

# PrayerCONNECT


Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

## GOD'S BETTER WAY

The Benefits of  
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**Don't Cower to the Enemy  
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CIRCLING JERICHO**





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# PrayerCONNECT

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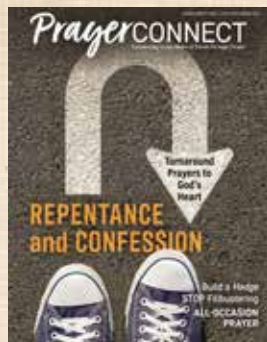


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Carol Madison  
PRAYER CONNECT Submissions  
4300 West 98th St. | Bloomington, MN 55437  
[editor@prayerconnect.net](mailto:editor@prayerconnect.net)

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PRAYER CONNECT is published four times per year, available in Print (\$24.99 per year) or Digital (\$19.99 per year) formats, and through the Church Prayer Leaders Network (CPLN) Membership (\$35.99 per year). Both CPLN and Print subscriptions include access to the Digital version. To subscribe, go to [prayerconnect.net](http://prayerconnect.net). We also have multiple copy discounts available for individuals or churches who want to purchase copies for a prayer team or small groups:

[prayerconnect.net](http://prayerconnect.net)  
Amy Crane  
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Jonathan Graf  
[jon@prayerleader.com](mailto:jon@prayerleader.com) | 812.238.5504

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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, 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.

Jon Graf | [jon@prayerleader.com](mailto:jon@prayerleader.com)  
Carol Madison | [editor@prayerconnect.net](mailto:editor@prayerconnect.net)  
[prayerconnect.net](http://prayerconnect.net) | [prayerleader.com](http://prayerleader.com)



**Published by**  
Church Prayer Leaders Network

**Sponsored by**  
America's National Prayer Committee  
Denominational Prayer Leaders Network  
Harvest Prayer Ministries

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

**Publisher/Editor-in-Chief**  
Jonathan Graf  
jon@prayerleader.com

**Editor**  
Carol Madison  
editor@prayerconnect.net

**Art Director**  
J. Bridget Rennie

**Assistant Editor**  
Niko Peele

**Editorial Assistant**  
Joan Sherman

**Editorial Advisors**  
Dave and Kim Butts

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## Previously in



Probably the most-quoted and familiar prayer in Scripture is “The Lord’s Prayer.” Yet most people have never explored the depths of Jesus’ profound teaching that’s full of Kingdom riches. Order this and other back issues at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).

### Prayer Mentors Who Shaped Me

Having a life coach is popular these days. Many people—especially leaders—hire someone who can look critically at a person’s effectiveness in his or her life, work, relationships, etc., and offer tips and suggestions on how to improve in areas of weakness.

I don’t knock that practice, but I have never had such a person in my life. Maybe I would be a corporate CEO today if I had!

I have had mentors, though—people I have learned from in specific areas of my life. Some were personal like Dr. Neil Foster (my first boss in publishing), Sandra Higley (my assistant at *Pray!* Magazine), Dr. Alvin VanderGriend (a prayer mentor), Lee Brase (prayer leader at The Navigators), and Dave Butts (great friend and former boss when I worked for Harvest Prayer Ministries). Others mentored me through the books they wrote.

One such author/mentor is Dr. A.B. Simpson, a famous missionary statesman of the late 1800s and early 1900s, and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). I started reading Simpson in earnest when I became his editor! My first publishing job was as classics editor at the C&MA’s publishing house. I worked to repackage many of Simpson’s 100-plus books to reissue them for modern readers.

Simpson wrote a lot on the Holy Spirit, divine healing, and prayer. He shaped my thinking about prayer as I read *The Life of Prayer* and the prayer sections in his *Christ in the Bible* commentary series.

“Prayer is the secret force of everything in the spiritual kingdom,” Simpson wrote in his commentary. “This great ministry of prayer begins in the bosom of Jesus, but is by Him transferred through the Holy Spirit to the heart of His Church and carried on by us in the ministry of prayer on earth.”

Prayer became more important to me as I read, “Our work must be born in prayer, watered by prayer, guarded by and protected by prayer and the worker himself ever steeped in prayer, and hidden behind the supernatural working of an almighty hand.”

It was reading Simpson that got me, as a believer in my mid-30s, starting to grow in my prayer life. I began to realize that many believers and churches were not experiencing dynamic, transforming prayer. His works—and another C&MA mentor A.W. Tozer and his book *The Pursuit of God*—were the start of my journey toward becoming a prayer leader and a voice for prayer in the local church.

Our spiritual growth will be more significant if we have mentors in our lives. We all need the voices of others to remind us, push us, and encourage us in our walks. Who are your prayer mentors?

Maybe *you* are a prayer mentor! If so, speak into others. Encourage them in prayer.

– Jonathan Graf



**Note:** If you want to mentor others in prayer, a great resource is *Prayer That’s Caught and Taught: Mentoring the Next Generation* by Prayer Connect editor Carol Madison. It offers nine important prayer principles people need to understand, as well as suggestions on how to teach them to those you mentor.



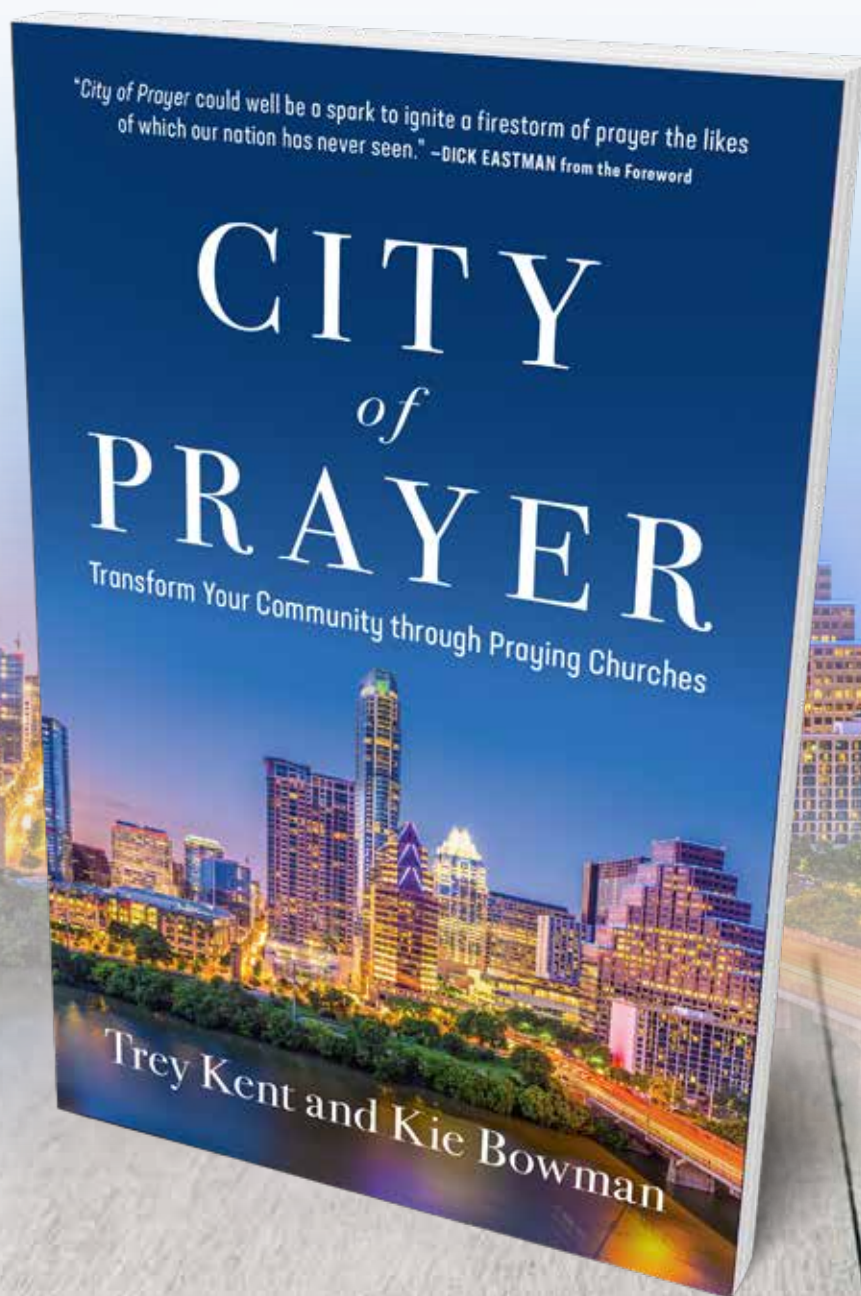
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## Coach Wins Supreme Court Case Over Prayer

