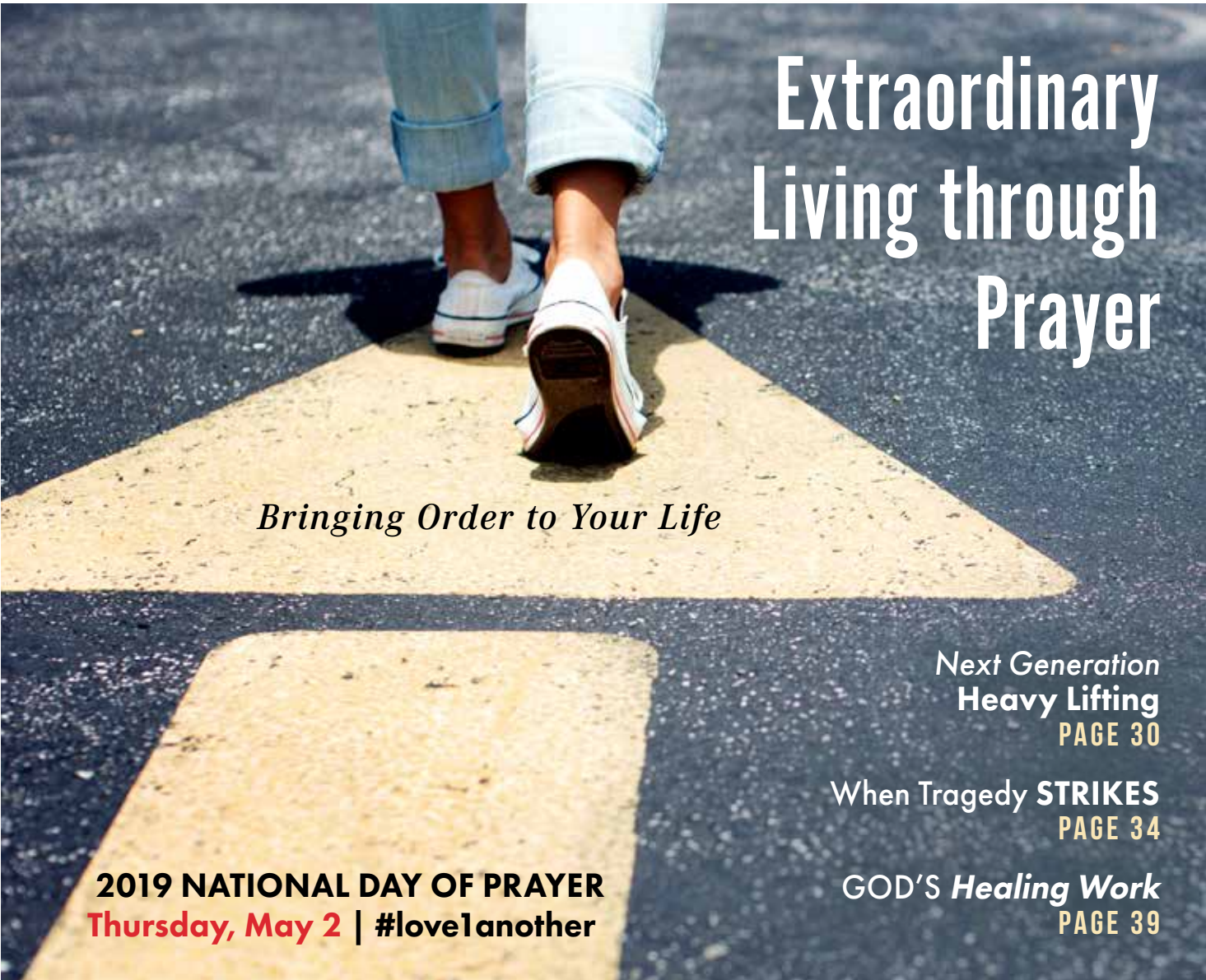


ISSUE THIRTY-SIX | JANUARY-MARCH 2019

PRAY

MOBILIZING UNIFIED PUBLIC PRAYER FOR AMERICA

INTRODUCING
THE NEW MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER



Extraordinary Living through Prayer

Bringing Order to Your Life

Next Generation
Heavy Lifting
PAGE 30

When Tragedy **STRIKES**
PAGE 34

GOD'S *Healing Work*
PAGE 39

2019 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
Thursday, May 2 | #love1another



INTRODUCING

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PRAY

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Business and Shipping Address

PRAY

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Article Submissions

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

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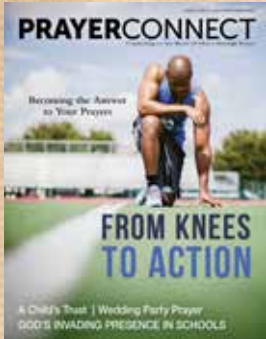
Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

There are a number of gifted speakers associated with PRAY. 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, and mentoring the next generation in prayer. The Church Prayer Leaders Network also has many speakers associated with its ministries. You can find contact information at the respective emails or websites.

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Carol Madison | editor@prayerconnect.net
praymagazine.org | prayerleader.com

Start with a Complete Set

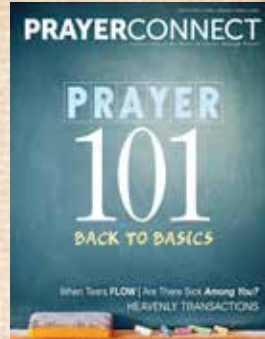
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Issue 30
FROM KNEES TO ACTION
Becoming the Answer to Your Prayers



Issue 31
LET PRAYER ARISE
Hope for a World in Turmoil



Issue 32
PRAYER 101
Back to Basics



Issue 33
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Issue 34
PRAYER AND POWER
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Issue 35
WHERE ARE YOU GOD?
Prayer through Suffering

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Issue 2 Fresh Fire
Issue 4 As the Waters Cover the Sea
Issue 5 The Place Was Shaken
Issue 6 Stand Firm & Strong
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PRAY

Issue Thirty-six • Vol. 9, No. 1

Published by

National Day of Prayer Task Force

Sponsored by

America's National Prayer Committee
Denominational Prayer Leaders Network

The mission of **PRAY** is

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

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Previously in Prayer Connect

Knowing Jesus intimately includes sharing in His suffering. "Where Are You God? Prayer through Suffering" looks at how to pray and walk through trials and difficulties with the peace and presence of Christ, as well as offer prayers that will minister to others. This issue and other back issues are available from prayershop.org.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Prayer Connect Becomes PRAY

If you have been engaged in the prayer ministry for more than ten years, you might remember that prior to *Prayer Connect*, there was another magazine called *Pray!*. Many of you subscribed to it. I was the founding editor of the publication, and Bridget, our current designer, was the founding designer. *Pray!* ceased publishing in 2009, five years after I left to minister more directly into churches through the Church Prayer Leaders Network.



When *Pray!* folded, we sensed God leading us to launch a new magazine on prayer to fill that void. We tried to buy the rights to *Pray!* but were not able to do so. We went ahead with our plans to launch the new magazine, using the name *Prayer Connect*.

In March of this year, the National Day of Prayer (NDP) acquired *Prayer Connect*. Plans were made for a significant "relaunch" with the January 2019 issue. We always liked the name *Pray!*. It is emphatic. Both a command and a challenge, it motivates the reader in a more dynamic way.

Because many years have passed, and there is now new leadership at NavPress (the owners of the *Pray!* trademark), we tried again to get permission to use the name *Pray!*. NavPress was extremely gracious, and they said they felt blessed to give the name to us and give new life to the magazine!

So here we are. *Prayer Connect* is now *PRAY* magazine.

New Features

The other thing changing, besides the look, is that each issue of *PRAY* will now contain a four-page section that has important information and communication from the National Day of Prayer Task Force. It is designed for two audiences: 1) NDP volunteers who put on NDP events in their church, community, county, and 2) state or local church prayer leaders who should consider doing so.

This section will contain practical help, designed to equip you to lead effective NDP events.

Also, each year, the April–June issue will focus almost entirely on the theme of the upcoming National Day of Prayer, fleshing out all angles and nuances of that theme. We do this so we can rally as many people as possible to unified public prayer for America!

We hope you like the changes.

Rest assured that those of you who have subscribed to *Prayer Connect* will keep your subscription under the new name *PRAY*. While it will take time to change the name in every online location and on printed material, you can be sure that if you see either *Prayer Connect* or *PRAY*, it is the same magazine!

We pray these changes will help the magazine to grow in circulation and financial stability so that we can minister to people in the prayer movement for years to come!

—Jonathan Graf

Discover author and speaker
JENNIFER KENNEDY DEAN



Jennifer Kennedy Dean takes complex spiritual theology, dusts it off, and breathes life into truth to make it practical, inspiring, and useable for everyday living in a way that changes women in lasting ways.—*Pam Farrel, Bestselling author and speaker*

Jennifer Kennedy Dean is an amazing woman, passionate prayer warrior, and precious friend. She brings authenticity and wisdom to every event at which she speaks.—*Lysa TerKeurst, New York Times Bestselling author and president of Proverbs 31 Ministries*

Jennifer Kennedy Dean is a powerful communicator. Her knowledge of the Word of God combined with a passion for communicating transformational truth make her one of the leading Bible teachers today.—*Carol Kent, Bestselling author and President of Speak Up Speaker Services*

Learn more about the difference between *a prayer life* and *a praying life* and consider Jennifer speaking at your event prayinglife.org

Awaken the Dawn Fills Nation with Prayer Tents

Tens of thousands of Christians gathered in tents for a time of endless prayer and praise in 50 state capitals and many college campuses across America from September 27–29, 2018. The event, called “Tent America 2018,” was hosted by Awaken the Dawn (awakenthedawn.org).

The three-day, around-the-clock prayer gatherings coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles. Many of the tents were placed on the grounds in front of

state capitols. Pictures from the various states were posted on the Awaken the Dawn Facebook page (facebook.com/awakenthedawnmvm).

Awaken the Dawn organizers explain, “The ‘Tent of Meeting’ represents the raw, unfiltered presence of God, unrestrained by cultural norms. This is the cry that must arise from the generations as we tabernacle together: ***We want to meet with You face-to-face!***”

Tent America 2018 was a continuation



of the vision launched in October 2017 when all 50 states were represented in tents along the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Prayer Banned at Graduation, School Events

A school district in Massachusetts will no longer allow prayer at its school-sponsored events in order to appease one of the nation's leading atheist groups.

Canton Public Schools Superintendent Jennifer Fischer-Mueller informed the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) that “steps have been taken to ensure that there will be no prayers or religious rituals” included as part of any school ceremony or school-

sponsored event, including graduation ceremonies.

The FFRF advocates for a strict separation of church and state and regularly pressures school districts and local government entities across the nation to drop all types of religious activities and cooperation. Fischer-Mueller's letter came after the FFRF sent a letter demanding action.

The letter complained that Canton Principal Derek Folan invited Rev. John

Tamilio III of the Congregational Church of Canton to give a prayer at the 2018 Canton High School graduation ceremony last spring. In the invocation, Tamilio allegedly called upon a “holy, loving, and most gracious God,” asking Him to bless the graduating students.

Many school districts choose to change their prayer policies to avoid the costly legal fees of an FFRF lawsuit.

SAMUEL SMITH, adapted from *The Christian Post* (christianpost.com).

Movement to Intercede for Government Leaders Grows

Christians across the country are gathering in several groups for what appears to be a growing prayer movement spreading in the United States. A renewed focus on praying for candidates and government leaders grew just prior to the 2016 elections, and then faded. But a new movement is again gathering momentum.

