancer. She was an over-comer—and my covenant partner.

When she passed away, I learned firsthand what a struggle it is for Christians to know how to respond to those who are suffering. In honor of my late wife, and based on what the Lord has taught me through Vivian's life and death, let me share some ways to pray for those going through suffering.

Most Christians have three key questions related to suffering. The following biblical insights and sample prayers can

frame our responses as we engage with those who need our encouragement.

#### QUESTION 1:

##### What Is the Purpose of Christian Suffering?

Our God is not the author of all the suffering and loss in our world. The enemy of our souls is very real. Jesus told us that the thief (Satan) comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10–12). Satan's active, evil influence exists in each of our lives, but God will use these personal battles (the loss and pressures of life) to help us grow.

Pushing back, in a manner consistent with the Word of God, develops our emotional and spiritual lives. The Bible explains this phenomenon in Romans 5:3–5: "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

# PRAYER GUIDE

By Sandra Higley and Danielle Schofield

## FOR THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING

**S**uffering comes in all shapes and sizes: chronic illness, persecution, relational heartaches, loss of a loved one, senseless tragedy, stresses of many kinds. We all face suffering at one time or another. In addition to praying for specifics centered on individual circumstances, here are a few ways to pray, based on what Scripture says about suffering.

### Kingdom Warfare

Father, this child of Yours has gone through unspeakable distress. Help those who are suffering to worship You in the midst of circumstances they don't understand. Lift them out of the hurtful details of what is happening so they get the bigger picture of its Kingdom impact. Help them trust You and hold on to the end, knowing You have a plan in mind for them. May they know You in a deeper, more meaningful way as a result of this circumstance (Job 1–2; 42:1–6, 10–16; Ps. 71:20).

### God's Glory

Father, if this suffering is intended to bring You glory, let it be so! Give Your suffering children the strength and joy to honor You during this difficult time. Deepen their understanding of the inheritance issues at stake when they share in Christ's sufferings. Help them to recognize that what they are going through is no comparison to the glory that will be revealed in them; help them wait for it with eager expectation. As they run the race through this trial, help them resist confusion and instead manifest the fruit of the Spirit (John 11:4; Rom. 8:17–19; Gal. 5:7–8, 22–23).

### God's Grace

Lord God, help Your servants embrace Your *no* as well as Your *yes*. Assure them that You see and hear them. Enable them to see Your power at work through these difficult circumstances. Show Yourself strong through their fragile state. Thank You that in spite of everything they are not crushed, driven to despair, or abandoned by You. Help them get up when circumstances knock them down so that Jesus' life shines through them (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

### Identification with Christ

Jesus, help Your beloved see that this hatred they are experiencing is visible proof they belong to You and not the world.

Encourage them to take a humble view of this identity as they continue to obey Your teaching and walk in love. Help them to fully know You and the power of Your resurrection, even as this situation causes them to become more and more like You. Let every act of unjust suffering commend them to God (Isa. 43:1; John 15:18–21; Phil. 3:10; 1 Peter 2:18–20).

### Faithful Friends

Heavenly Father, give Your suffering children true friends who seek to lighten their load rather than cause additional heartache. Give friends and family empathy for what the sufferers are going through; help them resist the urge to judge or assume they would handle things differently if put in the same situation. Help friends and loved ones to look for ways to encourage rather than chastising, condemning, or minimizing these overwhelming situations. Hold accountable those who profess to speak for You. Help sufferers to forgive and pray for any who allow the enemy to use them as unjust accusers. Help those afflicted to bless and not curse (Job 42:7–10; Luke 6:28).

### Proper Discernment

Father, give these dear ones a proper understanding of what is going on through this trial. Give them wisdom and courage to ask the right questions about fears, concerns, and needs. While it is commendable to suffer without cause, show Your children if there are other reasons this suffering has come to them. Without guilt or condemnation, help them to recognize any sin in their lives that needs to be dealt with according to Your Word. Help them to find a trustworthy person to come alongside them in prayer and confession if needed—someone in right relationship with You (Rom. 8:1; James 5:13–16; 1 Peter 2:18–20).

### Forbearance to Wait on the Lord

Father God, give Your hurting child the forbearance to wait on You, knowing we go through various seasons and each one has its purpose. Thank You that while weeping lasts for a night, You bring joy when the night is past. Turn their mourning to dancing! (Ps. 30:5, 11; Eccl. 3:1–3).

**SANDRA HIGLEY** is an author and the editor of *Real Life Downloaded* (Youth Edition), an online Sunday school curriculum supplement that is free of charge. Download the free *Real Life Downloaded* app. She co-authored this article with her daughter, who has a debilitating (sometimes fatal) disease with no known cure.



Our prayer can be something like this:

*Lord, help my friend accept the pain and the process of grieving while choosing to recognize the Lord's opportunity for growth in his or her struggles (James 1:2). Please infuse my friend with the comfort of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:4).*

## QUESTION 2:

### How Are Christians Supposed to Act When They Suffer?

The answer to this question is simple. We need to keep living, loving, and dreaming. Our well-being depends on how quickly we transition to a godly perspective. Let me explain.

In the Book of Job we find that Satan's goal was to bring a wedge between Job and God. Tools in our enemy's arsenal included sickness, domestic difficulties, loss of possessions, and the tragic death of loved ones. Satan designed these experiences to overwhelm the heart and mind of this faithful family man and motivate Job to rebel against the person and character of God.

These events were so dramatic that some people who read Job 1 take on a "second-hand offense." Assuming God is making a bet with Satan about Job's faithfulness—these people accuse our Lord of being insensitive and arbitrary. But that spiritually and emotionally cluttered perspective creates traps related to suffering.

God calls us, like Job, to trust His protective care. In seasons of loss and suffering, there are real manifestations of grief and unique grieving processes we must endure.

Let's go a little deeper. The following is a definition of grief and some accompanying manifestations (from *medicinenet.com*):

The normal process of reacting to a loss. The loss may be physical (such as a death), social (such as divorce), or occupational (such as

a job). Emotional reactions of grief can include anger, guilt, anxiety, sadness, and despair. Physical reactions of grief can include sleeping problems, changes in appetite, physical problems, or illness.

In the months since my wife's death, I have experienced an emotional roller coaster, accompanied by many of the grief symptoms listed in this definition. Christians, however, have the Holy Spirit's power to navigate the waters of adversity.

So how are we to handle our tribulations?

- By carrying out our daily duties and responsibilities, looking to the Lord.
- By forgiving persons who have offended us.
- By not blaming God for "treating us unfairly."