**T**he U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a Washington school district was wrong to punish a high school football coach for praying on the field after games. The court ruled 6-3 that the Bremerton School District discriminated against Coach Joe Kennedy.

Justice Neil Gorsuch delivered the court's opinion, joined by Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Amy Coney Barrett, and Brett Kavanaugh.

"Kennedy prayed during a period when school employees were free to speak with a friend, call for a reservation at a restaurant, check email, or attend to other personal matters. He offered his prayers quietly while his students were otherwise occupied. Still, the Bremerton School District disciplined him anyway," wrote Gorsuch.

"Both the Free Exercise and Free Speech Clauses of the First Amendment protect expressions like Mr. Kennedy's. . . . The Constitution and the best of our traditions counsel mutual respect and tolerance, not censorship and suppression, for religious and nonreligious views alike."

In response to the opinion, Kennedy

says, "This is just so awesome. All I've ever wanted was to be back on the field with my guys. I am incredibly grateful to the Supreme Court, my fantastic legal team, and everyone who has supported us. I thank God for answering our prayers and sustaining my family through this long battle."

Kelly Shackelford, president, CEO, and chief counsel for First Liberty, a religious liberty law firm that represented Kennedy, hailed the court's decision as a "tremendous victory for Coach Kennedy and religious liberty for all Americans."

"Our Constitution protects the right of every American to engage in private religious expression, including praying in public, without fear of getting fired," she adds. "We are grateful that the Supreme Court recognized what the Constitution and law have always said—Americans are free to live out their faith in public."

A devout Christian, Kennedy had a practice of going to the 50-yard line after



high school football games and praying, often with fans and students joining him. In 2015, the school district suspended him for praying on the field after games and later decided not to renew his contract because of his refusal to stop praying on the field.

Kennedy sued the school district in 2016, accusing them of violating his religious freedom.

Dave Kubal, president and CEO of Intercessors for America (IFA), says, "I am pleased that the Court finds the First Amendment protects the speech of people of faith and the right to express that faith through personal public prayer."

"As the nation's largest prayer ministry, we at IFA are encouraged by the Court's recognition that our freedom of personal public prayer is equal to the freedom of any secular speech . . . and that the government cannot punish or suppress those who express that right."

**MICHAEL GRYBOSKI**, adapted from Christian Post ([christianpost.com](http://christianpost.com)) and Intercessors for America ([ifapray.org](http://ifapray.org)).

## Korean Intercessors Pray for Revival in America

**F**rom Bellingham, WA, to Los Angeles, CA, to Bangor, ME, 240 Korean intercessors from South Korea dispersed to 20 cities throughout America to pray for revival in June 2022. According to P. Douglas Small, president of Project Pray and America's Prayer Meeting, the intercessors went "from coast to coast and border to border to pray morning,

noon, and night." Their prayer gatherings culminated on Pentecost Sunday.

The 20 teams of intercessors are associated with the World School of Prayer in Seoul, South Korea. The intercessors visited on the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Billy Graham's 1973 crusade in Seoul. That historic event drew more than three million people, with approximately

75,000 of them committing their lives to Christ. Korean Christians say it changed the direction of the nation.

"After the crusade, the prayer revival broke out in many different churches in South Korea. Even revival broke out . . . and churches started to grow," Aaron Park, executive director of the World School of Prayer, says. "Through the prayer revival



and church growth, God brought us the blessing, economically and spiritually.”

Now, the grandchildren of that revival returned to the U.S. to give America a spiritual boost. “We realize it is time for us to go and pay back our spiritual debt to America with prayer, so let’s go and humbly serve the American church with prayer,” says Park.

Project Pray hosted a special broadcast called America’s Prayer Meeting with the Korean intercessors on the campus of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) in Charlotte, NC. The new Billy Graham Archive and Research

Center was introduced as a place where people from around the globe can come and study the records and historical data of how God used Billy Graham and his organization to bring revival.

Dr. Tom Phillips, BGEA senior advisor and former crusade director, says Billy Graham fervently sought God for revival in America.

“Mr. Graham, from 1949 . . . all the way ‘til nearly his death, kept saying the same thing: ‘I’m praying for an old-fashioned, Holy Ghost, heaven-sent revival that would sweep America from coast to coast,’” says Phillips.

He adds, “How we need it now, and to have our Korean brothers and sisters joining with our American brothers and sisters to pray together because our job is to go into all the world and preach the gospel. That was Billy Graham’s calling, that’s our calling today, but it begins in prayer.”

Small says it’s no coincidence that the Korean intercessors came on the anniversary of the Seoul Crusade. “We’re believing that this can be a watershed moment for America that not just enriches us, but changes the nation.”

—Steve Little, CBN News (*cbn.com*).

## Native American Leaders Anticipate Revival

**T**hey came from Texas and Saskatchewan, South Carolina and Wyoming, Alberta and Kentucky. They carried the names of their tribes with honor: Lumbee, Chippewa, Navajo, Apache, Sioux, Hopi, and more.

Altogether, more than 125 Christian leaders representing 14 states, two provinces and 24 tribes gathered for the Native Peoples Christian Leaders Conference in Rapid City, SD. They came to be encouraged and equipped, to worship and network, with the goal of seeing revival spread through Indigenous communities in the United States and Canada.

As Will Graham addressed the assembly, he recounted a similar gathering that took place in Albuquerque, NM, in 1975. During that meeting, Graham’s grandfather Billy Graham said, “You as evangelical Indians are a sleeping giant. You are now awakening. The original Americans could turn around and be the evangelists to win over other Americans to Christ.”