Maureen Bravo started a prayer call-line during the 2016 election. However, she noticed that once the election was over, the line went silent with intercessors no longer calling in. So she asked the Lord what was going on. She sensed the Lord telling her: “The election's over. Everybody left the wall. Get back on the wall.”

Bravo explains, “Our 24/7 National Strategic Prayer Call was launched two days after the election.” The response, Bravo said, has been overwhelming. “There's a unity that I've never seen in the Body of Christ.”

Those wishing to pray for America day or night may call (712) 770-4340. Use the code: 543555.

Soldiers Profess Faith in Christ on Missouri Army Base

A U.S. Army Chaplain says a revival is taking place on the base of Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. Jose Rondon reports that more than 2,000 soldiers accepted Christ between March and August of 2018.

In a video showing hundreds of soldiers singing “Amazing Grace,” Rondon commented, “I’m excited about the future of our military for millions of our warriors who will sing God’s Amazing Grace. Glory to Christ, the only God, Savior, and Lord in this life and the one to come.”

Retired Major General Doug Carver, executive director of chaplaincy for the North American Mission Board,

told *The Baptist Press* that men and women in the armed services are hungry for God.

“Our troops, who are increasingly hungry for truth and relevancy in their lives, are finding a faith that works, through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ,” Carver said. “The current spiritual awakening at Fort Leonard Wood is indicative of a great move of God taking place within the Armed Services today.”

With a population of about 21,000 including 6,000 active soldiers, 12,000 family, and 3,000 civilians, Fort Leonard Wood is not a huge military base, but it serves as a training base for many



branches of the military. Each year, about 90,000 soldiers go through boot camp and then are transferred to other bases. Often God positions revivals that have the potential to spread out and impact hundreds of thousands of people far beyond the numbers initially affected by the revival.

Adapted from CBN NEWS (cbn.com).

Christians Meet at KKK Site to Repent

More than 10,000 individuals from a variety of cultural and denominational backgrounds gathered in late August for OneRace (oneracemovement.com) at Stone Mountain, GA, to repent of the past sins of racism, affirm the Church’s leadership role in overcoming our nation’s divisive past, and commit to a new unity.

Both the location and date of the event were historic. In 1915, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) burned its first cross in public on the top of Stone Mountain, and nearly 55 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech in which he dreamed freedom would one day ring from Stone Mountain.

The event began in the morning with more than 2,000 millennials ascending to the top of Stone Mountain to join more than 560 pastors. The group asked for forgiveness from those who had been affected by historic injustices, including Dov Wilker and Harold Kirtz of the American Jewish Committee, who represented Leo Frank, a Jewish man who was

the first individual lynched by the KKK in Georgia.

Another plea for forgiveness came from Pastor Ferrell Brown, a direct descendant of KKK Founder Nathan Bedford Forrest. “I stand here today as a representation of the racism of the white man against African-Americans, against Jews, against Hispanics,” said Brown. “I repent and I’m asking forgiveness.” On behalf of his lineage, he asked forgiveness from Dr. Rose Simmons and Anthony Thompson, who both lost family members in the 2015 shooting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston.

Simmons replied, “Ferrell, I respond to your plea for forgiveness and I forgive you. May God bless you. Thank you for the work that you have done in the Body of Christ so that we may take this movement all around the world.”

At the end of the event, organizers physically erected a cross on Stone Mountain.

At the base of the mountain, in front of the Confederate Monument, a stage

became the focal point for the rest of the day. Times of prayer and worship and speakers focused on healing, reconciliation, unity and social justice. Throughout the day, attendees (including church leaders) were reminded about the Church’s crucial role in leading the way for reconciliation.



Prayer Calendar

Weekend of Prayer to End Slavery and Trafficking
January 11–13, 2019
facebook.com/WeekendofPrayer

Seek God for the City
March 6–April 14, 2019
waymakers.org

Collegiate Day of Prayer
February 28, 2019
collegiatedayofprayer.org

WHAT GOD DID

WHEN AMERICA GATHERED TO PRAY IN 2018



In 2018, the reach of NDP was the greatest in its history. It's estimated that more than 510 million people were potentially reached through local gatherings or were impacted by livestream video, radio, or social media related to NDP.



Not only is this event a powerful day of prayer, but it is also an incredible opportunity to share the Gospel with people in our nation and around the world. On May 3, 2018, National Day of Prayer viewers were directed to peacewithgod.net. Over 20,000 people visited the site: 3,718 indicated they had made a decision to follow Christ, and 701 requested follow-up materials. The Kingdom of God is expanding as God works in and through the National Day of Prayer to draw people into a relationship with Him.



over 120 radio stations nationwide broadcasted NDP events



thousands of volunteers planned and hosted **over 50,000** local gatherings around the nation



NDP trended **#1 on Twitter** nationwide



over 1 million watched NDP Facebook Live broadcast from Washington, D.C.



over 100,000 social media posts made during 2018 events



an estimated **1.6 million people in 38 countries** watched NDP events livestream



an estimated **110 million** reached through Christian news sites



NDP event TV broadcasts available in **200 countries** with the potential to reach over **1 billion**

THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER | MAY 2, 2019



★ PRAY FOR AMERICA ★

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

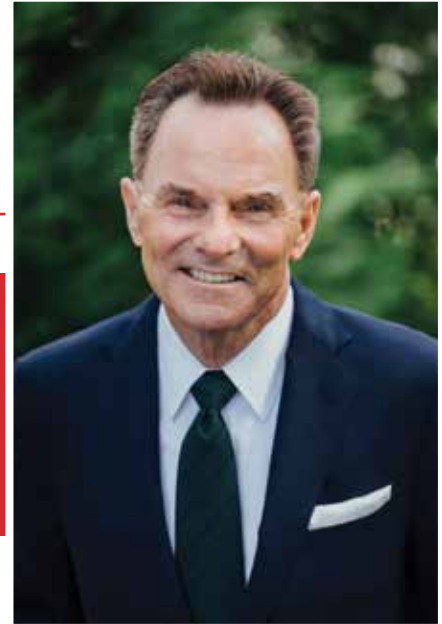
LOVE ONE ANOTHER. JUST AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.
JOHN 13:34

#LOVE1ANOTHER
NATIONALDAYOFPRAYER.ORG



2019 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

**CALLING ALL PASTORS, CHURCHES,
DENOMINATIONS, AND MINISTRIES
TO JOIN US IN FORWARDING LOVE IN
OUR NATION BY MOBILIZING UNIFIED
PUBLIC PRAYER FOR AMERICA.**



MOBILIZING UNIFIED PUBLIC PRAYER FOR AMERICA

This year's National Day of Prayer will call Americans to "Love One Another." The theme comes from the words of Jesus in John 13:34, "Love one another. Just as I have loved you." We tend to forget that Jesus didn't say we would be known by our creeds or by our knowledge or how much we know about the Bible—He said we would be known only by our love. And love has been painfully absent in America in so many ways.

Every town, city, and county in America needs to have a prayer observance for our nation on the upcoming National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 2, 2019. This is a compelling vision to imagine! While thousands upon thousands of prayer observances happen each year on the National Day of Prayer, they are not happening in every town, every city, and every county in America. This is what we must ensure. This is what we must advance. This is what we must strategize toward. This is much bigger than any of us, including our present task force. This is why we need you! That is right! You can help. You can lead. You can attend. Get your calendar out and mark the day now: Thursday, May 2, 2019. Our country needs prayer. Our country needs you.

There are three ways you can join us:

- Participate in an existing observance of the National Day of Prayer in your community.
- Create a new observance in your community that will mobilize more people to advance a strategy of prayer for America.
- Begin to pray now for Thursday, May 2.

Mobilize with millions across our nation to participate in this observance. Engage with us, pray with us, and get involved! Save Thursday, May 2, 2019, on your calendar for the National Day of Prayer.

Now is the Time to Lead and Pray for America,

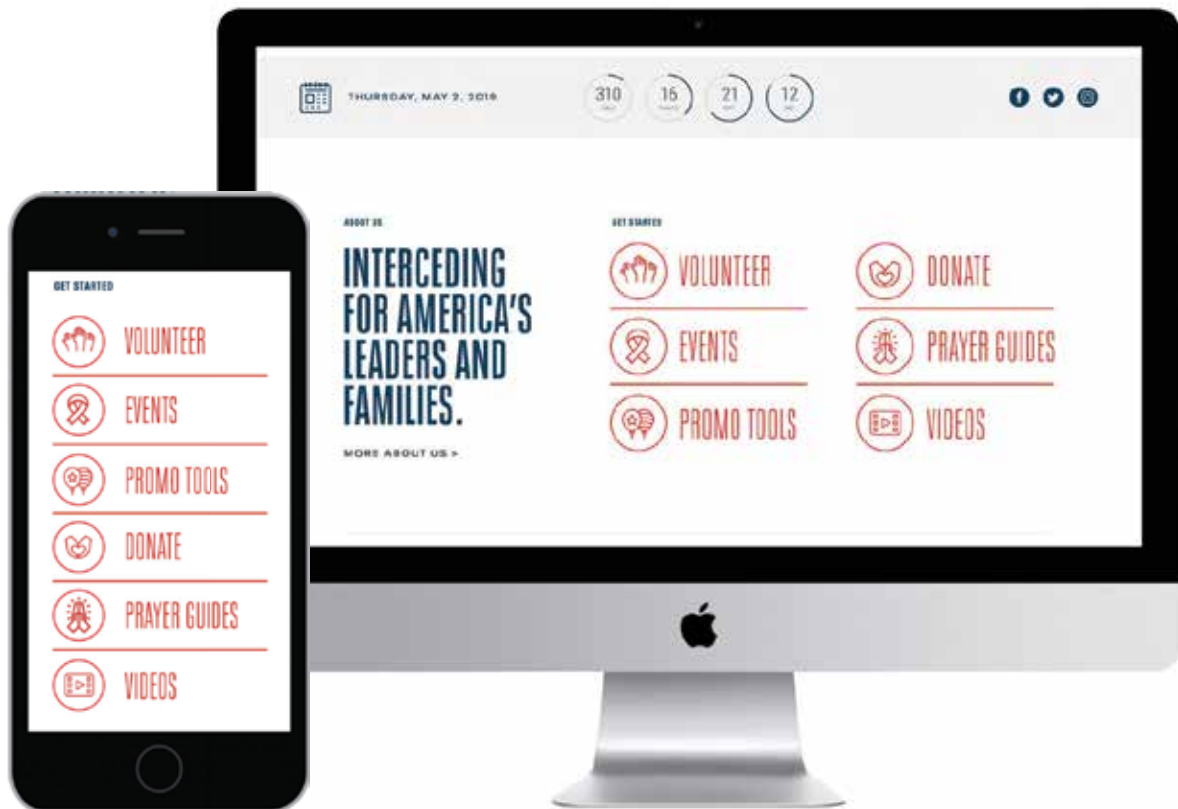
Dr. Ronnie Floyd

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

***"Our vision is to be a multi-church,
multi-denominational, multi-ministry,
multi-generational, multi-ethnic,
and multi-lingual movement of
prayer for America."***

REMODELING OUR FRONT DOOR

Check out the newly launched National Day of Prayer website at www.nationaldayofprayer.org.



Host a prayer event or use our event finder to find out when events are happening in your area!



Extraordinary Living *through Prayer*

I've gotten my personal life in order so many times I've lost track. (That's a confession, not a boast!) A friend of mine helped produce one of my favorite commercials about that moment when you realize you need a reset in your life come January 1. You might recall the YMCA commercial where a woman, seated on a couch, eats her way through an entire stick of butter—representing all the calories she inhaled during the holiday season. It's an invitation to get back on track, physically, with a new YMCA membership. As my friend tells it, there were several takes in filming the commercial, and the woman was a trooper, eating a sickening amount of butter!