Our prayer for those going through seasons of suffering can follow this general approach:

*Heavenly Father, I thank You for my friend(s) and their calling in Christ! May they receive the comfort and encouragement of the Spirit of God. Remind them that the comfort they receive from You is also preparing them to help others. Despite the depth of pain, assure them that resurrection-life anointing and grace will pour out of them to others with similar afflictions in the days ahead. Father, remind them that there is Kingdom value in what they are going through. May they also remember that they "are more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37) and that they will get through this.*

## QUESTION 3:

### How Do I Minister to My Grieving Friend?

After more than 40 years in ministry, I have learned that a person's presence is the most needed ministry in times of grief. Even though I have spent most of my adult life as a wordsmith and orator, just

being present with family and friends in their loss can be more precious and powerful than an amazing sermon. I too have experienced this ministry of presence.

I kissed my wife Vivian goodbye on Easter Sunday afternoon. I jumped into a limo with my friend and associate pastor David Parlette and headed to the airport and ultimately Johannesburg, South Africa. By the time I reached my hotel room, my eldest daughter informed me of my wife's sudden passing.

The presence of Pastor Dave was amazingly supportive during the more than 36 hours it took us to get back home. We prayed together and ate a few meals together, but most importantly I felt comfortable enough with him to sit in silence—in a state of shock mixed with thankfulness and horror.

Our prayer for friends going through suffering might include this kind of focus:

*Lord help me practice the ministry of presence for my friend. Let me understand and perceive that person's love language. I want to be an answer to his or her needs, not a self-absorbed intruder. As I attend to the things You assign me that will help my friend in practical ways, please send other servants motivated by love to express and minister Your comfort. Let the body of Christ be my friend's "bridge over troubled water" and a conduit for the love of God.*

When we gain insight into God's perspective on suffering, we can practice the presence of encouragement—with or without words! And our prayers will bring God's peace and comfort to friends in need. **PC**



**HARRY JACKSON** is senior pastor of Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, MD, and presiding bishop of the International Communion of Evangelical Churches. He is one of the chief conveners of The Reconciled Church: Healing the Racial Divide Movement ([thereconciledchurch.org](http://thereconciledchurch.org)).



# LESSONS



By Johnnie Moore

# FROM THE PERSECUTED

How One Man's Story Can Encourage Us to Pray

**P**eter's grandmother was a witchdoctor. But when Peter was ten years old, he witnessed her life-changing encounter with Jesus. He then made his own decision to follow Christ and dedicated himself to witnessing to everyone around him.

Peter tells each piece of his story earnestly, rapidly. He stops to laugh, wipes his eyes. Then he tells the next part, stops to laugh, and again wipes his eyes. His first persecution came at university, where he was pressured to renounce his faith or step down from student leadership. Later, long imprisonment marked him.

The more he talks, the more obvious it is that some of those tears are not mere humor. Some tears reflect painful memories, and others come from deep gratitude for what God has done—for Peter and for the persecuted church he now serves.

## Firsthand Prayer Encouragement

Peter's story, adapted here, can help us better understand how to pray for those being persecuted right now for their faith.

The ways Peter prayed through the darkest days of his life provide examples of how to remain faithful in prayer—in our own lives and on behalf of others.

I had been baptized as a boy when Watchman Nee's teams came to do ministry. At that time, my grandma was a high-ranking witch in a coven. She could perform miraculous signs and "heal" people, but her body would take on the suffering of those she was healing. Our family would also suffer from disease or our animals would die. Grandma grew frustrated and fearful. She had a special room in her house where she worshiped idols. The atmosphere was very dark in there. My family was afraid to go near.

During that time, many evangelists traveled to our town. One day, two of them came to my house and prayed for my grandma. She heard that when you believe in Jesus, He brings peace and blessing to your life. So she accepted Jesus as her Savior. Then the evangelists burned all of Grandma's idols. I will never forget coming home

from school that day. Immediately, I felt like there was light in our house.

But there were still evil spirits in Grandma. So the evangelists repeatedly came to our home to lay hands on her and cast out the demons, and she would scream. Then suddenly one day she was fine. The evil spirits were gone!

My three sisters and I were little kids then, watching this unfold. I came to trust Jesus after I saw such a dramatic change in my grandma. I knew there was a God and that God had the power to defeat evil.

After all this, a peace filled our home. I was filled with joy, and I led my mother to the Lord. Soon all of my family was saved. I would read the Bible secretly, even in school, right up until I finished college. I prayed a lot. It didn't matter what I encountered, I would pray. Persecution began. Yet God also performed signs and wonders.

**A**t university, the Lord began teaching me some hard lessons. Previously I was a new Christian, but now the Lord started to ask me to sacrifice some things. The first year at university, I became class president. But one weekend, my professor, a Communist party member, couldn't find me. My friend told him I was at church. The professor was furious. When I came back from church, he said, "You are a youth being raised under the red flag of the Communist party, so you should not indulge in Western thoughts and religion."

Then came other school leaders and Communist party leaders. They all tried to lead me away from Christian thinking. But I prayed constantly through all of this, and the Lord strengthened me.

Finally, my professor threatened me. He said I could give up my Christian beliefs or give up

being class president. I told my professor that I would rather be a Christian than head of the class. He thought that was unbelievable. Why would anyone make this kind of sacrifice for Jesus? But I felt free and relieved. As class president I couldn't tell others I was a Christian or I'd lose my position. But now I could share Jesus freely with my friends on campus.

After college, I wasn't completely satisfied in my heart because I saw many people come to church for different purposes. I wanted a more authentic spiritual life. I wanted to become more mature in my faith.

So I cried out, "If you're a God that exists just to meet people's needs, then I don't want to believe in You anymore. If You want me to continuously follow You, give me direction as to which way I should go in my life."

That year, I went to a Christian leadership conference, but many of us were arrested. Thirty or forty elders and people in leadership were brought to prison.

The officials thought I was a top leader because I was well educated. They placed me in a solitary room, and they watched me minute by minute. The police asked the head of the prison, the big boss, to monitor me closely. Then the guards began to beat me.

I was young and afraid. But then came the day they asked me to share about Christianity. And it was the big boss who said all the prisoners were required to listen as well!

"Everyone, listen carefully," the big boss said. "If he repeats himself, you can beat him." The prison had a rule that we had to study in the morning and evening. But now they had to study by listening to me teach about Christianity!

I would preach twice a day, starting from Genesis, without a Bible. I touched on everything, especially

why we need Jesus. After each session, the big boss would debate with me. I had to pretend he would win. But I knew that every time I would preach, hearts were softening.

Within the jail there was a hierarchy. Originally, I had to clean toilets, but every day after I would preach, I would get upgraded. Soon I was moved to a wooden bed. Then I got to sleep near the big boss, not near the toilets. Finally I started to get meat to eat sometimes, not just a little rice. So I knew the big boss was slowly changing his mind.

The big boss was a kung fu master. He could beat anyone. He had restless hands. Any disobedience was met with his wrath. And he had a law degree. After I stayed there one month, he said, "You must be sentenced to at least three years!"