That statement has been held tightly by Native Christians, a source of encouragement to persevere in the faith.

“I believe this is our opportunity—a God-given moment in time,” says Graham, pointing back to his grandfather’s words. “God is waking the sleeping giant,



and I believe God will use you to bring the last great revival.”

“I’ve wept so many tears and cried so many times, like the prophet Jeremiah, weeping for my people,” says Craig Smith, an Ojibwe evangelist from northern Minnesota. “Our hearts break for the conditions we find among our people. The challenges, the anguish, and the grief upon grief that cannot seem to be resolved.”

The challenges, Smith says, are deep-rooted and endemic. Leaders of the conference did not attempt to gloss over the stark realities of Native people, addressing a myriad of struggles head on: loyalty to traditional tribal spirituality, brutality (such as the massacre at Wounded Knee, on nearby Pine Ridge Indian Reservation), forced boarding schools (in the name of Jesus, Native children were taken from their families, stripped of their identities, and treated ruthlessly), alcoholism, generational family trauma,

and the belief that Christianity is a “white man’s religion.”

One thing was clear at the Native Peoples Christian Leaders Conference: It’s time to be bold in carrying the hope of Jesus to Indigenous people.

“I believe we’re going to see Native people on fire for Christ, leading other Native people to Jesus, leading the last great revival,” says Graham. “I don’t think it will be the preachers leading a revival, but the broken repenting and turning to Christ.”

—Erik Ogren, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (*billygraham.org*).

### Prayer Calendar

**Day of Prayer for Peace of Jerusalem**  
**Sunday, October 2**  
[daytopray.com](http://daytopray.com)

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**Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church**  
**Sunday, November 6**  
[ldop.ca](http://ldop.ca)

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**Weekend of Prayer to End Slavery and Trafficking**  
**January 7–8, 2023**  
[facebook.com/weekendofprayer](https://facebook.com/weekendofprayer)



# God's Better Way

## The Benefits of Unanswered Prayer

It's probably never good to start with a disclaimer. But let me just say that I do not endorse or recommend this movie because it is fraught with impossibilities and theological issues. And I may or may not have firsthand knowledge of the gist of this movie. Popcorn may or may not have been involved.

But there is a scene in *Bruce Almighty* that illustrates the benefits of unanswered prayer. Bruce, the main character, is momentarily given a sample of God's power to demonstrate how truly powerful God is. One of his assignments is to answer all the prayers offered by everyone around the world. Of course, he is quickly overwhelmed with the sheer volume and decides the simplest solution is to give everyone what he or she wants by saying "yes" to every request.

Crazy things happen. One woman loses 47 pounds on the Krispy Kreme diet. The lottery goes bankrupt with all the winners. Riots break out as answers to competing prayers create chaos. The main character learns the hard way that there is an order to God's sovereignty.

The movie illustrates that we may long for and desire certain answers to prayer, but our limited understanding of God's plans and design puts us in a precarious position if we think all our prayers are spot-on and deserve the intended outcome.

### God's Deeper Work

Of course, we all know the saying that God answers prayer with a yes, no, or wait. But we also all have those times when we feel like God is silent in answering prayers that come from the depths of our souls. Those are hard moments. We're not sure why He doesn't

respond with affirmation to our deepest longings.

But it's often in the "unanswered" prayers where God begins to do a deeper work in us. We learn to trust. We learn about God's goodness and sovereignty in our lives. And we also learn to allow a deeper examination into our own hearts and motives.

In this issue, our authors examine the benefits of unanswered prayer—the ways that God intends for us to prosper and grow when He doesn't respond as we had hoped.

In our lead article, Jamie Overholser writes about the tension of pouring out our hearts before God while at the same time surrendering to His will. It's the same tension Jesus felt in Gethsemane as He pleaded with His Father just before His death.

Niko Peele describes how "prayer is not designed to be a transactional activity but rather a relational reality with the living God of the universe." Unanswered prayer is part of our journey of building the character of Christ within us.

And there are times and seasons when unanswered prayer should provoke honest questions in our lives. Elizabeth Schmus writes not from a place of shame, but from a heart of self-examination over unresolved issues that may hinder answers to our prayers.

I shudder at the thought of God doing a "reply yes" to all my prayers in exactly the ways I fervently prayed them. Some of those prayers were off target and best left unanswered. God knows. And I'm so grateful He always acts out of love and His greater purposes. ☞

**CAROL MADISON** is editor of *Prayer Connect*, author of *Prayer That's Caught and Taught*, and director of prayer ministries at Hillside Church of Bloomington, MN.





Jesus' Example of  
Unanswered Prayer



# God's Will, Our Will

Prayer is both simple and complex. It's as simple as having a meaningful conversation with a good friend. And it's as complex as making our will known to God but surrendering it at the same time.

Prayer involves taking the risk of pouring out the desires of our hearts, but concurrently whispering those words of Jesus, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

Can you feel the tension?

## Agony of the Will

Jesus felt that tension in the Garden of Gethsemane as He agonized over His Father's will concerning the redemption of humankind. Interestingly enough, there's no record that the Father responded.

Jesus knew in His heart the will of His Father. But He expressed the overwhelming agony of His soul about the reality of the immediate future. He was so overwhelmed that He was compelled to tell His Father exactly how He felt and prayerfully wonder about an alternative.

Over the last decade I often expressed to the Lord exactly how I felt. In a particularly

dark season in pastoral ministry, I echoed the words of David many times: "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest" (Ps. 55:6).

*Just get me out of here, Lord!*

I suggested alternatives to God by sending out my resume to other ministries, escorted by the missionary prayer, "I'll go anywhere for You, Lord!"

No one responded to my ministry inquiries. Even the Father remained silent for a long time. Then one day I heard these words in my heart: "Jamie, I know you'll go anywhere for Me, but will you stay *here* for Me?"

I was not hoping for that answer. The Father's will is rarely somewhere else. It is most often right where you are—even if that place is painful and full of sorrow. How can this be?

## Facing the Tough Reality

My friends, may I introduce to you *submission* and *trust*? These are key spiritual disciplines in responding to the story God is writing, especially when we face the tough reality that He doesn't tell us everything we want to know.

Deuteronomy 29:29 declares, "The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are

BY JAMIE OVERHOLSER



# In His rich mercy and boundless wisdom God doesn't tell us everything.

not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us. . . ” (NLT). This crucial truth should release the tension and bring an utter sigh of relief.

In His rich mercy and boundless wisdom God doesn't tell us everything. If He did, we wouldn't take one step further into the future. In response to what He has *not* revealed, we humbly submit

to His benevolent and gracious reign over our lives. We trust in His good heart toward us amid not knowing.

As Brennan Manning expresses in his book *Ruthless Trust*, “The way of trust is a movement into obscurity, into the undefined, into ambiguity, not into some predetermined, clearly delineated plan for the future. The next step discloses

itself only out of a discernment of God acting in the desert of the present moment.”<sup>1</sup>

The “desert of the present moment” for Jesus in Gethsemane was saturated with submission and trust. Twice in His prayer, Jesus submitted to His Father's will. He didn't just say the words; He knelt in submission and then walked the way of trust. He bowed His heart in surrender and became subservient “by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8).