We've all felt that need for a reset in one way or another. We look at the start of a new year with determination to change significant areas of our lives, seeking more balance and discipline. January is definitely a good time for that reset!

Beyond Resolutions

But this issue is not about New Year's resolutions. It's not about the determination to develop greater discipline in your life—although that is certainly helpful.

This issue is about praying beyond what you normally do. It's a recognition that truly extraordinary living comes through a reset of your prayer life—to be fervent, passionate, and full of hope, believing in God's power to change everything!

With the theme "Extraordinary Living through Prayer," we're asking our readers to set their hearts toward extra prayer in this coming year. We implore you to pray more and to pray differently than you have in the past.

When we *press into prayer*, our lives change, bringing the order needed for healthier spiritual lives, personal relationships,

and finances. A life in order naturally enables people to pray more Kingdom prayers than personal-struggle prayers. The more your life is in order, the more effectively you can pray for others, for the advancement of the gospel, and for God's Kingdom priorities.

So, as you think about all the potential this new year brings, rethink areas of your life where you desire greater freedom and breakthrough. And begin this year with prayer. Extraordinary prayer. Fasting. Crying out. Late night and early morning. Corporate times with other believers. Deeply personal and intimate times with the Lord.

This kind of prayer sets the rest of life in order and has an impact far beyond ourselves.

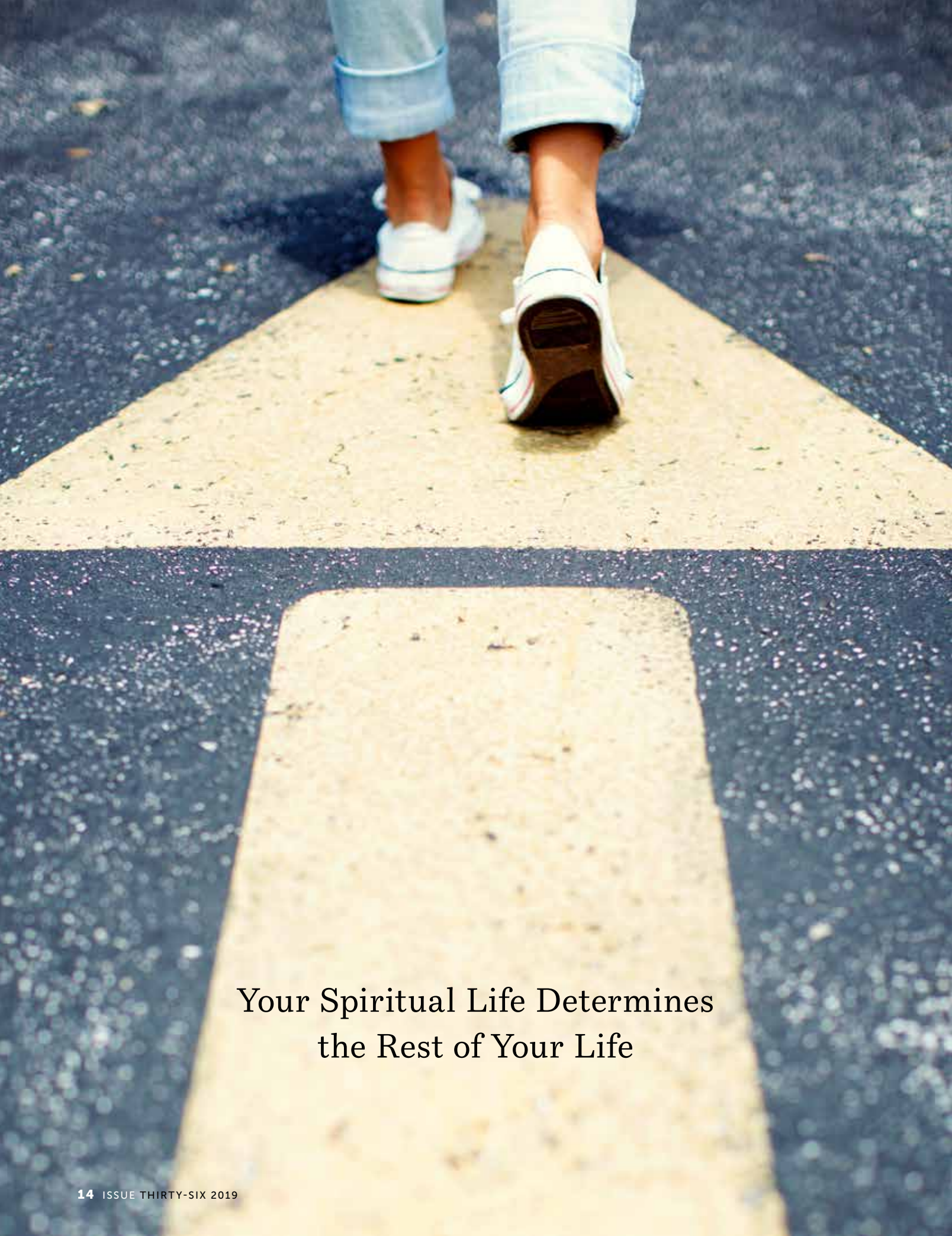
Let's Get Started

In this issue, Dr. Ronnie Floyd writes about the wisest decision you can make: *I will walk with God today*. Getting our lives in order spiritually allows us to prioritize God's work in our lives.

Dr. Tim Clinton invites us to pray through our relationships—the good, the bad, the ugly, and the questionable. When our relationships are in order, we will naturally be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading because our thoughts are not as consumed with turmoil. And Rachel Cruz points out ways to order our finances, avoiding financial disasters and stress that can distract us and cause our prayer lives to become ineffective for the Kingdom.

If there is one thing I for sure want to reset this coming year, it is a new passion for extraordinary prayer. And with the work of the Spirit unleashed, extraordinary living will certainly follow!

CAROL MADISON is editor of *PRAY*.

A high-angle, close-up shot of a person's lower legs and feet as they walk on a dark asphalt road. The person is wearing light blue denim jeans with the cuffs rolled up and white sneakers with thin, colorful stripes. They are walking on a yellow-painted crosswalk. The perspective is from directly behind the person, looking down at their feet and the path ahead. The lighting is bright, casting soft shadows.

Your Spiritual Life Determines
the Rest of Your Life

Praying Your Life into Order

Spiritually

The growth of our spiritual lives will never outpace our intentional commitment to prioritize it every day. Our spiritual development impacts every other area of our lives—and we cannot delegate that growth to anyone else.

During my college years, over Christmas break, my brother asked me to build a barn for him. He is a much more gifted carpenter than I, but he was trying to help me out. I needed the money. But building barns was neither my passion nor within my skill set. I accomplished the task, but in a few years the barn began to lean and eventually became unsafe. My brother would have been better off building the barn himself than delegating something to me I could not properly do.

Just as my brother should not have expected me to build a barn, you and I cannot expect someone else to build our spiritual lives for us. No one else can construct our daily walk with God. It has to be intentional, purposeful, and personal. Each one of us is accountable to do it ourselves.

The wisest decision we can make each day is this: *I will*

walk with God today. What the Bible says about Enoch has always challenged me. This statement is simple yet profound: “Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:24, ESV).

Could God write this about your life and mine today? If not, why not? What stands in our way? Who is standing in our way?

In reality, no one and no thing stands in our way. The decision is ours. Remember these truths:

1. God wants to walk with us! Getting our lives in order spiritually and practically begins with the decision to make it our number-one priority.
2. God wants to have a meaningful relationship with us daily. He never puts us on hold, and we never have to stand in line.
3. He does not delegate our spiritual growth to one of the angels who serves Him. He is always waiting on each of us to come to Him.
4. Bringing our lives into spiritual order requires a strategy.

Let me highlight a few ways to be intentional in our commitment to prioritize our spiritual lives:

Reading the Bible Daily

The Bible is God's Word. It's what God says to you and me, and to all people. Thus, we need to read the Bible every day.

When the Bible speaks, God speaks. His voice through His Word cannot be minimized. But we can maximize its impact in our lives if we truly understand that what He says lives forever—and put His Word into practice!

Through the years, I have witnessed thousands of Christians who live out their faith. Almost without exception, those who read the Bible daily are set apart from the others.

Former trucking magnate J.B. Hunt told me that the Bible was his road map for life. It showed him how to live the way he wanted to live—for God. Hunt drove trucks all over America even before he and his wife Johnelle began their Fortune 500 transportation company (one of the largest in the country). While he

lived on the road, the map of our country became important to him. It led him to his desired destination.

But Hunt began his day reading the Bible. It would take him at least 18 months to read through the Bible once, but he read through the entire Bible several times in his life. It was his road map leading him to his desired spiritual growth. If an extraordinarily busy and wealthy man like J.B. Hunt knew he needed to read the Bible and make it a priority each day of his life, surely his example can inspire us to do the same.

This imperative daily discipline helps us become spiritually fit. We cannot be all God wants us to be if we do not read the Bible. It is impossible.

Praying Our Life into Order

Think of it this way: *We can go to God*

anytime, anywhere, about anything. Through Jesus Christ, we have direct access to God.

Since we can go to God anytime, anywhere, and about anything that's going on in our lives, why not choose to talk to God daily—and often? Create your own system of prayer or adopt someone else's. If nothing else, make a list of things you are concerned about in your own life, your family, your church, your career and business, your future, your finances, your country, and concerns you have for other people. Pray for them each day and look for God to walk into those situations personally and powerfully. God answers prayer!

God steps into the life of the person who prays. He can do more in a moment than you can in a lifetime. Each of us needs divine intervention.

Living an orderly life requires praying our lives into order. This is why I keep



Is our nation

in trouble?

CAN PRAYER

CHANGE A NATION?

IF IT IS NOT TOO DIFFICULT, WILL YOU HELP?

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Praying Your Life into Order

Physically

Almost six years ago, I was working in the corporate world when I learned I was pregnant with our daughter. My husband and I began praying about a new job I could do from home. As laughable as it seemed, the Lord directed me to pursue certification as a personal trainer.

My experience with fitness and healthy eating was limited. I knew the importance of being active, drinking plenty of water, and choosing healthy foods, but I didn't translate that knowledge into action.

As I learned more about the science of our bodies, I became more aware of the impact my daily choices were having—not just on how I looked and felt, but on my ability to concentrate, think clearly, remember, and stay alert.

One Harvard Medical School article says researchers “found that regular aerobic exercise, the kind that gets your heart and your sweat glands pumping, appears to boost the size of the hippocampus, the brain area involved in verbal memory and learning.”¹

The article explains: “The benefits of exercise come directly from its ability to reduce insulin resistance, reduce inflammation, and stimulate the release of growth factors—chemicals in the brain that affect the health of brain cells, the growth of new blood vessels in the brain, and even the abundance and survival of new brain cells. Indirectly, exercise improves mood and sleep, and reduces stress and anxiety.”

Science is proving what most of us have known all along—that people who take care of themselves physically have increased mental ability, have a greater ability to reason and think critically, and have better memory recall.

Hand in Hand

I see a connection to my prayer life, too. In fact, I believe my spiritual health and physical health go hand in hand. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:7, “The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” To be spiritually disciplined is to be disciplined in every area of life.

When I'm at my healthiest, I'm more likely to get up early to read my Bible and pray. I'm better able to memorize Scripture. Throughout my day, I'm more attentive and less tired, and I'm able to speak more clearly, think more clearly, and react more clearly.