That's when I cried out to God, "Lord, I can't be here three years!" Then I prayed, "Lord, if I bring this man to Christ, then can I go?" The presence of the Lord was so real, so strong! All I could do was continue to pray. Then I felt relaxed and released by God.

One night, the big boss couldn't sleep. He asked me to talk to him. He said one of my words from God touched him. He began to open up. He told me he came from a celebrity family and was the head of the mafia in another city. He was part of the "Black Society," with 3,000 subordinates under him. "Even the mayor would kneel to me and submit to me," the big boss said. "Everyone was afraid of me." He was also a high-ranking officer. But when he was stationed at that prison, everyone ignored him—even his wife and children.

He started telling me his secrets. One night, he said he thought I'd be transferred to another jail, or maybe even released. "So we have no time left," he said suddenly. "What can I



do to be saved?"

I led him to Christ that night. After the big boss received Christ, he changed! In the past, every day he felt he had to beat someone. But now, when he would get provoked, he'd say, "If it weren't for Christ, I would beat you!"

All of the people in that cell were saved—15 people total!

The big boss asked me, "Besides confessing my sins, what else do I need to do?"

I said, "You need to be baptized." We didn't know how to do that in the jail. But then we decided there was a small tank in the shower for bathing that we could use. One day, we stepped outside to get some fresh air, and the big boss said, "Okay, let's do it now."

We filled the tank in the shower, and when he came up out of the water, he was so joyful. He ran to tell the others there that he had been saved!

The very next day, I got the news that I was released. Right before I left, the big boss asked me questions, like how to pray. I only had a little time, so I wrote down some verses for him. Ever since then, I have been in ministry. God has protected me.

**T**he next time you feel defeated and unwilling to pray, remember the faith of Peter. Whether in a season of comfort, or a season of pain, Peter was always letting his requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:6). He never wavered. He never pressed a pause button on his faith. He trusted God's plan for him.

## Ways to Pray

We may never experience the kind of suffering for our faith that some believers around the world do. But we can actively engage in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ by praying faithfully for them.

Here are some prayer points for the persecuted Church:

- Pray they will know God's presence and comfort in their fear, pain, and suffering. Ask God to show them how dearly He loves them—and that He has not forgotten them in their struggles.
- Pray for protection from violence, abuse, and harassment. But should they continue to suffer, ask God to strengthen their faith and resolve.
- Pray they will not be broken in spirit or fall into despair. May they always keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.
- Ask God to miraculously turn every evil done against them into greater advancement of the gospel.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill them with grace and the power to demonstrate the love of Christ in even the most difficult situations.
- Ask God to remind you often of your brothers and sisters who are suffering for Christ. Pray for God to transform your heart to remember them, pray for them, love them, and remain one with them in Christ.
- Jesus instructs us in Matthew 5:44 to pray for those who persecute us. Pray that those who suffer will have extraordinary love that comes through the empowerment of the Spirit. Pray that their prayers will bring about transformed hearts of hardened and cruel people.

In Peter's difficult circumstances, he did not operate out of fear. Instead, he relied on our powerful and sovereign God. May our prayer lives be as constant and unmoved as Peter's, always faithful until the end. **PC**



**JOHNNIE MOORE** is founder and president of The KAIROS Company, a public relations and communications consulting firm. He has served as an adviser to multiple presidential candidates, and was also senior vice president of Liberty University.

# Pursuing the Christ

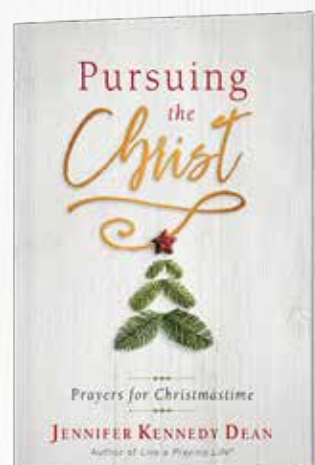
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# BIBLE

# STUDY

**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](http://Biblegateway.com) is an excellent source for translations you may not have on hand.

## Prayer through Suffering

### I'VE

always prayed. But I haven't always prayed with passion. I prayed good words. I prayed for good things. But my heart wasn't always engaged, and my prayers sometimes felt sterile.

Then came the year my world fell apart. For the first time in my life I recognized my utter powerlessness. My life had careened out of control, and I couldn't do a thing about it.

My women's Bible class was studying Psalms that year. I was surprised to discover that the psalmists weren't always pious and joyful when they prayed. And, contrary to what I'd heard, not every psalm ends in praise. But the biggest aha moment for me was this: David, the man after God's own heart, prayed his guts out! Some of his prayers were anguished, raw, and messy. It made me wonder—if he could pray his unvarnished emotions, could I do that, too?

I decided to try it. I wouldn't pray

with measured, holy-sounding words. I wouldn't write with neat script in my pretty journal. No, I would tell God how I felt about things—how I *really* felt. And if it wasn't pretty, well, that's just how it would have to be.

God seemed up for it. He even set the stage by sending a terrific thunderstorm. The dark clouds and booming thunder matched my mood. So I went outside, and, in the torrential rain, I screamed out my fear and confusion to God. Oblivious to how drenched I was becoming, I prayed as never before. It sounded like no prayer I'd ever heard in church. But I knew it was prayer. It was probably the most real prayer I'd ever prayed up to that point. And it felt good. It was cathartic.

I didn't hear God's response, but I felt it. His peace came over me, quieting my troubled soul, letting me know He was there, and that He would continue to be, come what may.

I learned later there is a name for this kind of prayer-in-suffering: it's called *lament*. I don't know how I'd missed

this. It turns out that lament prayers pepper the entire Bible, especially the Old Testament. Psalms is where we find most of them—approximately one-third of the Psalms are laments! But they show up in lots of other places, too—Job, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, for instance. There's even an entire book of the Bible dedicated to praying in suffering. It's called—no surprise—*Lamentations*.

It seems that God created laments for those who are praying in times of suffering. When we pray lament, we are in good company with some of the saintliest of God's saints. After all, what better to do in times of suffering than to pour out our hearts to God?

### Discussion Questions

After reading each of these laments from Psalms, jot down notes to the questions that follow:

- Psalm 6:1–10
- Psalm 13:1–4
- Psalm 25:16–20
- Psalm 38:1–22



What kinds of suffering are mentioned or alluded to in these laments?

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What kinds of things do the lamenters ask God to do?

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In what ways do the lamenters demonstrate faith?

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Did anything from these passages surprise you? If so, note them here.

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Read Psalm 22:1–24, the prayer that Jesus prayed from the cross during His deepest suffering. What connections would Jesus have made between the psalmist’s experience and His own? How does knowing that Jesus lamented encourage or challenge you in your own prayer life?