Even the apostle Paul did not get the answer to prayer that he hoped for. Three times he pleaded with the Lord to remove, as he described, “a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan” (2 Cor. 12:7). Instead of taking something evil away, God gave him a sufficient amount of grace that allowed divine power and strength to shine through and rest upon Paul.

This was a real experience for Paul, not just some flowery way for God to ignore his request. It was so real that Paul went on to say, “I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). You see, Paul may never have been able to say this if his thorn had been removed as requested. Paul grew leaps and bounds by God not giving him what he thought he needed.

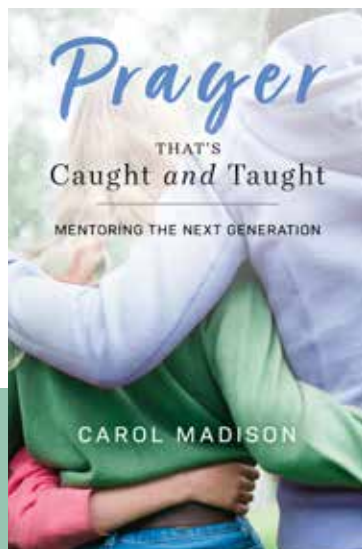
I don't blame Paul for his request. Many times I've asked God to remove something or someone from my life that was causing pain. But as we see repeatedly in Scripture, the removal of “a thorn in the flesh” may be *our* will, but it's not God's. His will supersedes pain management. His will concerns our overall growth as a human being and a Kingdom citizen. His will is always bigger than the immediate discomfort we're experiencing. God desires our maturity and His glory.

## God's in Charge

In the fall of 2019, my wife and I put our 120-year-old farmhouse in Pennsylvania on the market. We were in a financial pickle. Well, to say it more bluntly, we

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were in a desperate financial place! We had a plan to ease the present pain we were in, but looking back, we acted out of pure desperation. It was a bad plan!

**S**ure, we talked to God about it, but really didn't give Him much time to act. He didn't wave His magic wand quickly enough to solve our problem. So, we threw our best exit plan together and hoped for the best. Looking back, we are extremely thankful now that God did not answer the original request. We would have been even more desperate if He had.

In January 2020 we sensed that we should take our house off the market. We had one low offer in three months and then a strange, full-price cash offer that just did not sit well with us for some reason.

Well, who knew that a global pandemic was waiting just around the corner? God knew.


In His graciousness He delayed and then masterfully reconstructed our desperate plan into His beautiful will. There are many more details to this story but suffice it to say that God sold our house in August 2021 at the height of a seller's market. He graciously allowed us to move to central Virginia where the weather is splendid most of the time (think less snow!) and where we live much closer to our adult children.

My friends, perhaps we should begin every prayer with submitting ourselves to God's gracious sovereignty in our lives. I don't want to figure this out all on my own. I would rather kneel in submission every morning to my King who rules and reigns with great wisdom and kindness. I would rather trust His good heart toward me than question His every move, especially when His answers don't sync up with my specific requests.

*Lord, we submit to You now. We surrender to Your glorious, gracious, and sometimes bewildering ways You choose to write our story and fulfill Your will. We give everyone and everything to You, Father. We trust*

*You through the pain, the ambiguity, and the obscurity of our present situation. We trust You to give us what we need and what will allow Your grace, power, and strength to shine through and rest upon us. And when You give us what we do ask for, thank You! You're a good, good Father.*

*Either way, Lord, You're a good, good Father. Amen.*

God is in charge. And to be honest, I don't want to be. 

<sup>1</sup>Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust* (HarperSan-Francisco, 2000).



#### JAMIE OVERHOLSER

serves as a Field Shepherd with Standing Stone, a ministry that shepherds and mentors pastors and ministry leaders. He also works as a Bereavement Counselor with a hospice agency.

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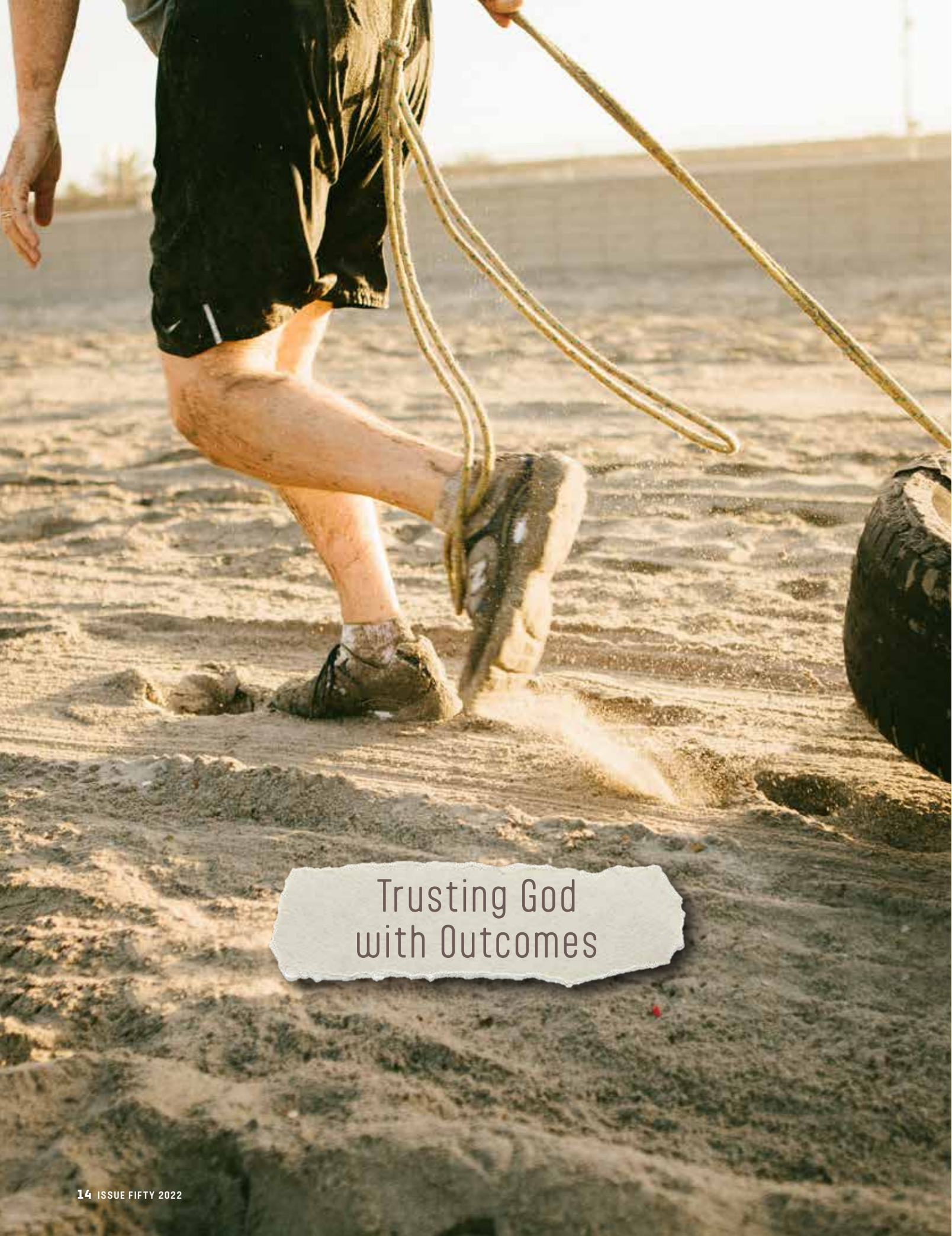
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# All Is Not Lost

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I grew up surrounded by praying people, more specifically, praying women of faith. I can remember waking up in the middle of the night and hearing my mother crying, weeping, and calling out each of my siblings' names before the Lord. I recall walking into my grandmother's bedroom and seeing her kneeling and talking to God.