When I'm at my healthiest, I think and pray less about my own ailments. My mind has a higher capacity to think about other things, which allows me to pay more attention to other people, listen well, empathize, and even spend more time praying for other people.

My husband says that when he's 80 years old, he wants to be healthy enough to give his all to the Lord the way he can today. For all of us, our commitment to fitness today is an investment in our current quality of life and a way we can serve the Lord as we age. In his book *Living Fit*, Dr. Ronnie Floyd writes, “While God determines your number of days on this earth, you will determine the quality and effectiveness of each of these days.”²

I don't always get this right. Even as a certified personal trainer who understands both the science and benefits, it isn't always easy for me to live out these principles. But I know I'm not alone!

Here are two action steps to prayerfully commit to the Lord:

- **First, identify one simple step to make your diet healthier, and then commit that step to the Lord.** Honestly evaluate your dietary habits, and pick one area to step it up! A great strategy for most of us would be to add an additional vegetable to two meals per week.
- **Second, identify one simple step you can add to your weekly exercise routine, and commit that step to the Lord.** If you do not have a fitness routine, consider committing to some type of exercise two days a week.

God wants us to seek Him first. He cares about every part of us—the spiritual, the relational, the emotional, and even the physical.

¹Heidi Goodman, “Regular Exercise Changes the Brain to Improve Memory, Thinking Skills,” Harvard Health Blog (April 5, 2018): <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/regular-exercise-changes-brain-improve-memory-thinking-skills-201404097110>.

²Ronnie Floyd, *Living Fit* (B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 59.

RACHEL McMICHAEL is a pastor's wife, certified personal trainer, and member of Cross Church, Fayetteville, AR.

Let God do something new in your life by listening to Him.

my prayer list in the Notes app on my iPad. My list changes continually as I watch God respond to my prayers. And I can easily change my list because of the technology's simplicity. Find what works best for you, and just do it!

Praying with Fasting

Consider adding periodic times of fasting to your prayer life. *Fasting* is abstaining from something with a spiritual goal in mind. When we talk about fasting, most people think of fasting from food. Not everyone is physically able to fast from food, but that is not an excuse to

refrain from fasting. We can fast (or abstain) from social media, television, or something else with the goal of drawing aside and talking more intimately with God. We can fast for a portion of a day for a certain number of days. Or we can fast completely for a period of time. Fasts typically last one, seven, 21, or 40 days.

However you choose to fast, use the time you would have spent during that particular activity (meals, social media, etc.) to communicate with God.

Use this time of fasting to pray extraordinarily. What does that mean? Whatever is normal for you, strive to at least double it. If you normally pray for five minutes a day, pray for ten. If you normally pray for 30 minutes a day, pray for an hour a day. The number of minutes is not important—*just pray more*. Pray extraordinarily.

Spend time talking to God and listening to Him. Effective communication involves speaking and listening. Prayer is no different. It involves talking to God and listening to what He is saying to you. If we only talk and do not listen, we are missing half of the equation. Let God do something new in your life by listening to Him.

Disciplining Ourselves, Being Intentional

Discipline is doing the right thing even if you do not want to do it or feel like doing it. I am convinced that many Christ followers choose a lesser quality of spiritual growth because they take the path of least resistance. I am not talking about resistance against the evil one. I am talking about resisting our greatest enemy—ourselves!

Regardless of the way we feel or what

we desire, we can choose to be intentional about our spiritual growth.

Many people hear words like *discipline* and *intentional* and think we're talking about salvation by works. Of course, salvation by works is unbiblical, but that's not what I mean here. Salvation is by grace through faith. But, in the Bible, faith is always connected to a life of discipleship. There is an intimate connection between discipline and discipleship—you can see it in the two words! God saves us by His grace, but once we are saved, He wants us to cultivate our relationship with Him by taking intentional and disciplined actions.


The following are some personal actions we can discipline ourselves to take *intentionally*:

- I will develop my spiritual life daily.
- I will release my life to God daily.
- I will read the Bible daily.
- I will talk to God daily.

These intentional and necessary actions are key to spiritual fitness. This is what it means to live intentionally. In God's strength you can do this. So begin taking these actions today to enjoy a successful, godly life.

Understanding God Is Waiting for Us

God is waiting to walk with us and talk with us through His Word daily. He is waiting for us to take responsibility for our own spiritual growth. God can do anything, anywhere, at any time, with anyone.

In every way and through every phase of life, He can bring our lives into order. 



DR. RONNIE FLOYD has served as senior pastor of Cross Church (a multicampus church) in Northwest Arkansas since 1986. He was president of the Southern Baptist

Convention for a two-year term, and is now the president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. His website is ronniefloyd.com.

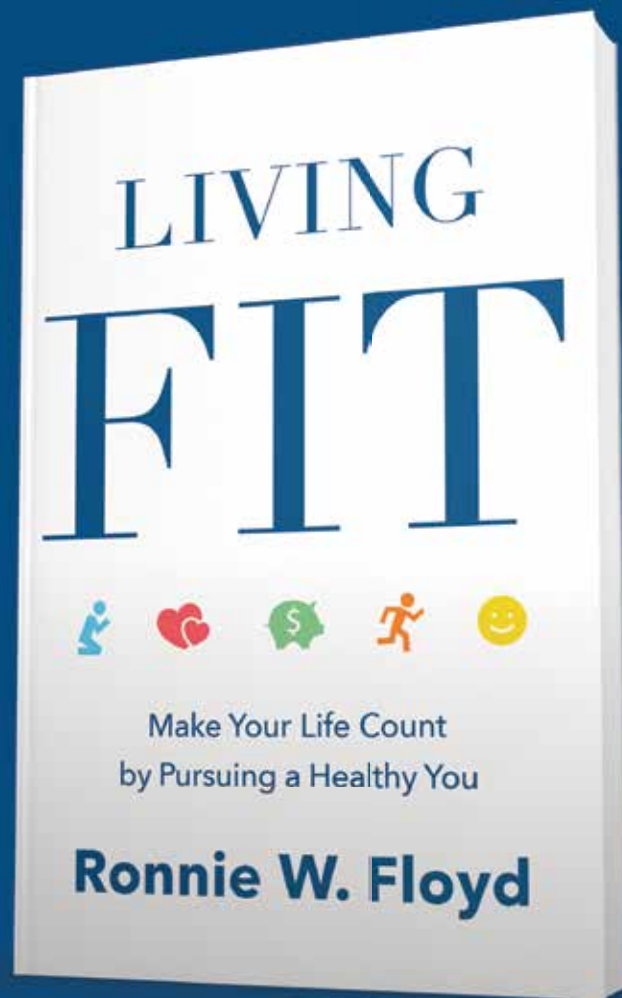


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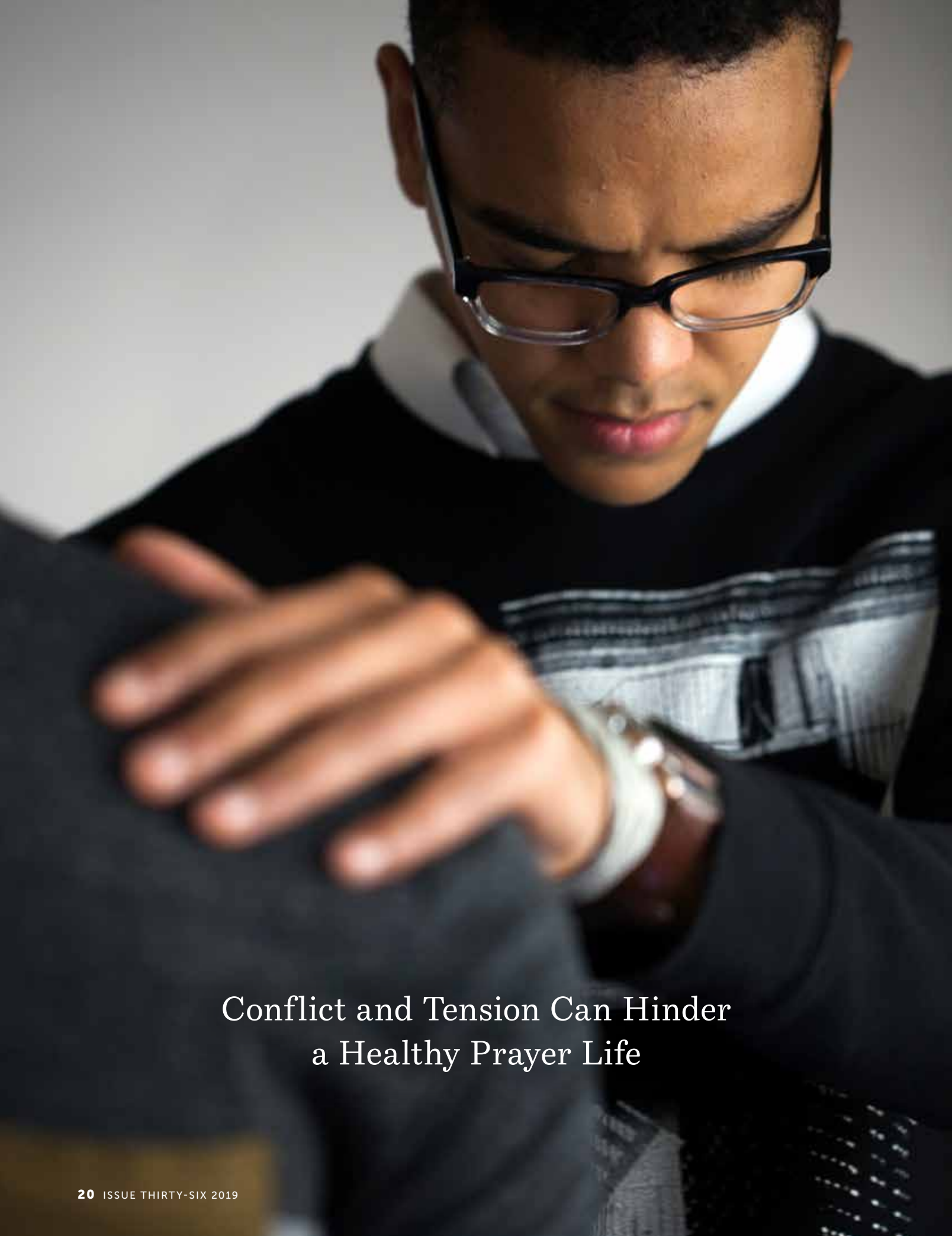


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Conflict and Tension Can Hinder
a Healthy Prayer Life

Praying Your Life into Order

Relationally

Life is full of brokenness. In many ways, I believe the pace, pain, and pressures of modern-day life have taken over. The result is a lot of anger, frustration, resentment, and even bitterness between people. And yes, it's hard to pray for or with someone you don't like, just fought with, or are mad at.

That kind of tension can hinder our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading. And prayers offered in the presence of conflict or broken relationships can even "shut heaven's door" to God's answers. The health of our relationships can positively or negatively affect our prayer lives.

Although none of us will ever have our lives completely in order, probably, we can still pray with faith and confidence. But Scripture speaks of times when our prayer lives are hindered by our choices or actions. Peter says a healthy marriage relationship is one path to effective prayer: "Husbands . . . be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers" (1 Peter 3:7).

That's pretty straight stuff. How you do—or don't do—relationships can affect your prayer life for good and bad.

And, in the same way, I believe the health of our prayer lives can affect our relationships.

Get It Right

Life is all about relationships—horizontally (our relationships with others) and vertically (our relationship with God). Get both right, and God will bless you.