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We’ve seen that prayers of lament are often very personal. But lamenting is also appropriate in other circumstances. Read the following laments, then answer the questions that follow.

- 2 Chronicles 20:5–12
- Psalm 94:2–4
- Daniel 9:3–19
- Habakkuk 1:2–4

What kinds of suffering were these people experiencing?

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When might you find yourself wanting to pray a lament similar to one of these?

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## Action Steps

Sometimes it’s hard to find words to pray when we are suffering. Praying Scripture helps. Choose one of the psalms from the previous list. Copy it and carry it with you in your pocket or purse. When your circumstances feel overwhelming, borrow the psalmist’s words and tell God about your suffering.

The text I chose: \_\_\_\_\_

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Use Habakkuk 3 as a model for writing your own prayer of lament. It can be a lament for yourself, for someone you love, or it could be more general, like a prayer for your nation or for the persecuted Church around the world. Make sure to include both parts to your prayer—the statement of suffering’s cause and the “though” statement that declares your faith despite the circumstances.

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**CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK** is a regular contributor to *Prayer Connect* and director of curriculum for Community Bible Studies ([communitybiblestudies.org](http://communitybiblestudies.org)).

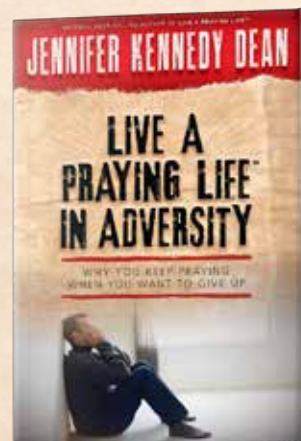
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# 4

How to Take Your Praying Beyond the Norm

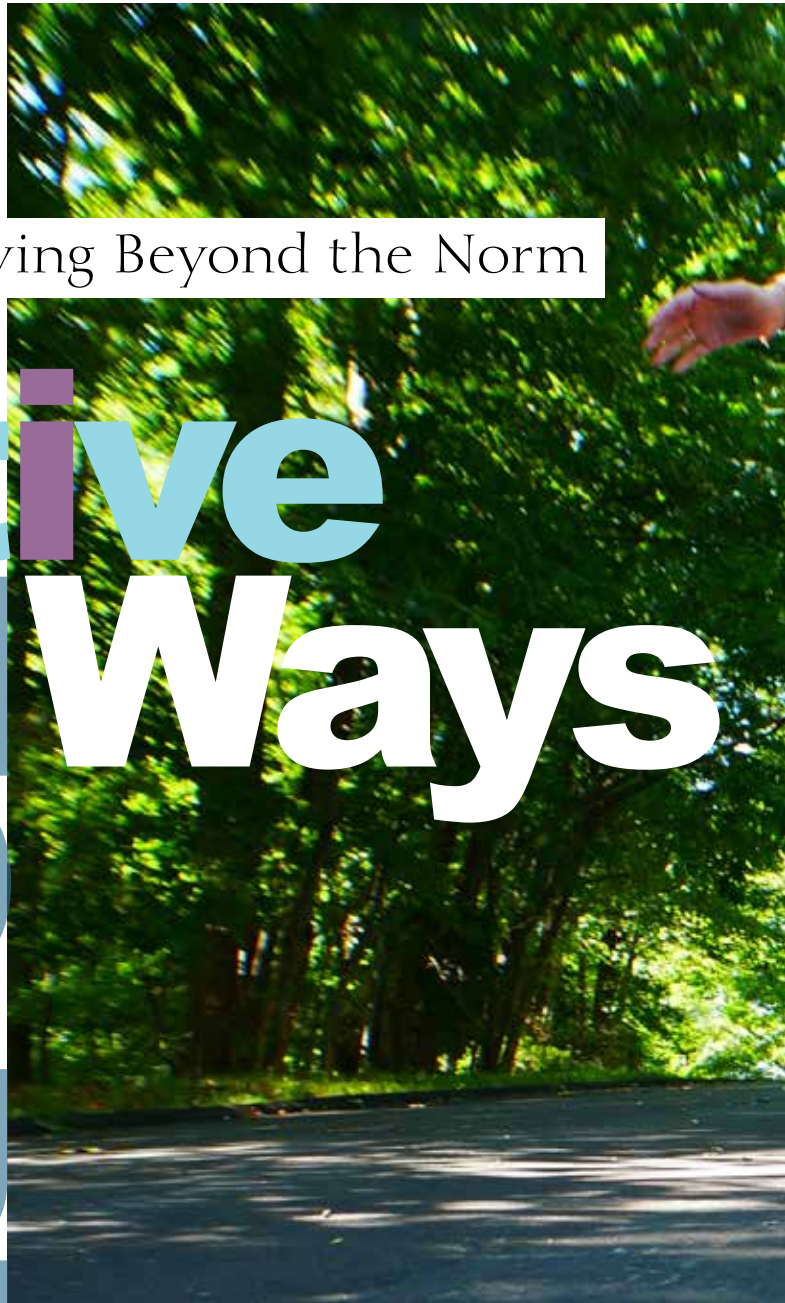
# Creative Ways

By Paul Covert

**M**any believers struggle with prayer—often because they lack variety. They remind me of a friend who went shopping and bought ten pairs of black cotton cargo pants and 15 blue T-shirts. He wears the same thing every day. There's no variety. His morning routine never changes.

Some Christians use the same method of prayer they were taught decades earlier—even if it does not fit their personality or interests. So their prayer lives feel routine or even foreign to the way they are wired.

Over the last decade, in an effort to bring new life to the prayers of Christ followers, I have collected many creative ways to pray. Here are a few you might try privately—or with friends in your small group.



## Praying the Pictures of the Scripture

**1** I enjoy praying word pictures of Jesus from the Bible. The vivid pictures of Jesus throughout the Gospels can stimulate prayer. I am not talking about the illustrations in the back of a Bible but rather the glimpses of Jesus' life so real they create pictures in our minds.

For example, in Luke 9:37–43 Jesus comes down from the Mountain of Transfiguration and a great crowd gathers. A man whose only son is harassed by a demon cries out to Jesus, “Look at my son, for he is my only child.” The man explains his desperation: “I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.”

Jesus calls for the boy to be brought to Him. Even before





the child reaches Jesus, the unclean spirit throws the boy to the ground. Jesus rebukes the demon and gives the child back to his father.

I love to “pray this picture” by personalizing it for Annie and me with our own three sons. “Lord, will You look upon our sons and heal them in their struggles?”

The image of Jesus giving the son back to his father is fabulous. Some people have a child who is ill or estranged from them, and the picture of Jesus giving their child back, completely healed and whole, takes my breath away.