As I watched their lives of prayer and dependency on Christ, I noticed that in their contending and perseverance, God was doing something much bigger than the external thing they were praying for—He was making them bigger in Him (or shall I say *making Himself bigger in them*). Each time they were faced with a crisis or challenge in life, their responses became increasingly more mature. They were more Christlike. Their faith in God's faithfulness grew stronger.

Instead of choosing offense in their pain and suffering, they chose Christ every time.

## Cultivating and Cooperating

As I began my own journey of prayer through the ups and downs of life, I noticed God doing a similar work in my heart. There

were times I contended for things—and the answer never came.

After walking through the disappointment with God, I began to realize that I got the real answer I needed. Most often it was packaged in the form of an internal breakthrough that my soul so desperately needed.

I don't pretend to know the exact reasons why God answers some prayers and not others. I would even argue that God *does* answer our prayers, but sometimes the answer is a simple "no." But I want to encourage you that even when you're not getting the answer you desire, all is not lost.

God could be cultivating (expanding Himself) within you through the process. By cooperating with His sovereignty, we *will* see the answers that only He can orchestrate.

## Perseverance

Life happens to everyone. We all walk through seasons of pain and difficulty. During these times it can be tempting just to throw in the towel and give up, especially when we are petitioning God for help but do not see anything change. We are not alone. Great men and women of God have also felt this way in their

BY NIKO PEELE



# Perseverance is prevailing in faith when you do not see an answer.

walk of faith. Despite the obstacles and challenges, we see them persevere.

The story of the three Hebrew boys who were thrown into a fiery furnace is one of the greatest stories about perseverance. In the very face of death, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to declare, “The God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Dan. 3:17–18).

**W**ow. Such a powerful, mature response. Their faith wasn’t only in the ability of God to deliver them, but it was in the understanding of the sovereignty of God to work anything after the council of His will—even if it wasn’t the answer they desired. Instead of caving in to the pressure of their faith being tested, they pressed in and persevered. The outcome produced something dynamic within them and for those around them who witnessed such faith.

This reminds me of 2 Corinthians 4:8–10 as Paul describes the persevering faith of the saints of God. He includes descriptive words such as not feeling crushed, in despair, abandoned, or destroyed:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

Perseverance is essential and something that must be cultivated in the life of every follower of Jesus. Perseverance is prevailing in faith when you do not see an answer. It is enduring in faith, regardless of the pressure, obstacles, and contradictions.

This type of perseverance—prevailing faith—produces the character of Christ within us.

## Character of Christ

**Y**ou may have heard it said that God is more interested in the journey than the destination. I have found this to be true. Prayer was not designed to be a transactional activity but rather a relational reality with the living God of the universe, who is our Father. An active relationship, standing before the living God in prayer (who created all the heavens and the earth and can measure the span of the universe with one hand), doesn’t leave one living in old ways.

Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.” Often in prayer, God will hide an answer *for* us (not from us) because He is doing something greater than what we are asking for.

In our contending for an answer (our faithfulness to show up before God in prayer) we get to be with Him, and that is truly the reward. Being with God produces something dynamic within our soul. It produces the knowledge of God, the love for God, perseverance in God, and ultimately the character of Christ. For this reason, the journey truly is more significant than the destination. It is Christ enlarging Himself within us.

As we surrender ourselves before God, even in the disappointment of “unanswered prayers,” the Spirit of God cultivates a resiliency within us that produces the character of Christ. When we reach higher for Him through our pain, God often responds with the answer that our soul needs (refinement and sanctification) more than the answer that our flesh desires.

As the character of Christ is formed within us, we find ourselves able to walk through things that would have overtaken us in previous seasons in life. Paul says in Romans 5:3–4:

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

But the character of Christ isn’t necessarily just for us. It also helps point the world to Jesus. What God is producing within us through the pain and disappointment of unanswered prayers ultimately preaches and testifies to the world around us about



the Good News and greatness of our God. The beautiful and healing character of Christ being formed within us causes others to take notice!

## Responding Well

**T**he topic of unanswered prayer can bring a lot of emotions and questions. This very article may remind you of a time when you contended in faith for a miracle or a breakthrough—maybe health, finances, or relationships—and it did not turn out the way you had hoped. You may still be on a journey of prayer or know someone who is feeling disappointed by what may seem like silence from God.

This can leave one offended towards God, questioning His faithfulness. God is never disappointed in our pain or questions. He actually welcomes it.

Think about Job, experiencing loss after loss after loss. He cried out to God for deliverance and relief, for renewed health, and just plain help. He sat with his close friends, and they went through question after question of why God would not answer. Job remained surrendered to God. He even got to the point of saying, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15).

Job was basically saying, no matter if God answers my prayers or not, I will still trust Him. Job remained surrendered and released his life to the sovereign will of God.

This story is as an example of how we can respond to the sovereignty of God. We must embrace a posture of *submission* to the will of God and *release* the answer to Him. We must submit our will and desire to God no matter the circumstance. God has higher ways that we simply may not understand:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8–9).

Like Christ who submitted His will to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–56), we can do the same. We must learn to release our request and lives to God by putting things in His hands—and then trusting Him with the outcome.

With God, no prayer is ever lost! **PC**



**NIKO PEELE** is assistant editor of *Prayer Connect*. He is also the founder and president of Ignite Movement, helping to establish and advance vibrant gospel communities and united movements on college campuses and in cities ([nikopeele.com](http://nikopeele.com)).

## You Don't Have to Be a Super-Spiritual Saint to Have a Meaningful Prayer Life

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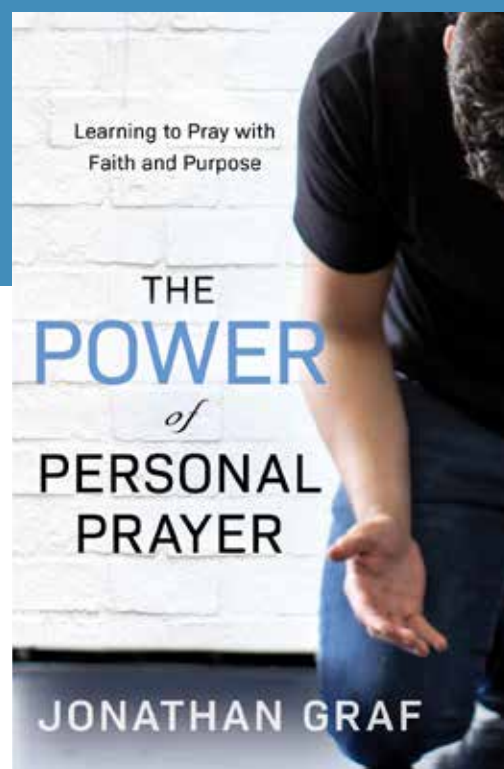
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A large, mature tree with a thick trunk and dense green foliage stands on the left side of the frame. A simple wooden bench, made of two horizontal slats, is positioned in front of the tree. The bench is supported by concrete blocks. The ground is a mix of dirt and green grass. In the background, there is a field of tall grass and a line of trees under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The sun is high in the sky, creating a strong lens flare effect that illuminates the entire scene with a warm, golden light.