So how do we pray through our relationships—the good, the bad, the ugly, and the questionable ones? Here are six ways to pray relationships into order:

1. Ask God to give you a heart and mind of clarity, conviction, and forgiveness. Try praying this: *Lord, help me understand and show me the areas in which I am falling short of reflecting You. Forgive me. Help me change and forgive.*

No matter the offense, don't swallow the pain or harbor the hurt. Conviction is never easy!

Yet when we sincerely pray for conviction, God will bring to our minds the areas of life we need to change. And when we are following Him, the Lord will give us the strength and courage to make those changes.

Despite the difficulty of this prayer, it is one we all must

pray if we want to improve our prayer lives and our relationships. He wants us to let Him be our strength. The more dependent we become on God, the healthier our relationships will become.

2. Talk with spiritual mentors or trusted friends and pray through painful relationships. Make this vulnerable request: *Will you pray with me?*

Throughout the Bible there are stories of people coming alongside others and praying with them, encouraging them, and equipping them. Every Timothy needs a Paul. Every Elisha needs an Elijah. Who are your spiritual mentors? Seek out godly mentorship. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus reminds us, “Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

What a powerful truth! When we let trusted spiritual mentors into our lives and they pray with us, we can get a fresh perspective.

3. Pray for the Lord to build grace and new life into your relationships. Spend time in God’s Word and in worship. Live according to this scriptural exhortation: “*Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day*” (1 Chron. 16:23).

Have you ever felt so empty that loving others is impossible? The more time you spend in prayer and abiding with God, the more His love will fill you. Love for others overflows from a heart abounding with God’s love (Rom. 5:5).

Sometimes, in the midst of our damaged relationships and forgotten prayer lives, we feel we have fallen too far for God to ever pick us up. The good news is that, in His grace, God is always working to win our hearts. He loves to use our brokenness and powerlessness to send us fleeing back to Him. When we reconcile with Him, He reconciles us with one another and breathes new life into our relationships.

4. Pray for God’s will to be done in the situation. Invite God’s will into your life: “*Your kingdom come, your will be done*” (Matt. 6:10).

Reflect on the prayer Jesus gave us in Matthew 6:9–13. The first half of the prayer focuses on praise, adoration, and humble submission to God’s will. Only then does it transition into requests and supplications.

God’s will is powerful, and only when we align our lives with His will can we find peace in our prayer times, in our relationships, and in our lives.

God’s will may not always be clear. It may not always make sense. But it is always perfect, even if we can’t see it. James 4:15 reminds us to bring ourselves into alignment with the Father’s will: “You ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

5. Pray for the person who has hurt and/or offended you.

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Release him or her and the offense that you feel. Take a step forward by offering this prayer: *God, help me release the hurt. Give me Your wisdom regarding how to do that.*

There's nothing more beautiful than being in a relationship with somebody who's *supposed* to love you—and they *do*! And there's nothing more painful than being in a relationship with somebody who's *supposed* to love you, and they *don't*.

As much as we wish this were not the case, sometimes relationships cannot be repaired immediately because the other person refuses to reconcile or is not a "safe" person to be around. When this occurs, what better recourse than to turn to Jesus? He knows better than anyone the sting of betrayal and rejection.

Pray. Plead with God. Turn your eyes to the One who holds you in His hands.

6. Pray with the person if possible and appropriate. Humbly ask the person: *Can we pray about this?*

Sometimes the relationship is too raw and broken to pray together. But as God works and the doors open, few things in life are more powerful than praying with and for one another. Do not let fear keep you from taking the initiative. Offer to pray with that person. Come alongside him or her. Do for that person what you would want done for you.

Don't let your prayer life suffer because of your relationships. And don't let your relationships suffer because you may be neglecting your prayer life.

Press into God. Seek Him fervently, so you can radiate His love to others.

If Possible . . .

Paul uses strong words in Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." There will be some people we can't make peace with, but as much as we can, God wants us to work through the challenges and difficulties of those relationships and live in peace. He wants us to *own our influence* as much as we can.

Yes, we live in a broken world. But,

thank God, the pain, anger, and bitterness don't have to triumph. Our spirit of humility and forgiveness can pave the way for God's goodness and grace to build healthy, loving, and lasting relationships.

The healthier our relationships, the more sensitive we will be to the Holy Spirit's leading, and the healthier our

prayer lives will be. Everyone wins! 🏆



DR. TIM CLINTON is president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and serves as executive director of the James Dobson Family Institute. He is the author of nearly 30 books, including *The Struggle Is Real: How to Care for Mental and Relational Health Needs in the Church*. Follow him on Twitter @DrTimClinton.

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Managing Money Well Blesses Others and Strengthens Your Prayers

Praying Your Life into Order

Financially

Sometimes I find myself trying to pray at the end of a long day. Maybe I just flew home from a speaking event, tucked my daughters in for the night, kissed my husband, and crawled into bed. “Hey, God,” I start. And then, eight hours later, I wake up.

We face all kinds of distractions when we pray: sleep, our kids, our own racing thoughts. But I think some of the biggest hindrances to our prayer lives include intense, enduring struggles—especially in the area of finances.

And, for many adults, money is a big factor in our daily stress level. Studies show that only 39 percent of Americans could cover a \$1,000 emergency.¹ This nagging lack of security—and the uneasy feelings that go with it—cause stress that can affect our marriages and our relationship with God.

It makes sense, then, that this stress over financial worries can also result in an ineffective prayer life. Romans 13:8 says, “Owe no one anything except to love one another” (NKJV). If we focus on debt or other money problems, we can’t put our energy toward things that really matter.

But we serve a gracious and understanding God. That’s why prayer holds so much potential and offers so much

power. God doesn’t want us to miss out on what can happen when we nurture our relationship with Him through prayer. That’s what prayer really is anyway: our hearts connecting with the heart of the Father.

So how can we relate to God and rely on Him, regardless of our money situation?

Put Your Finances in the Proper Order

To bring order to your finances, first *put your finances in the proper order*. From my talks with people all across the country, I’ve found that many families create their budgets backward—if they budget at all. They buy things they want and need, and then pay bills. Often there’s nothing left—no money to save, no money to give. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard the phrase, “I’d love to save and give, but I can’t afford to!”

The truth is, many people spend money needlessly—or without paying attention—on morning coffees, afternoon snacks, Target runs, and weekend hobbies. Blind to what they’re actually spending money on, they feel unable to save or give.



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But what if we decided to give, save, and *then* spend? How might our finances change? How might our prayer lives change? And how might *we* change?

Giving First Changes Everything

The way we manage our money reveals our character: money is never just about money.

1. Giving changes us. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it.” God owns it all. And if He is the owner, then we’re just managers. Every dollar we make and every item we acquire belongs to Him. We have the opportunity to manage *His* money well. If we understand this, our money attitudes and behaviors will change significantly!

Here’s why: When we recognize God as the owner of everything, we realize He is also the ultimate Giver. He not only gave up His Son for us, but He also provides food, shelter, clothes, and much more. We’re all created in His image. So we’re all made to be givers too.

And when we give, we change. When we adjust our budgets to consider others first, our priorities begin to shift. We start to see the difference God can make in the world through our giving. And soon we can’t wait to partner with Him in His great mission—both through generosity and prayer.

On a practical level, this shift means we might allocate less money for ourselves and more money for others. We may even start looking around our homes and thinking, *I’m so fortunate. I have so much. What more could I need?* Generosity is the best cure I know for selfishness and discontentment.

2. Giving changes how we view God. When we give, we’re saying, “God, I trust you.” Maybe you choose to give to God the money you intended for debt repayment, a “new-to-you” car, or a much-needed night out with your

spouse. Your choosing to give away that money demonstrates your trust that God will take care of you because He is good, and He does what He says He will do.

In Psalm 24, David continues, “Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior” (vv. 3–5). God, the all-powerful Creator of the oceans and the mountains, promises to take care of us when we come to Him with clean hands, a pure heart, and no idols.

Jesus said that we can’t serve two masters. By willingly opening our hands and letting go of our money through giving, we remove our trust from the fragility of our finances and put our trust squarely on the shoulders of our great God.

A proper view of both God and money encourages a closer relationship with Him—to ascend the mountain, to stand in His holy place. In the Old Testament this meant entering the tabernacle. Today, it describes prayer.

3. Give a little until you can give a lot. When we decide to give first, we’re one step closer to creating a budget. If you haven’t made a budget before, prepare to be amazed! A budget is simple to create but offers a huge payoff that will rock your financial world.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Give first. Save second. Spend third.
2. Make sure income minus expenses, giving, and saving equal zero. Give every dollar a job to do.
3. Keep track of your spending throughout the month and make adjustments as needed.

That’s it! If you make a budget and stick to it, you *can* give generously, save for the future, pay off debt—and cover your necessities and plenty of your wants.

The better you get at budgeting, the more goals will become reality and the more fun you'll have with your money!

After all, what could be more fun than living a generous, Kingdom-driven life?

Involve God in Your Money Decisions

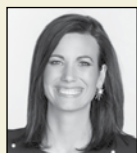
Finally, Paul gives this encouragement in 1 Timothy 6:17–19:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Pray that God will bless your finances so you may be a blessing to others and your prayers will not be hindered. Ask Him for provision and the wisdom to manage your money well. When we do this, we learn what really matters—and we “take hold of the life that is truly life.”

A well-ordered life, even in finances, allows us to focus our energy on things that really matter, like connecting with the heart of the Father through undistracted prayer. 📖

¹Taylor Tepper, “Most Americans Don’t Have Enough Savings to Cover a \$1K Emergency,” *Bankrate* (January 18, 2018): <https://www.bankrate.com/banking/savings/financial-security-0118/>.



RACHEL CRUZE is a #1 *New York Times* best-selling author and host of The Rachel Cruze Show. She has authored three best-selling books, including *Love Your Life, Not Theirs* and *Smart Money Smart Kids*, which she co-wrote with her father, Dave Ramsey (rachelcruze.com).

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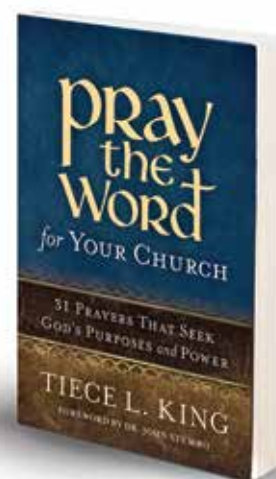
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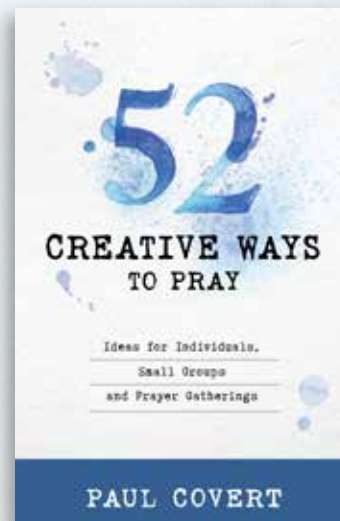
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Bible Study

Bringing Order to Your Life

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

During the first week of each new year, I like to set aside a few hours with God to do an inventory of my life. Together, He and I look over the year that has passed, and I thank Him for its gifts. I mourn losses. I celebrate the ways He has grown me. I confess the ways I've let Him down. And I ask Him what He would like me to focus on in the new year.

My way of looking forward often takes the form of what some Christians have called a "rule of life." If you're not familiar with a "rule of life," you might want to give it a try. It's a great way to work with God to bring order and cohesion to the various pieces of your life. And as we see throughout this issue of *PRAY*, a well-ordered life and prayer go hand in hand.