**Practice it:** There are hundreds of word pictures in Scripture and many ways to pray each one in fresh ways. Here are a few to get started:

- Peter walking on the water (Matt. 14:22–33)

- God informing Moses that His name is I AM (Ex. 3:14)
- Jesus with the little children on His lap (Mark 10:13–16).

**You’ll know you have it when . . .** your mind starts to see pictures of Jesus and God all through the Scriptures and you can pray them freely. This will open a new realm of prayer for you.

## Blessing Others

**2** Blessing is the act of communicating approval or encouragement to others we care about. It is a powerful concept in the Scriptures.

- God blessed Adam and Eve when He created them and placed them in the garden (Gen. 1:27–28).

- Before Jacob died, he gave a blessing to each of his 12 sons (Gen. 49).
- In Genesis 27:26–29, Isaac blessed his son Jacob: “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness—an abundance of grain and new wine.”

One of the joys of my life is gathering my grandchildren on my lap and praying a prayer of blessing over each one. I pray for such things as their safety, their walk with God, their future spouses, strong health, sensitivity to the Spirit of God, love for their siblings, and favor with God and man. Then I give them each a kiss and a huge hug and send them home

with their parents. This family tradition has become a happy time for all of us.

The concept is transferable. You can pray a blessing over your husband or wife before he or she leaves for work in the morning. You can pray a blessing over your children at night before bed.

Praying a blessing over your neighbors—or even your enemies—is a healthy and spiritually mature thing to do.

**Practice it:** This week look for someone you can bless. It may be a family member or friend, but select a different one each day. Place a hand on him or her (if that is appropriate) and pray a blessing over that person. Choose a place where he or she will not be embarrassed, and pray over such aspects as health, future, relationships, and walk with God.

**You’ll know you have it when . . .** blessing others is part of your daily routine. Imagine how many people can be refreshed and strengthened by such prayers.

**3 Kingdom Praying**  
We all pray many kinds of prayers, including casual prayers like,

“God, I am late for the doctor’s appointment. Please turn all the lights between here and there green.” Or sometimes we pray crisis prayers that have a different kind of urgency: “Oh, no, I have cancer. Please heal me, Lord!”

There is nothing wrong with either kind of prayer, but don’t forget to add Kingdom prayers to this mix. Kingdom prayers are prayers that *extend* the Kingdom of God. For example, “God please stop the killing of innocent babies by abortion.”

Kingdom prayers take an aspect that is right in the Kingdom of God—and then ask God to make it right here on earth.

**Practice it:** Following are a few Kingdom-prayer starters to try this week. Pray one each day, adding your personal thoughts to the starter. Create Kingdom prayers of your own for the following:

- “God, please stop the terrible practice

# Need a spark in your prayer life?

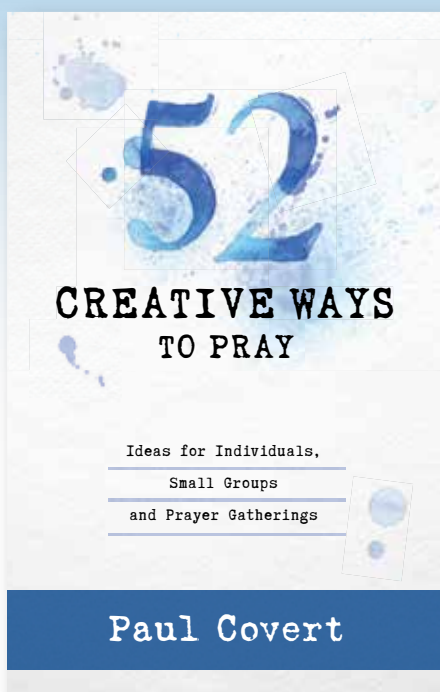
## Too much a sameness to the prayer time in your small group?

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of sex trafficking in our country and our world.”

- “Father, please stop the human injustices carried out by North Korea.”
- “God, please help the American Church regain more passion for prayer.”
- “Lord, please raise up strong Christian leaders from among our young people to take the Church into the next generation.”

**You’ll know you have it when . . .**

Kingdom praying is part of your regular prayer times.

4

## Praying Jesus

Have you ever thought about using the body of Jesus as prayer prompts—His eyes, ears, hands, arms, or feet? I have found great comfort in doing this as I pray over myself or others.

If you are in a situation where you don’t know what to do, for instance, pray like this, “Jesus, I know You can see things I will never see. So I am asking You to give me Your eyes in this situation so I will know what You want me to do—and do it with confidence.” Identify with Jesus in a personal way that prompts you to pray creatively.

**Practice it:** Pray for

- His ears to hear what only He can hear.
- His hands to help another.
- His feet to flee from temptation.
- His eyes to see the way He sees.
- His mind to give you the wisdom you need.
- His mind/thoughts to speak the right words.
- His smile to comfort another.
- His attitude in the midst of suffering.

**You’ll know you have it when . . .**

you find comfort in the presence of Jesus and all His abilities and personal characteristics.

## Beyond the Routine

This kind of variety can take prayers beyond the obvious “fix-this-or-that” approach. Use these prayer starters in groups to teach others to grow deeper in prayer.

Don’t let your prayer life fall into a rut. Find creative ways to stretch your own prayer life and encourage others as

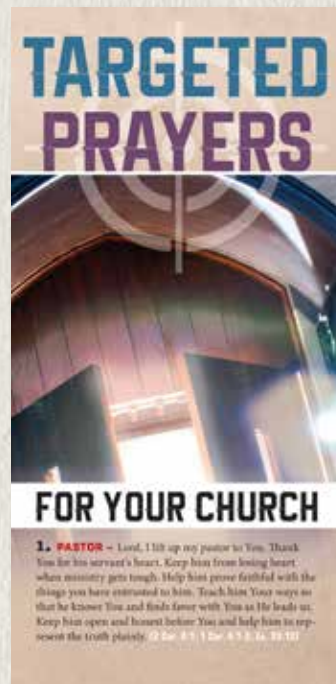
you model fresh ways to pray. **PC**



**PAUL COVERT** is an author who leads schools of prayer and prayer events across the U.S. and internationally. He consults with churches in the areas of prayer leadership and prayer strategy. The ideas in this article are taken from Paul’s new book *52 Creative Ways to Pray* (PrayerShop Publishing 2018).

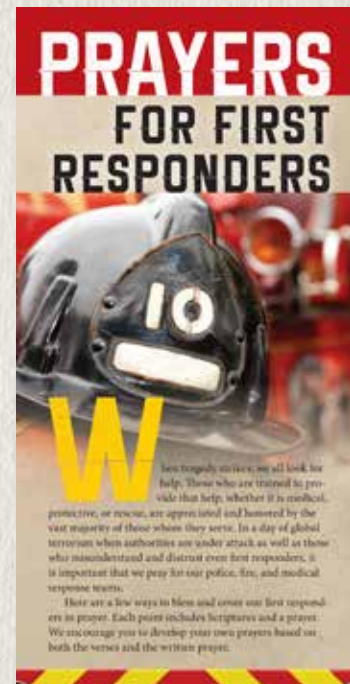
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A photograph of a family walking away from the camera on a sandy beach at sunset. A man in a dark t-shirt and jeans holds the hand of a young boy in a light blue shirt. A woman in a white lace top walks beside them, her arm around the man's waist. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and long shadows.