# Seek God's Heart



# When Prayers Are Not Answered

Sitting on a deserted park bench, I cried out to the Lord in anguish. Was it really my fault my parents divorced? What about when my baby died? Was that my fault? And my cancer? Was it my fault God did not answer yes to many other desperate prayers?

Earlier that week, the speaker at our women's Bible study shared a message on the topic of why God doesn't answer our prayers. While I'm sure she meant well, the overwhelming conclusion I heard was that we are the ones, in a variety of ways, who prevent the Lord from answering yes to all our prayers.

The weight of that was too much to bear. I took some time to get away and wrestle it out in prayer. As I sat on that bench, I had a lot of questions.

What the Lord so lovingly showed me that day changed my tears to gratitude and renewed my trust in Him. He reminded me of all the ways prayer brought me close to Him, how He was unmistakably with me in my darkest nights, and all the ways He provided for me in my deepest pain.

He drew me back to the Book of Job and reminded me that I wasn't there when He "laid the earth's foundation" (Job 38:4), and there was much I would never understand. But I will be there when He comes back to redeem all things:

"I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25–27).

## Higher Ways

This topic of unanswered or "ungranted" prayers brings up a lot of emotion for most of us. We all have disappointments and tragic losses that we begged God to heal or prevent. While God may not have said yes to all my prayers in the ways I longed for, prayer has drawn me close to Him.

As I practice praising Him in my darkest valleys, He teaches me more about His character, trades my worries for His peace, and brings me to a place of contentment in trusting that His ways are higher than my ways.

BY ELIZABETH SCHMUS



# Practice perseverance because maybe His answer has just not come yet!

In what ways has the Lord drawn close to you as you pray? Ask Him what He wants to reveal to you about Himself, His ways, and His love for you. Is there anything else He wants to show you and teach you? The psalmist speaks of God's desire to engage with us: "Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!" (Ps. 116:2, NLT).

I am reminded of God's higher ways in this passage of Scripture from the apostle Paul. He knew about waiting for answers to his prayers, agonizing to God over his longings and desires, and perhaps even wondering how his time spent in prison would ever advance God's Kingdom. Yet, he trusted the ways of the Lord and the work of the Spirit:

Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good (Rom. 8:26–28, MSG).

## Great Questions to Ask

While there is no simple answer to why prayers go unanswered and no easy formula guaranteeing a yes, consider asking the Lord some of these questions:

**1. Could God be taking a different or longer path to answering your prayer?** I heard a story from some visiting missionaries who shared the gospel overseas with the same group of people for decades before they saw their first conversion. Home on furlough following

that only conversion, they questioned if they should even go back. When they returned to the field the following year, their one convert had evangelized the rest of the village! The new Christians were now asking how to take the gospel to surrounding villages.

Practice perseverance because maybe His answer has just not come yet! (Luke 18:1–7; James 5:17–18; Eph. 6:18).

**2. Is God asking you to play a part in answering your prayer?** For years, I have prayed for the end of abortion. And then a few years ago I sensed the Lord inviting me to pray weekly in front of our local Planned Parenthood with a friend. He's brought us many opportunities to share and pray with women visiting this location. He's also given us the opportunity to support a teenage girl as she chose to embrace her unexpected pregnancy. We are also foster parenting as part of the solution.

Is the Lord inviting you to participate with Him in answering your prayer?

**3. Is free will involved? Remember, God doesn't force His ways upon us.** This is one of the most emotionally difficult "answers" to process. It represents our desperate prayers for the prodigals, for the addicted, and for those walking in destructive paths. We long for God to rescue those who may not be willing to surrender to Him.

And yet, even in crying out to the Lord to change them in godly ways, we have a unique opportunity to experience the Lord's heart as He waits for all of us to lay down our wills to follow His.

**4. Could it be that what you are asking for is not the best for you or for others?** There's a great song by Garth Brooks called "Unanswered Prayers." He tells a story of running into his old crush at a football game years later. He was overcome with gratitude realizing if God had answered his high school prayers, he would not have the wife with whom he had built a life and family.

Maybe for you it was a job you didn't get but now you see God's hand in your work in ways you never could have predicted. Or maybe, like another country song, what He has not yet healed will turn out to be "the broken road" that leads straight to Him.



**5. Could God be asking you to walk through something with Him in ways that will bring good?** As a child, I was privileged to meet Joni Eareckson Tada at the premier of her movie *Joni*, which told the story of a diving accident that left her quadriplegic as a teenager. She became a hero to me as she honored the Lord in the midst of her pain and suffering. There is no one who has made Jesus look more attractive to me. If He can carry her through her life as she sings His praises, makes art, and serves others, then I can trust Him to carry me through as well.

Consider Joseph, sold into slavery by his own brothers and eventually left to rot in prison for not taking advantage of his boss's wife. How unfair! And yet, God took what was meant for evil and used it for good: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20).

**6. Is the Lord allowing the enemy to attempt to dissuade you from walking with the Lord?** This is incomprehensible to me—the idea that the enemy must ask the Lord for permission to test our faith. And yet that's just what happened when Satan determined to torment Job enough to incite Job to curse God (Job 1:8–12). Satan could only go as far as God allowed him.

Peter was sure he would never deny Jesus, but Jesus gave him a glimpse into the cosmic battle: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31–32).

If this is what is happening to you, take heart. You are in good company with Job, Peter, the other disciples, and many unnamed others through the ages. Embrace the test and allow the Lord to strengthen your faith.

**7. Are there things in your life God wants you to examine?** While there are a myriad of reasons God may be saying no—or not yet—to our prayers, there are also Scripture passages that point to our own issues that might get in the way. Please don't fall into the same trap I did by letting any of these verses lead you into a pit of shame. But perhaps it is time to:

- confess sin (Isa. 59:1–2; Ps. 66:18)
- forgive others (Mark 11:25; Eph. 4:32; Matt. 6:12)
- strengthen your belief (Heb. 4:16, 11:1, 27; James 1:6–8)
- evaluate your motives (James 4:2–3, 6)
- treat others differently (1 Peter 3:6–7, 12)
- persist earnestly (Luke 18:1–7; James 5:17; Eph. 6:18; Ps. 116:2).

If the Lord reveals that any of these Scriptures apply to you, confess and receive His forgiveness. Then move forward in the confidence that Jesus loves you so much He already paid the penalty for your sins on the cross.