In the "Action Steps" part of this study, I'll tell you how to create a simple rule of life. But first, the Bible study.

Discussion Questions

Dr. Tim Clinton believes our relationships can affect our prayer lives. Have you experienced this in your life? If so, how?

Conversely, Clinton also believes that our prayer lives can affect our relationships. If you have found this to be true, share an example.

Write one biblical principle for relationships for each of the following verses or passages. Circle the references that correspond to ones you'd like to make a prayer focus.

Matthew 7:3
John 13:14–15
Romans 12:9–10
Romans 12:19
Romans 12:20–21
Ephesians 4:26
1 Thessalonians 5:11
James 1:19–20

Rachel Cruze contends that finances can be a major distraction in prayer. Read the following passages. How could the truths they contain help someone pray through such struggles? Circle the references that correspond to truths you would like to pray about.

Proverbs 13:11
Malachi 3:10

Matthew 6:21
 Matthew 6:24
 Romans 13:8
 1 Timothy 6:17–19
 Hebrews 13:5

“As our spiritual lives go, so go the rest of our lives,” says Dr. Ronnie Floyd. Below, you’ll find a list of spiritual disciplines he wrote about. Put a check by those already a consistent part of your life. Circle those you’d like to enjoy more regularly and intentionally.

- ☐ Daily Bible reading
- ☐ Prayer
- ☐ Praying with fasting
- ☐ Listening to God

Scripture offers many other spiritual disciplines to help bring order to our souls. Which ones do you find in the following passages? Circle any you would like to practice more regularly in your life.

Psalms 119:11
 Psalm 136:1–2
 Psalm 139:23–24
 Colossians 3:13
 Hebrews 4:1, 9–11
 James 5:16

When you’re 80, will you be healthy enough to give your all to the Lord the way you can today? If that’s what you want, Rachel McMichael says you’ll need to invest in some physical self-discipline now. What two or three physical goals (diet, exercise, etc.) can you set for yourself this year so that you will be able to serve the Lord well, even when you’re older? (If you are already 80 or older, talk about ways your earlier attention, or

inattention, to your body’s well-being affects your ability to serve the Lord now.)

Action Steps

Try making a simple rule of life. From this Bible study you just completed, prayerfully identify your life priorities. You may want to include additional things that didn’t come up in your study.

Make a chart. It can simply be lines scribbled on paper. List your priorities in the horizontal rows. Above the vertical columns, write how often you would like to practice these: daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. Fill in the squares with specific action steps that will help you bring order to these various aspects of your life.

For example, if God is challenging you to give more generously, in the “finance” row, you might record a certain amount you’d like to give every month.

Or if you want to be more hospitable, in the “relationships” row write a goal such as this: “Invite someone to coffee or lunch at least once a week.”

Perhaps you want to spend more focused time with God. In the “spiritual life” row you could write, “Take a personal prayer retreat” every quarter.

Clearly, this tool is only as effective as your follow through. Personally, I don’t ever achieve all my goals. But one thing is sure: although my life is never as well-ordered as I’d like, it’s a lot more balanced thanks to this simple practice I do at the beginning of each new year. 🏠

CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK is a regular contributor to *PRAY* and director of curriculum for Community Bible Studies (communitybiblestudies.org).



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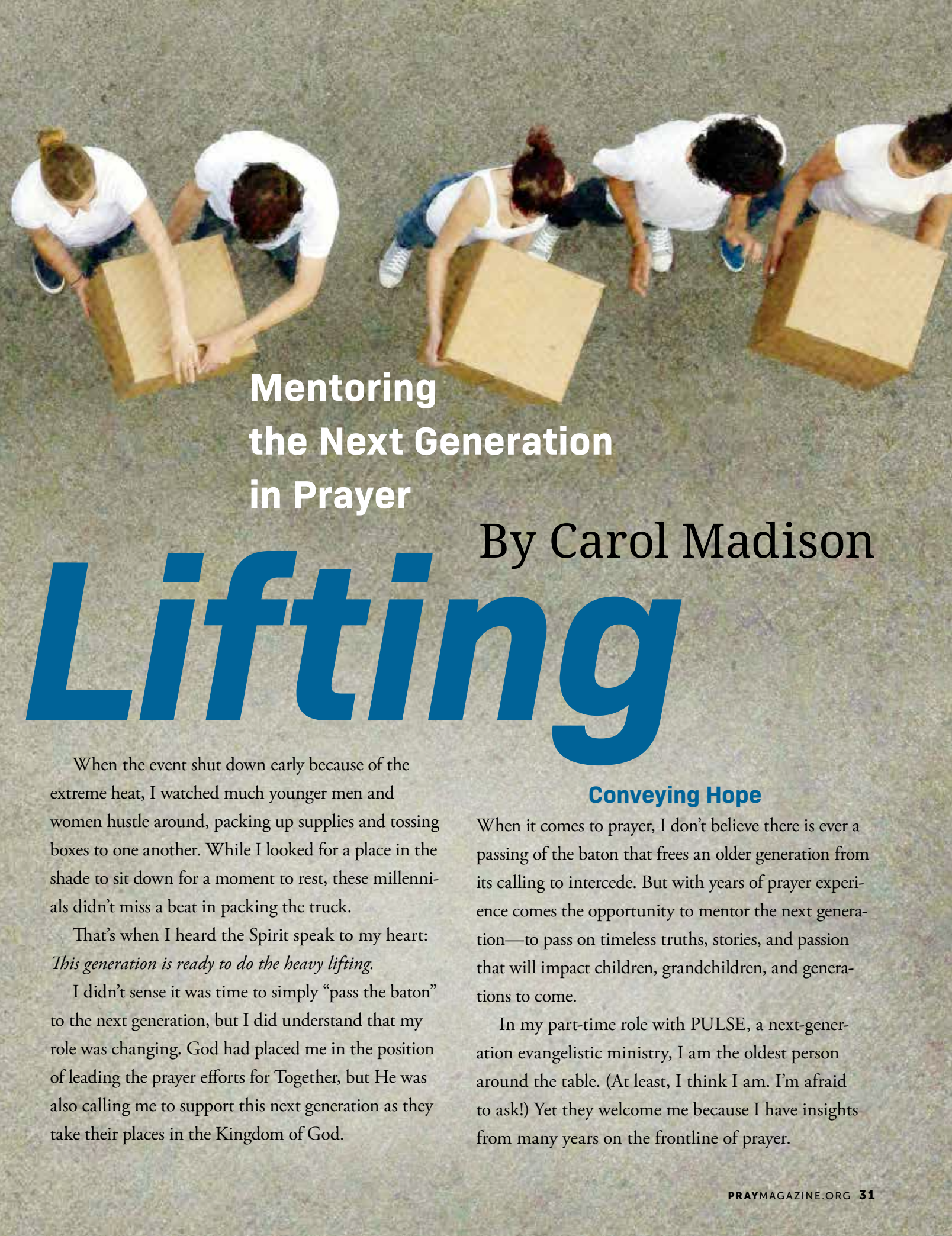


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It's Heavy-

My feet hurt, my muscles ached, and I didn't think I could lift another box onto the truck as we wrapped up a large next-generation gathering in Washington, D.C. It was a record-heat, exhausting day with hundreds of thousands of people gathered around the Washington Monument to worship Jesus and pray for a spiritual awakening in our nation. I had spent the day giving leadership to seven intercessory prayer tents that supported Together 2016—and it had been a long, hot day with lots of steps as I went from tent to tent.



Mentoring the Next Generation in Prayer

By Carol Madison

Lifting

When the event shut down early because of the extreme heat, I watched much younger men and women hustle around, packing up supplies and tossing boxes to one another. While I looked for a place in the shade to sit down for a moment to rest, these millennials didn't miss a beat in packing the truck.

That's when I heard the Spirit speak to my heart: *This generation is ready to do the heavy lifting.*

I didn't sense it was time to simply "pass the baton" to the next generation, but I did understand that my role was changing. God had placed me in the position of leading the prayer efforts for Together, but He was also calling me to support this next generation as they take their places in the Kingdom of God.

Conveying Hope

When it comes to prayer, I don't believe there is ever a passing of the baton that frees an older generation from its calling to intercede. But with years of prayer experience comes the opportunity to mentor the next generation—to pass on timeless truths, stories, and passion that will impact children, grandchildren, and generations to come.

In my part-time role with PULSE, a next-generation evangelistic ministry, I am the oldest person around the table. (At least, I think I am. I'm afraid to ask!) Yet they welcome me because I have insights from many years on the frontline of prayer.

Once a month I teach prayer principles intended to encourage the staff to pray with more faith and hope. I then spend the rest of the day offering half-hour personal prayer appointments with the individual staff members. I've prayed this next generation through ministry and personal struggles, joys, and uncertainties. I've listened to their hearts, and they've heard my heart-felt prayers on their behalf. The saying, "Prayer is more caught than taught," seems true as I spend private time praying for each team member.

Jesus is, of course, known for His extraordinary, unmatched prayer life. Sometimes He went off by Himself to pour out His heart to His heavenly Father. Other times He prayed out loud for the benefit of others. He did that for a stunned crowd gathered around Lazarus's tomb:

They took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me" (John 11:41–42).

Any prayer offered on behalf of younger people—out loud and in their presence—is a form of mentoring as you demonstrate your faith in the all-powerful God who answers the cries of His people. When you are the one who says, "I believe—and I will believe God on your behalf," you have stepped up as a mentor. Sometimes that younger person needs the simple reminder that prayer is always the right next thing to do—and that hope is never misplaced when we bring our concerns and needs to God in prayer.

If nothing else, being a mentor means being a conveyor of hope to those who come after you. That's what Paul prayed: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13).

Telling Stories

I love studying past revivals and spiritual awakenings because the stories encourage me to keep praying for another great move of God in our nation. No matter how hopeless things appeared in the past, God interrupted those downward spirals, and He can certainly do it again!

I've also witnessed firsthand the miraculously transformed community of Almolonga, Guatemala—a once poverty-stricken, idolatrous village that now flourishes with the tangible presence and power of God.

I thrive on these kinds of stories, as well as the biblical accounts of answered prayer. In Psalm 78:4 we see the importance of declaring God's great and mighty wonders:

We will not hide them from their descendants;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
his power, and the wonders he has done.

Imagine the impact of the answered-prayer stories our favorite biblical characters got to pass on to the next generation:

- Anna finally receiving her answer to years of prayer and fasting for the arrival of the Messiah (Luke 2:36–38)
- Daniel watching an angel clamp shut the mouths of vicious lions (Dan. 6:16–23)
- Elijah feeling the searing heat of fire sent from heaven on a watered-down altar (1 Kings 18:30–39)
- Nehemiah watching God's favor surround him as he rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2–4)
- Moses calling upon God for rescue and watching water flow out of a rock (Ex. 17:1–7)
- Peter feeling an angel poke him awake, and then watching an iron gate fling open as he walks, untouched, out of prison—all in answer to the prayers of his friends (Acts 12:6–11).

Perhaps your stories are not as dramatic, but you have accounts of struggles and triumphs in prayer. There is a generation waiting to hear them!

Being Accountable

Mentoring is not a one-way deal. Mentoring others stretches me because I have to give extra prayer, thought, and reflection to my own prayer life. Teaching others reminds me to live up to my public prayer life. It's built-in accountability. You've probably heard the saying, "I wish I was the person my dog thinks I am." Sometimes I feel that way about my prayer life: "I wish I had all the faith and consistency in prayer that people think I have!"