Igniting Revival in Our Nation

# *Five* on the





By Cheryl Sacks

“Revival will come to America when the *family altar* is restored!”

The Lord’s voice seemed almost audible as the words rang out in my heart.

Our church was in the middle of a conference on “Revival and the Holy Spirit”—yet not one of the speakers had mentioned families in connection with revival.

*How could something so simple as families praying and worshiping the Lord bring spiritual life to a nation?* I thought.

As I stood on the platform waiting for my turn to speak, I breathed a prayer, “Lord, is this really *You* speaking?”

Suddenly a young man stepped to the microphone and prayed the exact words I’d just heard: “Lord, restore the *family altar* in homes across America!”

Wow—what a confirmation!

As he was praying, I saw a vision of our nation covered in darkness. But all at once, lights began to illuminate the darkness. As families began to pray and worship together, their homes filled up with living light, which spread to other homes, quickly transforming the entire nation.

Many years have passed since then, and I believe we are beginning to see this vision fulfilled. We read statistics and news reports about divorce, single parenting, families in crisis, poverty, the national drug epidemic, and sexual improprieties. Yet, despite all this, God is unquestionably moving, and it’s happening at the family altar.

### Altars of Hearts

Old Testament patriarchs worshiped at altars made of stone. Today we, as individuals and families, worship the Lord at the altars of our hearts. We can do this in any place at any time.

It is an amazing thing to come into the presence of God together as a family. This opens the windows of heaven and brings us out of the monotony of daily living into the riches of God. It gives us an opportunity to call out to the Lord for more of Him in our lives, and for friends, coworkers, and seekers at church to come to salvation.

These fresh encounters are contagious. The fire spreads. As our families become saturated with the heart of God, His hope, joy, and love bubble out of us, reigniting in others that which was reignited in us.

Our daughter Nicole and her husband Marco experienced this recently when they opened their family altar to extended family and friends. Nicole had been talking about the Lord with her personal trainer Jen, and with the children’s babysitter Christina. So Nicole decided to invite them to their family night of worship.

Several guests brought instruments—a keyboard and guitars—and everyone joined in

# Family Altar

worshiping the Lord. Jen, who had never been inside a church, said later that the experience was so profound she felt “like Jell-O.” She thought any moment she might break into tears. Jen has now accepted Christ, and her marriage, which was headed for divorce, is on the road to healing and health. Christina said she had never been in such a powerful spiritual setting. Her heart is open, and she is asking for prayer.

What everyone experienced that night was a powerful outpouring of God’s presence. It was an ignition of passion for Jesus accompanied by an infusion of spiritual life. It was a manifestation of God’s goodness.

This is revival, and God’s promise to praying families is this: those who seek Him will find Him.

## The Power of Praying Together

The wife of a pastor in my city shares the powerful results of families in their church praying together:

Recently our church gave away 30 copies of *The Prayer Saturated Family* to members in our church. Almost all of them started holding a family prayer and worship night, and it has literally transformed their homes.

We have seen a lot of little miracles—but the biggest one came to a couple who started this practice. The couple had only been saved a few years, so they had not raised their kids in a Christ-centered home with prayer and worship. All their children are grown now and none of them knew the Lord.

The couple started family prayer and worship every Monday night and invited their kids to come. One by one they started coming and accepting the Lord as their Savior. Two have been baptized.

Their son, who had become a Buddhist, called his mom. “I can’t come to family prayer on Monday nights,” he said. “Could you change

it to Tuesday nights so I can come, too?”

So his parents changed it. That son now comes faithfully, and they are having good conversations. The parents are confident that the Holy Spirit is at work and that their son will come to know the Lord.

My husband Hal and I have been praying together to see revival in our church for more than 30 years. One recent Sunday night we arrived early for the downtown-campus church service, mainly attended by students from the nearby universities. Young people had already lined up down the street and around the block. Once the doors opened, the sanctuary and balcony quickly filled. The crowd overflowed into the chapel and into the courtyard, where the service was being live streamed. The atmosphere was electric. Students worshiped with passion and zeal. Many responded to the message and gave their hearts to Christ.

This is not a onetime occurrence. It is happening in our services regularly. What we’re experiencing is not “church as usual.” It’s fresh and alive!

## Do It Again, Lord!

There are “fiery hot spots” like this popping up across our nation. In some places it looks like the *Jesus Movement* all over again. The Jesus Movement (late ‘60s and early ‘70s) was God’s response to the heart cries of mothers and fathers, interceding for their kids’ deliverance from drugs and promiscuity.

Pastor Chuck Smith and his wife, residents of Costa Mesa, CA, ignited the movement. On their way home from church they noticed the hippies wandering the streets, and the Smiths began praying together for them. Then they started inviting the hippies into their home for prayer, worship, and Bible study, and the Jesus Movement spread exponentially. Tens of thousands came to Christ and thousands were baptized in the ocean.

The family altar’s power to ignite

revival goes back hundreds of years before that. In the late 1600s the Puritan minister Richard Baxter felt burdened over the cold spiritual state of his church. It was not only cold, but practically empty.

He determined that the way to bring revival to his church and community was to establish the family altar in every home. He went from home to home, leading people to Christ and establishing family altars. After nearly three years, revival fires were burning in his church, and multitudes of rejoicing believers and seekers of Jesus would crowd the church every Sunday.

In the early 1700s the minister Thomas Boston followed the same procedure in his spiritually cold parish, with the same results!

## Steps to Building an Altar

You can begin taking steps now to build—or rebuild—your own family altar. Here are some suggestions:

- **Call your family together and discuss the idea of devoting a special time each day or week to gather to meet with the Lord.** Explain that this is a time to invite His presence and power into your lives and family—to thank Him for the great things happening and to ask His help in the challenges. Find a time you can all agree upon, and make sure it is set aside for this purpose.
- **Tailor your gathering to the ages and personality of your family.** Younger kids can’t sit still for long. You may need to pray with them when you put them to bed and have a longer time of prayer after they fall asleep. If you have teenagers, involve them in framing the time to make it interesting and exciting.
- **Set the tone.** Our family has found that reading a Scripture or chapter from a Christian book helps set the tone and inspires faith. Does anyone in your family play an instrument or have a good singing voice? He or she



may be willing to lead a time of worship as you begin. At our house we turn on Pandora and start with our favorite worship music.