## Rest in Sovereignty

Ultimately, our unanswered prayers, like those of the psalmists and the example of Job, bring us back to the place of resting in God's sovereignty.

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Rom. 9:15–16).

So, trust in the Lord rather than in your own ways or understanding. God will direct you when you call upon Him (Prov. 3:5–6). I pray that as you wade through the confusion and heartbreak of your own ungranted requests, you will cling tightly to Him.

As you come closer to God, He comes even closer to you (James 4:8). **PC**



**ELIZABETH SCHMUS** serves Christian Educators Association International ([ceai.org](http://ceai.org)) alongside her husband David. Their purpose is to protect Christian educators in their profession and equip them to transform their schools. They have five daughters and live in Southern California.

## For Further Reading

Check out some additional articles on blogs and websites related to "Benefits of Unanswered Prayer" at [prayerleader.com/issue-50-extras](http://prayerleader.com/issue-50-extras).

- "Why We Should be Thankful for Unanswered Prayers," by Jennifer Heeren
- "Analyzing Unanswered Prayer," by R.C. Sproul
- "The Blessings of Unanswered Prayer," by Dona Eley

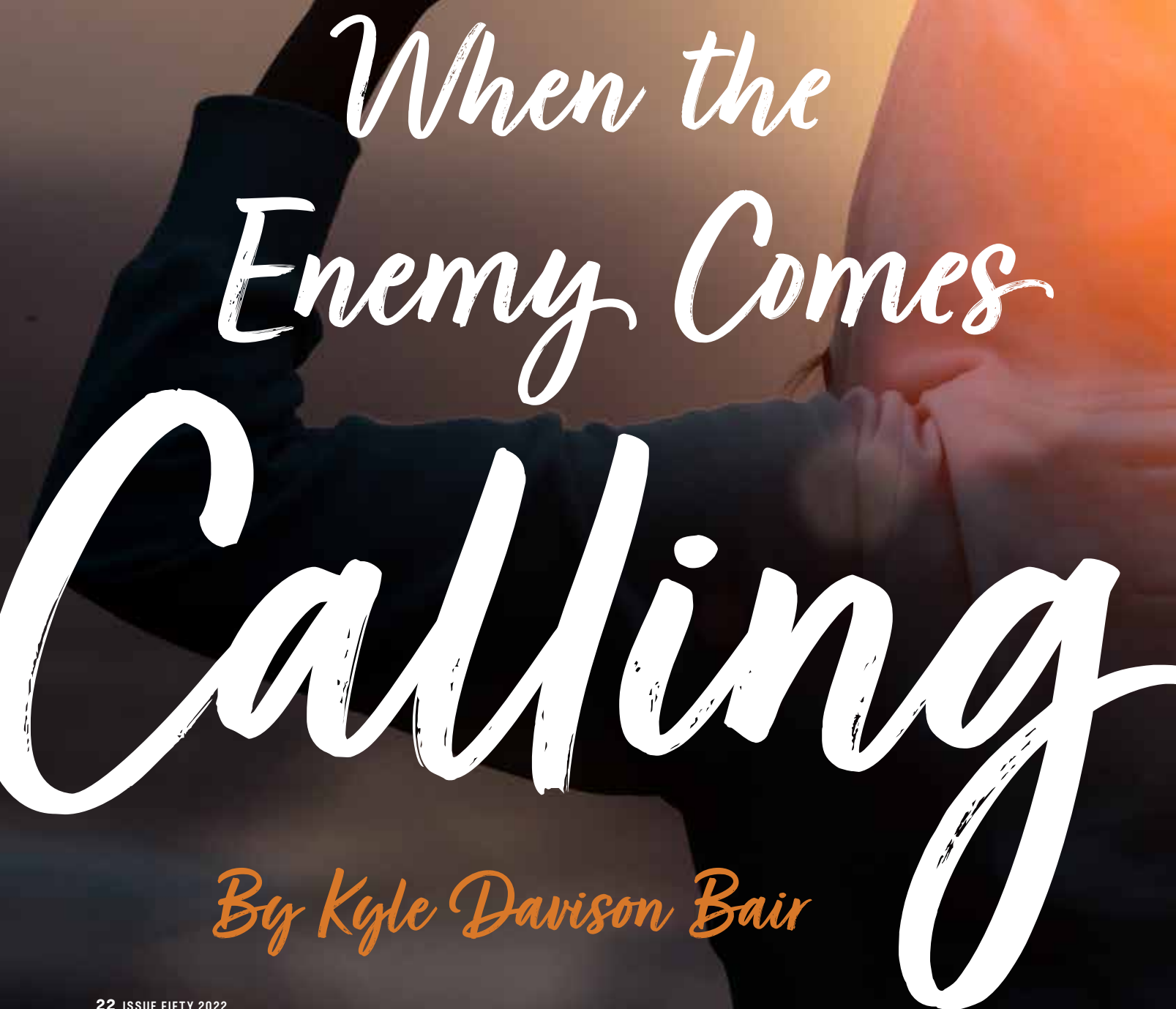


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A person's arm and hand are silhouetted against a bright, warm sunset or sunrise sky. The hand is raised in a fist, a symbol of solidarity or protest. The person is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt. The overall mood is one of hope and resilience.

# *When the Enemy Comes Calling*

*By Kyle Davison Bair*





# Don't Cower; Grow Stronger

**F**orget everything you've seen in movies about spiritual warfare.

Our cultural imaginations morph spiritual warfare into something akin to forces of darkness and light clashing in epic battles raging all over the earth, requiring titanic struggles to overcome such a vast and vigorous enemy.

That's a lie.

Spiritual warfare is discipleship. It is one of many tools God provides to His children to enable us to grow stronger.

God doesn't want you to run terrified from the devil. He wants you to count it all joy when you encounter trials of various kinds—even spiritual ones—because through them you can grow mature and complete, not lacking in anything (James 1:2–4).

Let me prove it to you.

## BEGINS WITH GOD

Understand that spiritual warfare begins with God, not the devil. When we see God in His proper place, everything else clicks into its proper place. In every spiritual conflict, your first reaction should be to pray through this verse:

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them (Rom. 8:28, NLT).

There is no cosmic clash of titanic spiritual forces, with each side straining to gain supremacy. Rather, God wields complete magisterial control. He is working every attack of the enemy out for the good of His children—*right now*.



# The devil's attacks serve as a red flag highlighting where you need growth the most.

Because of this promise:

- We can *always* hope. God is resolving every attack for good.
- We can run *toward* spiritual attacks. We know we can grow stronger from them.
- Spiritual warfare spurs on discipleship. It reveals where we need to grow.

## ALREADY DEFEATED

As a pastor, I cherish the privilege of praying with people on their darkest days. Many dark days include demonic activity. When people describe the

spiritual warfare they experience, they invariably see the devil as an unbeatable enemy. They've tried everything they know, but they can't stop his attacks.

In these situations, we don't take on the devil in battle. We don't have to. Jesus already defeated the devil.

This provokes frustration in many. If Jesus beat the devil before, why can't I beat him *now*?

This frustration results from fighting a battle you can't win—because Jesus already won it. No matter how much energy you exert fighting demons, you can't add anything to Jesus' victory over the devil.