Mentoring reminds me that, yes, I *do* believe in the God of the impossible (Luke 1:37, ESV). I love the privilege of passing on my certainty that God has all power to heal, redeem, and restore. Mentoring reminds me to pray like I believe it!

The more we reflect on our own prayer life, the more the Spirit reminds us of the accumulated answered prayers in our lifetime. When we step into a mentoring relationship, we begin to realize that we know more than we think we do! The Spirit reminds us of biblical truths and a lifetime of personal stories.

When we begin to speak out what we already know, we will, in turn, pray with greater confidence—and pass on hope to a new generation.

Getting Started

So, how do you start mentoring? First, ask the Lord about it.

When I started my first prayer mentor group in my church, I had only the conviction that I needed to do *something*, but I had no idea where to start. I prayed. And waited. And prayed some more.

Then I had the simple idea (no doubt from the Lord) of mentoring six women for six months. A short time after that, the Spirit prompted some younger women to *ask me to mentor them*. Suddenly I had a group of six younger women eager to learn. I went session by

session, seeking the Lord about what to do next. By the end of our time, I had 12 sessions' worth of my best prayer practices to share with more mentor groups in the years to come.

Here's a checklist of ideas to get started:

- Invite God to remind you of stories you can retell of His goodness and power. Draw from Scripture, history, and your own prayer life. Record them as illustrations for prayer principles.
- Research prayer resources that resonate with your heart and experience. Take note of prayer practices that fit with the way God has equipped you.
- Develop your own file of teaching topics that you can pass on to others. Here are some sessions I've led: praying Scripture, Jesus' prayer life, prayers of Paul, hearing God's voice, fasting, contending in prayer, and prayer personalities.
- Be strategic. Look for opportunities to invest in others. Start with your own family—and expand. Perhaps it's one-on-one or in a small group. Ask God to direct you to those who might be open to mentoring.

Mentoring can be as simple as telling stories to your children and praying with them before bed. Or it may mean identifying younger men and women in your church and developing prayer relationships with them so that you can pass on helpful prayer practices.


Whatever ways God leads you, a new generation needs you.

Lifting the Incoming Boxes!

It's time for this younger generation to do some heavy lifting in prayer, evangelism, and furthering God's Kingdom. Their time has arrived to take the gospel to their generation and to the ends of the earth.

When the boxes were being tossed around on that sweltering day in Washington, D.C., I cheered on the next

generation—and had enough sense to duck at the appropriate times. I was OK with my shifting role because I realized my entire lifetime has been God's preparation for this mentoring assignment.

Step into your role of fueling another great movement of God by passing on the gift of prayer to those who come after you. 



CAROL MADISON is the editor of *Prayer Connect* and *PRAY* magazines and director of prayer ministries at Hillside Church of Bloomington, MN. She is also the author of *Prayer That's Caught and Taught: Mentoring the Next Generation*, a newly released book that contains many of the stories and lessons she uses with her prayer mentoring groups. It is available at prayershop.org.

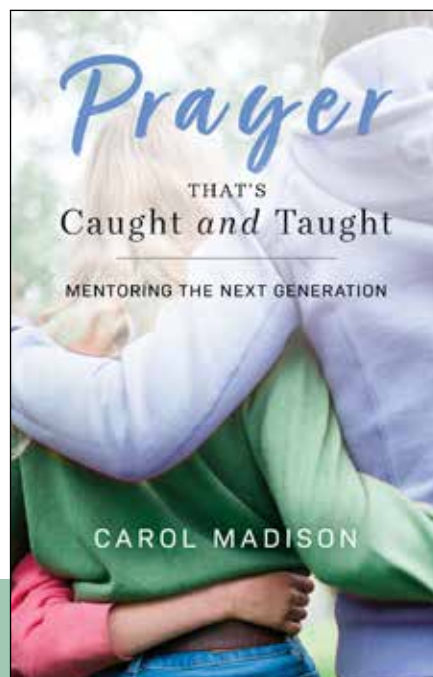
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Six Biblical Prayers When Tragedy Strikes

By Stacey Pardoe

The day we heard the news, our hearts felt like they broke into a thousand pieces. I stared out the living room window with tear-filled eyes and considered the years our friend would miss. I thought of the grandchildren yet to be born, summer vacations along the Carolina coast, and Christmas dinners beneath twinkling lights. It's hard not to grieve what might have been when cancer sweeps in and dashes our expectations.

The shape or form of our loss may differ, but at some point we all face the deep grief of saying goodbye to loved ones and staring numbly into the heavens. We wrestle with God's goodness in our broken world. We make the difficult choice between maintaining soft hearts or letting our pain coat our broken hearts with hard, protective shells.

A Nation's Grief

Days after our family's personal loss, our nation faced a much greater tragedy. With my heart still fragile and bruised in my own pain, I watched the scene unfold on the afternoon news. Long lines of teens fled the school building in Parkland, FL, with arms raised to the sky as a gunman went on a rampage, devastating countless lives. I couldn't wrap my mind around the horror.

The news channels captured the images of parents weeping outside the building. Gray ashen crosses of Ash Wednesday's sacrament streamed down their damp foreheads. How quickly a holy day can descend into the worst kind of terror.

My mind raced to the fear that one day *I* might be the mother weeping on the sidewalk outside our small-town high school. One day, *I* might find myself searching for my child in the chaos. *I* might be the one whose name is called from among the crowd. *I* might be the one watching an ambulance take my child away. *I* might be the one trying to pick up the shattered pieces of my life.

For the past two decades, attacks against our children, our schools, and our citizens have seemed unending. Names like *Sandy Hook*, *Virginia Tech*, and *Columbine* are etched in our minds forever. A concert-turned-massacre in Las Vegas has caused people to rethink attending large events. Wildfires, earthquakes, mudslides, and tornados add to the uncertainty of everyday life.

In light of these calamities, how do we pray for the broken and hurting? How do we pray for our nation when evil ravages our schools, churches, families, and other places that should be safe havens? How do we pray for our neighbors and friends when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death—when words like *cancer*, *mental illness*, and *suicide* wreck their worlds?

Whether we're praying for families who have lost loved ones through a large-scale tragedy or we're praying for the quiet losses that take place in living rooms and hospital rooms every day, we can offer these six appropriate biblical prayers:

1 **Pray that the hurting and broken will see their need for God.** The world offers a wide range of remedies for our pain. But ultimately, we all need God, the Creator of the universe, to step in and restore our broken hearts. We can begin by praying that those affected will come



Hope for a Broken and Hurting World

to the realization that God is the great Healer. Disasters remind us that we live in a world desperate for a Rescuer.

The well-known passage of 2 Chronicles 7:14 was originally written to God's chosen nation, Israel, as a call to seek His face and find healing. This is a powerful prayer for our country and our time as well. We can intercede for the hurting this way: "Lord, we pray that Your people who are called by Your name will humble themselves and pray and seek Your face." The first step on the path toward healing of a nation is through the humility of the Church.

2. Pray that we will turn from evil. In addition to seeking God's face, 2 Chronicles 7:14 is a call for God's people to turn from their wicked ways. The promise that follows is for God's children today, too: God will hear from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land. When we turn from evil and seek God's face, He hears, forgives, and heals.

Our culture, saturated with violence, needs forgiveness and healing, both of which come when we turn in repentance to the open arms of our heavenly Father. And when the Church repents before God for our own sins and those of our nation, we take another step on the path toward healing.

3. Pray that we will encounter the healing presence of Jesus Christ. The adage that "time heals all wounds" is simply untrue. Jesus Christ is the great Healer. "By his wounds we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). Hurting hearts desperately need a Healer, and that Healer is Jesus.

Pray that the suffering will see their need and turn to the One who binds up our wounds. Pray for a fresh revelation of God's Spirit to draw hearts to Himself. Pray that the heartbroken will recognize their spiritual thirst and draw near to the God who promises streams of living water (John 7:37–38).

4. Pray that hardships will lead hurting people to saving faith in Christ. Jesus said it is the sick

who need a doctor (Matt. 9:12). In the same light, only the broken need a Savior. Pray that God will use people's hopelessness to reveal their great need for a Savior.

Times of loss often remind us of the brevity of life, the brokenness of this world, and the need for Someone to pay the price for our sins. Pray for messengers of the gospel to speak into the lives of those who suffer (Rom. 10:14). People are often most open to the gospel when their hearts are tender with grief. Pray that they will turn to Jesus and receive His gift of eternal life.

5. Pray that the hurting will encounter Jesus as their portion and hope. Throughout

our family's painful trial, I wanted nothing more than to hurry to the other side of our dark valley of pain. I longed to "make things right" any way I could. I was tempted to put my hope in a future that looked brighter than our present circumstances. In all my planning and my attempts to fix our brokenness, I was gently reminded that "fixing" our situation was not my hope; Jesus, Immanuel, is my hope.

My hope does not rest in getting to the other side of my pain or climbing out of the valley of the shadow of death. My hope rests in the fact that Jesus is my portion in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. Psalm 142:5 says, "I cry to you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living'" (ESV).

Jesus promises to stay with us, even in the darkest times. Pray that the hurting will encounter Jesus as their portion and their hope.

6. Pray that the hurting will be strengthened according to God's glorious might.

In Colossians 1:11, Paul prayed this for God's children (including us): Be

"strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience." Only by God's glorious might can we climb out of the darkest valleys. Pray that the hurting will be filled with the strength and joy of the Lord. Now is the time to pray—even before a disaster strikes—that God will transform lives through whatever comes upon us, and that this deep transformation results in glory to His holy name.

Prayer as Our First Response

There are no easy answers or quick fixes in times of despair. Often, the best we can do when tragedy strikes close to home is to offer the comfort of our presence and to quietly lift up our prayers. Prayer is not our final effort when all else fails. God has given it to us as our first response and the foundation of our lives.

As we pray for those facing tragedy, pain, and hopelessness, we hold onto the promise that Jesus walks with us through every valley. We offer prayers of thanksgiving for this promise, and we lift these prayers of petition for those who struggle to pray for themselves.

Our family is healing from the losses of the past, and we have witnessed firsthand God's power to move mightily despite any tragedy. We cannot truly grasp what it means to encounter Jesus as our portion until we have reached the end of ourselves and fallen before Him, devastated.

In our family's pain, our precious Savior brought healing, and He is the hope the world craves. Tragedy can strike at any time. As others are overcome with grief and despair, let us, as the Church, go to prayer *first*—that our broken world will turn to Him, seek His face, and encounter His healing presence. 🏠



STACEY PARDOE is a freelance journalist, mentor, and certified special education teacher. Her greatest passion is to walk closely with Christ and make His love known to the world. She writes weekly at staceypardoe.com.

Let My Words Be Few

Every spring, for about three days, I surround myself with people who write, edit, illustrate, rearrange, print, and sell words. I live alone and work at home so, during this professional event, I speak—and hear—many more words than I normally do in a three-day period.

But in 2018, five words in particular stuck with me after I returned home from the conference. Five words comprising 17 letters and divided into two complete sentences, each spoken during a different conversation.

The Lord knows. And Be you.

The people who said these words are seasoned writers and no doubt have exceptional vocabularies. Yet they used a few of the simplest, clearest words in the English language to say what I needed to hear. Their messages, like a crisp seal

pressing into melted wax, left a strong impression on me.

Choose Carefully

An economy of words—carefully chosen—is sometimes far more desirable than a long, elaborately crafted message. And this applies to prayer, too.



The wisdom of Ecclesiastes 5:2 spells this out: “Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in

heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.”

God hears and answers short prayers just as much as He does long ones. The key is not the number or length of words uttered but the sincerity and faith of the heart offering them.