- **Create a journal where you can record your family's requests and the date the prayers are answered.** We also write down the blessings God has given that week—and some we didn't even ask for! He is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20).
- **Remember, in addition to a special set-aside time, we can pray and worship together anytime and at any place**—on our way to school or a soccer game, even on vacation. Be sure to enjoy your time. It's okay to laugh. In the presence of the Lord, there is joy! (Ps. 16:11).

My friend Teresa and her husband live in Perth, Australia, and one day she heard the Lord speak to her: "Teresa, I want you to build a family altar."

Teresa had never heard that term before, but she sensed the Lord was asking her to start a regular time of family prayer and worship.

She wasn't sure how this could happen since her two sons are grown and married with children of their own. But the Lord gave Teresa a plan. He guided her to call her family to a weekly time of prayer and fasting each Tuesday. Everyone would skip breakfast and lunch and gather at Teresa's home for the evening meal.

After dinner, they would pray together, guided by this simple question, "What do you want God to do for you this week?"

Teresa's daughter-in-law is a physician. She wanted to see healings and miracles in her practice. Within three weeks, the Lord began to answer. Teresa's daughter-in-law has seen patients healed of brain tumors. Women who previously could not conceive have given birth. And many young women patients have been delivered from depression and other serious problems.

Before long Teresa's family couldn't

wait for the next Tuesday's gathering to see what the Lord had done that week.

## Restored Families Bring Revival

As my husband and I speak in churches and conferences about the family altar, we're seeing an increasing hunger for God's presence in the home. Hundreds of moms, dads, and entire families are streaming forward after each service, inviting God's presence afresh into their homes and committing themselves to regular prayer and worship together. Testimonies are pouring in of healed marriages, salvations, and deliverance from drugs and other addictions.

Many have been praying for revival in our churches and nation for years. Could it be that the missing component is the *power of the family altar*? Could it be that we have neglected to preserve this sacred practice, where we not only

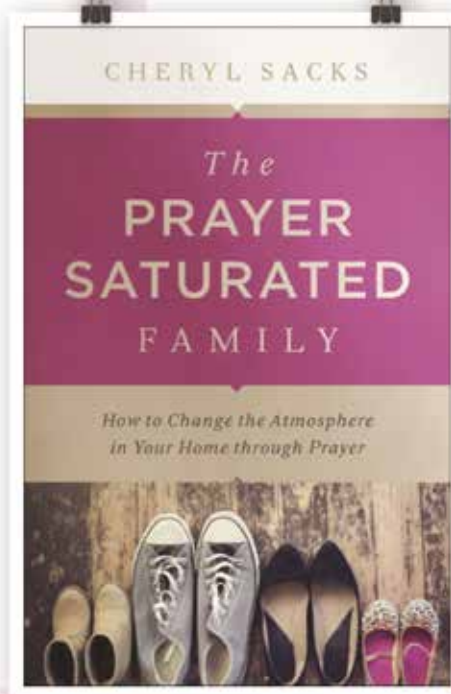
pass on the stories of God's goodness and power to the next generation, but where they can experience it firsthand?

What if pastors across America began to call their families to establish a family altar and pray for revival? What if families regularly invited God's presence into their homes, and prayed for their schools, workplaces, and churches? What if every time we gathered to pray, we asked the Lord to send another Great Awakening to our land?

I believe we would see families restored, revival fires ablaze, and a great harvest brought into the Kingdom. **PC**



**CHERYL SACKS** is cofounder of BridgeBuilders International, a ministry that mobilizes God's people in transformational prayer ([bridgebuilders.net](http://bridgebuilders.net)). She is a national speaker and best-selling author of *The Prayer Saturated Family: How to Change the Atmosphere in Your Home Through Prayer*, available at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).



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## Pregnancy Prayers for Growing Babies

**H**ow, Father? How can we help a woman understand her baby is not a choice, but a life already chosen by You?”

God listened while I bagged diapers and sorted onesies in the clothing room at our pregnancy center. Without the benefit of an ultrasound machine, our volunteers labored to guide streams of young women looking for answers and seeking peace in chaos.

As positive pregnancy test results became clear, tears accompanied whispered prayers. While some mamas gave thanks, others pleaded, “Lord, help!”

When a mama’s response was to call out to God, I realized she might benefit from a tool to keep the communication going. Why not help her get to know her child and his Creator? Why not show her the value of the one growing in her womb as she prays? So I began penning prayers for mamas.

By combining prenatal developmental markers from *thebump.com* with insights from *Praying the Attributes of God* by Rosemary Jensen, I created prayers from weeks four to forty with the goal of keeping young mamas talking and listening to the Creator. Then I posted the prayers on my website for easy

cell phone access. Sample excerpts from *elainetomski.com* include:

- **4 weeks:** Thank you, God, for what You’ve made inside me. You’ve created a person the size of a poppy seed. My little one is already programmed for height, hair color, and eye color. I don’t know the details yet, but You do. Please keep my tiny one safe. I trust You to give life and growth to this precious one behind my belly button and near to my heart.
- **24 weeks:** From the size of a poppy seed to 12 inches of a human being in just 24 weeks? You are an amazing Creator! Thank You, God, for growing my little babe. Thank You that she’s getting closer to being able to survive outside my womb. I’m feeling less patient and becoming more uncomfortable. I’m thankful You’re always patient with me, God.
- **35 weeks:** Thank You that my child is now the size of a coconut. No wonder he’s pressing on everything inside of me! When he kicks my bladder, thank You that he has fully developed ears that hear me squeal. Both my little one and I are changing. I’m comforted by the fact that You, God, never change.



One mama says, “Elaine’s prayers help to guide me in how to specifically pray for my growing baby. They remind me that God loves this little one even more than I do as He quietly and secretly shapes her into her little being.” Another mama reports that it helped her bond with her husband and brought him understanding as they tracked the growth and size of their little one. She was especially comforted to know what the baby was like in her first three months when all she felt was sick.

Today, my prayers for pregnant women continue. I pray they perceive the value of preborn life. While only God knows when a mama’s prayer deters abortion, we fully understand He is faithful to hear and answer our prayers.

**ELAINE TOMSKI** is the picture book author of *Behind My Bellybutton* and a contributing writer for *Just Plain Values* and *Clubhouse Jr.* magazines.

## Saddlebags: Two Weeks of Prayer Provisions

**P**arents constantly wash dirty hands, help with homework, bandage knees, and feed hungry sons and daughters with sandwiches and affection. They deal with endless details of laundry, lunchboxes, soccer schedules, and household chores. But our prayers for our treasured sons and daughters can

sometimes seem so vague that we’re not sure what we’re advocating for. And often we don’t recognize when our prayers are being answered.

Praying blessings over our sons and daughters is not only powerful and fruitful, but it can help parents verbalize to our children our hopes instead of our

fears. We have the privilege of filling their spiritual saddlebags with godly character traits instead of provisions the world thinks they will need.

The following 14 Scriptures—one each day—are a good start toward building godly character in the lives of our young men and women. After two weeks



of requests to bless them in these specific, beneficial ways, the following topics can be repeated or expanded.

*Lord, let my sons and daughters*

- **Find Safety and Protection in You:** “As surely as the Lord lives,” he said, “not one hair of your son’s head will fall to the ground” (2 Sam. 14:11).
- **Seek Your Guidance:** “He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way” (Ps. 25:9).
- **Maintain Purity:** “The one who has clean hands and a pure heart . . . will receive blessing from the LORD” (Ps. 24:4–5).
- **Commit Themselves to Prayer:** “Three times a day [Daniel] got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (Dan. 6:10).
- **Seek to Be Filled with Your Spirit:** “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).
- **Clothe Themselves with Your Power:** “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

- **Speak Your Words:** “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the LORD” (Isa. 59:21).
- **Be Humble:** “All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 14:11).
- **Provide Joy and Delight to Others:** “He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth” (Luke 1:14).
- **Exhibit the Fullness of Your Strength:** “The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7).
- **Demonstrate the Fullness of Your Love:** “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken . . .” says the Lord, who has compassion on you” (Isa. 54:10).
- **Be Free and Able to Serve:** “Live as free people, but do not use your

freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves” (1 Peter 2:16).

- **Serve You in Faith and Patience:** “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised” (Heb. 6:12).
- **Keep Themselves Alert and Ready for Christ’s Coming:** “Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their clothing ready so they will not have to walk around naked and ashamed” (Rev. 16:15, NLT).

Use these and other Scriptures to start your *own* list of traits you believe your children will need in the current culture. Pray blessings from God’s Word and fill up their spiritual saddlebags!

**MARCIA DAUGHERTY** has worked in staff and volunteer roles at several churches in the Midwest, assisting with music, discipleship, children’s ministries, missions, leadership, and communications.

## Will You Pray with Us?

Thank you for coming alongside us as prayer partners! We are actively listening to the Lord, discerning His voice, and presenting content aligned with His Kingdom purposes. Please pray we will correctly “understand the times” and know what to do in leading the prayer movement across this nation (1 Chron. 12:32).

Here are some other requests:

- Pray that the National Day of Prayer Task Force will continue growing beyond “one day” in May—and will help foster a prayer movement that touches every church in our nation and engages all believers to actively cry out to God for desperately needed revival and spiritual awakening.
- Pray for Carol Madison, *Prayer Connect* editor, as she also leads prayer initiatives on behalf of the next generation and their plans for Together 2018 at Texas Motor Speedway, Oct. 20–21 (*togethergeneration.com*). Pray for both rest and energy as she balances workloads with various ministries.
- Pray for Bridget Rennie, *Prayer Connect* art director, as she designs each issue of the magazine. Pray for good health, spiritual refreshment, and creativity that accurately reflects the content of each article.

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## Expectant Atmosphere of a Praying Church | By Thomas Swank

I love walking into a church where there is a sense of expectancy—not expectancy of a great time of worship or inspiring teaching from God’s Word, although both contribute to this atmosphere. What excites me is a sense of expectancy about what God is going to do and what He *is* doing.

I remember a church some years ago—not a large church—that was having a fruitful season. Each Sunday for weeks someone would respond to an invitation to receive Christ, or the church heard a report of someone surrendering to Christ during the week. A layman told me the congregation could hardly wait to go to church each week to see who had come to faith in Christ. They were faithfully bringing names of people before the Lord in prayer, and He was answering! The atmosphere was filled with expectancy.

A few years ago, a friend of mine led his church in a week of 24/7 prayer that was to conclude on Easter. After the Easter services, he left for vacation. When he returned, he was surprised to learn that the 24/7 prayer was continuing. It continued for more than two years with multiple answers to prayer and a growing expectation of what God was going to do. One young unbeliever accompanied a friend to the prayer room for her time to pray—and within the hour that unbeliever came to faith in Christ.

### Early-Church Atmosphere

As you read the Book of Acts and the Epistles you soon feel the atmosphere of the early Church. Those early believers prayed with expectancy—and with confidence. Here are evidences of their confident practice of prayer:

- In all matters prayer is the first

priority rather than the last resort (Acts 2:42, 6:4).

- When opposition arises to the message of Christ, prayer is the spontaneous response (Acts 4:23–24).
- Prayer is an acknowledgement of faith in the Lord (Acts 4:24).
- Prayer focuses on the fulfillment of the great commission (Acts 4:29).
- There is a sense of expectancy in prayer (Acts 4:30).
- The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is evident (Acts 4:31).
- God’s people are empowered to proclaim the good news (Acts 4:31, 33).
- The leaders are praying people, and they set an example of prayer for the congregation (Acts 1:14, 6:4).<sup>1</sup>
- Prayer is a way of life throughout the church. Not an isolated program, prayer permeates every ministry of the church (Eph. 6:18).<sup>2</sup>
- God’s presence fills His house. Perhaps the single most distinguishing characteristic of a “house of prayer” is that it is filled with the tangible presence of God (Acts 2:2).
- With prayer, an increased spiritual hunger results in unbelievers coming to faith in Christ and believers deepening their faith (Acts 2).
- Spending time in the presence of the Lord produces humility, purity, unity, compassion, and Christlikeness in the lives of the leaders and the congregation (Col. 3:12).<sup>3</sup>

As we read about the practice of prayer in the early Church, we become aware of their conviction that “if God doesn’t do this, it can’t be done.” They exhibit boldness born of desperation.

Recently a church layman told me

about a property adjacent to his church that they had tried to purchase for years to expand their ministry. It was a residential property, but the owner was trying to get it rezoned commercial so he could ask a higher price. The church leadership called the church to prayer. Shortly after they began their concerted prayer, the owner sold them the property at less than the residential value.

Praying churches are confident that no matter what comes their way, God can handle it. Whether it is a changing neighborhood that threatens attendance, the death of a long-term pastor, or lack of clarity about future direction, a praying church has confidence, nurtured through the years, that God will lead them to continue expanding the Kingdom.

If prayer is not a priority, there will be no sense of expectation. Our focus disastrously shifts from expecting something from God to expecting the worship team to move us and the sermon to inspire us. We begin to look for what *we* can do rather than expecting what *God* might do.

Churches that consistently pray Kingdom prayers and celebrate answers will create an atmosphere of expectancy that produces confidence and boldness to ask God for great things. ☛

<sup>1</sup>Cheryl Sacks, *The Prayer Saturated Church* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007), 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



**THOMAS SWANK** is director of PRAYFIRST!, the prayer ministry of the Missionary Church. He is a member of the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network.





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