While attempting to walk on water, Peter called out, “Lord, save me!” (Matt.

14:30), and Jesus immediately grabbed him and kept him from drowning.

The disciples pleaded with Jesus: “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5). Bartimaeus asked Jesus to heal his sight with these simple words: “Rabbi, I want to see” (Mark 10:51). The ten lepers begged, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us” (Luke 17:13), and the tax collector—in contrast to the nearby Pharisee puffing himself up in a long prayer—simply acknowledged his sinfulness and pleaded for mercy (Luke 18:13).

One of the most moving short prayers is that of the thief hanging on the cross next to Jesus, who asked to be remembered when Jesus returned to His Kingdom (Luke 23:42).

There is a time and place for long conversations with the Lord, but don’t discount the effectiveness of humble and succinct prayers, both private and public.

ANN-MARGRET HOVSEPIAN is an award-winning Montreal-based writer and illustrator, and an associate member of The Evangelical Press Association (annhovsepian.com).

Praying God’s Wish List

Since time is limited for all of us, how do we take full advantage of the precious minutes we allocate to talk to God? Though all of us want to ask for things like job success, physical healing, and traveling safety, the Lord often has other plans. So my small group has developed a way to broaden our prayers according to His “wish list.”

Let’s say a man named John approaches our prayer team with a request: “Please pray that at the end

of my job interview this week, I’ll be offered the position.”

Is that a good prayer? We can’t know for certain. But there are quite a few things we know God wants for John’s employment—things like hope, wisdom, and peace. John and his job hunt would benefit from any of these. Although there’s nothing wrong with praying as he asked, landing that particular job might be forfeiting something more valuable that God wants to do within him first.

God’s wish list is full of blessings available for the asking—a compilation of the many good gifts He wants to give. It includes things like comfort, strength, joy, and perseverance. His Word reminds us these priceless gifts are available to us, which is why we can’t go wrong praying from His wish list.

Prayers by the Mug

To facilitate this, my prayer group has compiled 400 Bible verses—20 each

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TIPS&TOOLS

on 20 different topics—typing them onto small cards, color-coded by subject. We keep the cards in mugs where they're ready to pull out and apply during prayer. Here's a sample verse: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom. 15:13, esv).

If we use that verse regarding John's employment, we might pray like this: "Father, please fill John with abounding hope as he awaits your choice of job for him."

By putting John's name into this bit of God's active, living Word, we're requesting things far more significant than a job itself can offer. God loves to say yes to things like hope, especially for someone going through a challenging life change.

Another example is Diane. She survived an auto accident and requested prayer for rapid healing of her injuries. That's a good prayer. But maybe God's



first choice would be for Diane to have a prolonged recovery so He can get her full attention while she's flat on her back. His intent might be to pour

spiritual riches into her *before* she heals, things she can continue using well after recovery.

As we lift up Diane in prayer, we can also pluck some items from God's wish list that might be higher priorities than a speedy recovery. We can ask Him to increase her joy or develop a greater trust in Him while she's sidelined. Adding these cards ensures we are praying according to God's wish list.

The Lord's standing invitation is, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer. 33:3). If we call according to His wish list, we won't miss even one of those great and mighty things!

MARGARET NYMAN is an award-winning author from southwest Michigan. She blogs at gettingthroughthis.com.

Will You Pray with Us?

We are grateful for your prayers as we seek to advance the prayer movement in our nation. Perhaps 2019 is the year we will see the answer to our longtime prayer for revival and spiritual awakening!

Here are some ways you can pray for us:

- Many of us associated with *PRAY* will be at America's National Prayer Committee meetings toward the end of January. It is a great time to connect with national prayer leaders, receive updates on the latest in the prayer movement, and envision themes and article ideas for the magazine. Ask God to increase the circulation of *PRAY* as it becomes a strategic voice for the National Day of Prayer.
- Plans are underway for another great National Day of Prayer in May! Pray for Dr. Ronnie Floyd and his staff as they promote and plan events to unite the Church in prayer for our nation, with the theme "Love One Another." Pray for growth of the prayer movement in every community.
- Pray for the flow of our editorial process, including assigning articles to writers, creativity for authors, editing and refining of articles, graphic design of each page, contracting with advertisers, and final proofreading. Pray that each person involved at every stage (Carol, Joyce, Joan, Bridget, Kim, and Jon) will serve with excellence.

Healing Work Only God Can Do | By Kyle Davison Bair

Harley entered my office defeated. His head drooped, he wouldn't make eye-contact, and he barely spoke. He had been this way for months.

After four hours he left my office triumphant: his head up, his shoulders relaxed, and his face radiating joy. I've seen Harley frequently at church in the months since that appointment, always smiling and eager to greet anyone around him.

In those four hours we tapped a resource of incredible power: God.

Harley didn't need advice from me. He didn't need a lecture, a reprimand, or even a listening ear. He needed power.

Using *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* as our guide, we examined seven key areas in Harley's life. We asked difficult questions and took stock of his life. At each step we prayed. Hard.

Harley confessed sins and shortcomings. He renounced counterfeit religious experiences. He asked God to forgive him even as he forgave everyone he could think of who had sinned against him. We asked God to speak and we paused to listen. We dealt with fears, failures, and family influences. Through it all God listened, God spoke, and God healed.

In short: God did the work only He can do.

Move Out of the Way

As a pastor, one of the hardest lessons to learn is how to get out of God's way. Early on, I obsessed over solving people's problems. I became a private-eye pastor, analyzing why they were suffering and how they could change. I found all the right Scripture verses to throw at them, expecting that if they heard all the right

information, their problems would disappear.

And I hurt far more people than I ever helped.

Transformation does not come by information. It does not come by human effort. And it never comes by a pastor trying to solve all your problems for you.

Only God transforms. Often we let our pride shipwreck our lives, refusing to let anyone else take control. We pass this pride on by insisting that a checklist of tasks can solve every problem with more effort. But only God transforms.

Scripture tells us clearly: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2). Conforming to the world is easy: keep trying to solve your problems by yourself without God's power.

But God wants to break us out of that pattern. Therefore, He does not tell us to transform ourselves, but rather to submit to Him. When we stop acting and start listening, then God can speak. As God speaks, He renews our minds. That transforms our lives.

When Harley stepped into my office, I could have given him checklists to solve all his perceived problems. He may even have followed a few. Yet this human effort would not transform his life.

Instead, we prayed. As we did, God transformed his heart. Harley suddenly realized how he needed to change. His realizations closely matched the advice I would have given. But this way he wasn't taking another person's suggestions. His face lit up as the Holy Spirit opened his eyes to these realities directly. When he left, he wasn't obsessed with or fearful

about checking the next item off the list. He left in joy, excited to do what God revealed to him.

Let God Do the Speaking

God speaks in many ways. He can renew our minds as we read His Word, listen to Scripture-saturated sermons, or grow through Spirit-driven discipleship. But so often, the most immediate and powerful transformation arrives through the simplest means of all: prayer.

Through prayer we connect with the God who gives life to the fullest. Through prayer He can speak to us, heal us, and restore us—if we will pause long enough to listen.

That is why I treasure ministries like Freedom in Christ (which incorporates *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* mentioned earlier; ficm.org), Transformation Prayer Ministry (transformationprayer.org), and Prayer Resolution (crossresources.com). They are full of wisdom and godly counsel.

But their power comes from leading people straight to Jesus. He alone possesses the power to heal our pain, speak the truth we need to hear, and give rest to our weary souls. Jesus can accomplish all this and far more. But we will not have if we do not ask—or if we try to do the work ourselves.

God is more powerful than you and I are. Let Him do the work that only He can do. If you do, you will see your life (and the lives of those you want to help) transformed. 📖

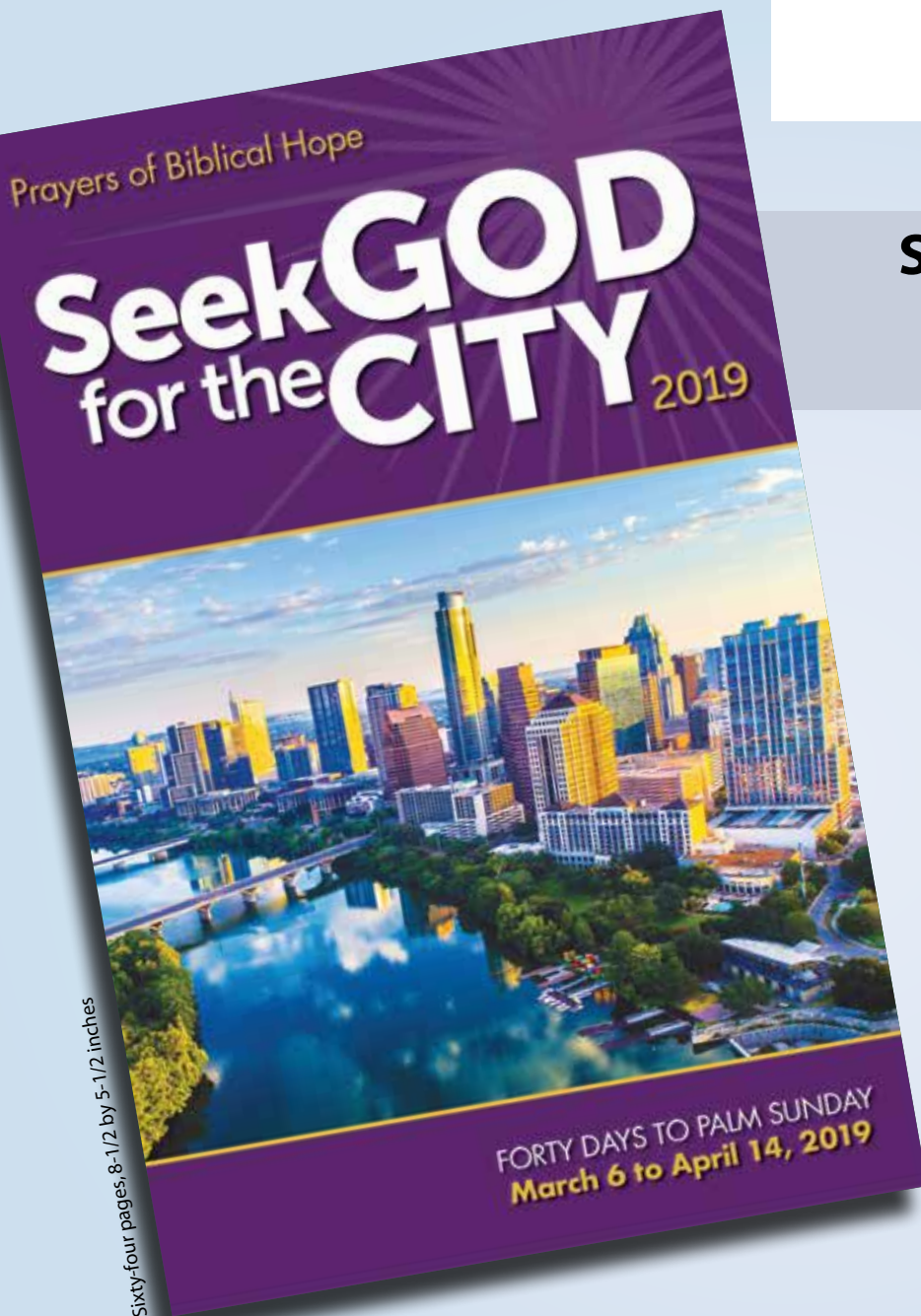


KYLE DAVISON BAIR is prayer ministries pastor at New Hope Church in New Hope, MN. He is also an active participant in a network of Twin Cities prayer leaders.

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