Therefore, we must stop viewing the devil as an enemy that we need to slug it out with. Instead, we view the devil as a tool in the hand of God. Our God is so endlessly clever that He can use every attack for good.

Think of it this way: why is the devil attacking you *there*? Out of all the ways he could attack you, why *that* way?

The devil attacks your weak points. Sin creates these weak points—either your sin or the sin somebody else committed against you. Therefore, the devil's attacks serve as a red flag highlighting where you need growth the most: where you need to repent or where you need to heal.

Let me tell you a story to bring this all together.

## THE UNEXPECTED

Carl often experienced demonic activity, including objects in his apartment moving on their own and voices that taunted and tormented him.<sup>1</sup> He wanted someone to set him free from these attacks. He came to my church because he'd heard we have a powerful deliverance ministry.

But we didn't do what he expected.

Instead of casting out the demons, we prayed. We looked at God's promises. We considered the weight of God's declaration: "... the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world" (1 John 4:4, NLT).

Then we started growing.

As Carl explained his situation, he revealed a great deal of anger he held toward people who had harmed him throughout his life. We took him to the Scriptures, explaining that this ongoing anger was likely giving the demons

## Are You Thirsty for More of God?

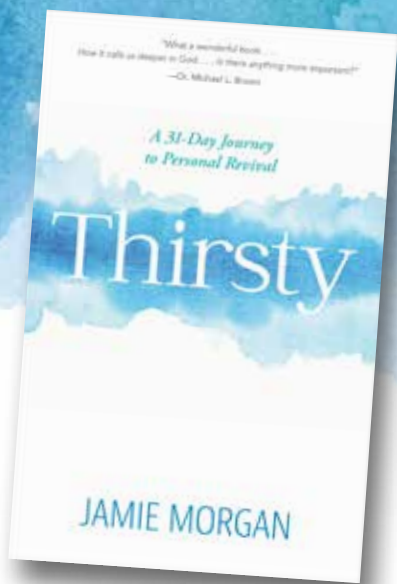
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access to his life, based on Ephesians 4: “And ‘don’t sin by letting anger control you.’ Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil” (vss. 26–27, NLT).

To get rid of the demons, Carl simply had to forgive.

We began working through all the anger Carl harbored. It took a few sessions, as many people had treated him horribly. For every wound, Carl went before God in prayer. He chose to forgive each person. He didn’t let them off the hook; he handed them over to God for justice.

A few days after one session, Carl texted, saying that the demonic activity had peaked suddenly in his apartment. I asked if he was feeling any anger. He said yes. Raw hatred toward one person had flooded up in his heart the day before.

Over a quick series of texts, I encouraged Carl to forgive this person. It

challenged Carl. This person had hurt him worse than anyone else. But he had already tasted the freedom of forgiveness. So, Carl prayed, giving this person over to God and choosing to forgive.

And the demonic activity in his apartment ceased.

I never cast out a demon. I didn’t have to. When Carl forgave, he destroyed the stronghold the demons held in his life. With their stronghold gone, they fled.

## HUMBLE HEALING

If the demonic activity had never happened, Carl may have harbored his hatred for the rest of his life, never knowing the freedom and joy he found in Jesus. But because they attacked, Carl was able to repent, heal, and grow.

Demonic strongholds appear because of our own sin or the sin someone inflicted on us. In Carl’s case, it was

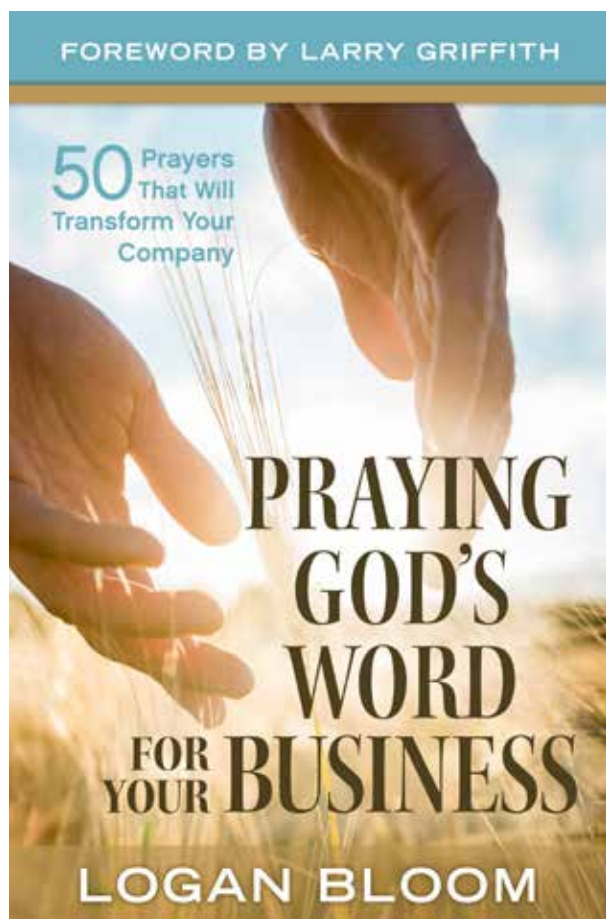
both. Many people had sinned against him, creating deep wounds. But Carl had sinned, as well, by holding on to his anger instead of forgiving. When Carl forgave, God healed the wounds.

The demonic attacks ceased, but that was secondary. Carl’s heart was the matter of primary importance. He made the hard choice to forgive, ending a lifetime of rebellion against God.

James explains what happened: “‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:6–7).

When Carl forgave, he was choosing to submit himself to God. He obeyed God’s command to forgive (Matt. 6:12). By doing so, he resisted the devil, destroying his stronghold in Carl’s life. And then, like clockwork, the demons fled.

Spiritual warfare became discipleship for Carl. He came out of this experience



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closer to God. He held a newfound appreciation for prayer. Carl grew more like Jesus by forgiving all who hurt him. He understood more clearly the power of God and the weakness of the devil. Carl saw the wisdom in verses he'd never appreciated before. He learned to trust God, seeing that his desire for forgiveness unlocked a life of freedom Carl didn't even know he was missing.

## COUNT IT JOY

In my years of pastoral ministry, anger has been the most common stronghold. Yet, any sin can become a stronghold. Sin is rebellion. Any area of life harboring rebellion against God opens the door to the devil. By contrast, a life free of rebellion gives the devil no access.

Jesus lived completely submitted to the Father. As a result, the devil couldn't


touch Him. When the devil attacked Jesus for 40 days in the wilderness, he could only tempt and lie, trying to trick Jesus into sinning. But because Jesus refused to sin against the Father, the devil had no access to Jesus' life. The devil couldn't do anything but flee.

This is why Peter says, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). If you harbor any rebellion against God—any sin you won't surrender—the devil can pounce in through that open door.

Peter continues: "Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:9). Resist the devil both by refusing to sin and by swiftly repenting of any sin his attacks reveal.

You may suffer the devil's attacks for a while, as Carl did. But as Peter says, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10, ESV).

Once Carl prayed, repented, and forgave, God indeed restored him, secured him, confirmed him, strengthened him, and established him in the truth.

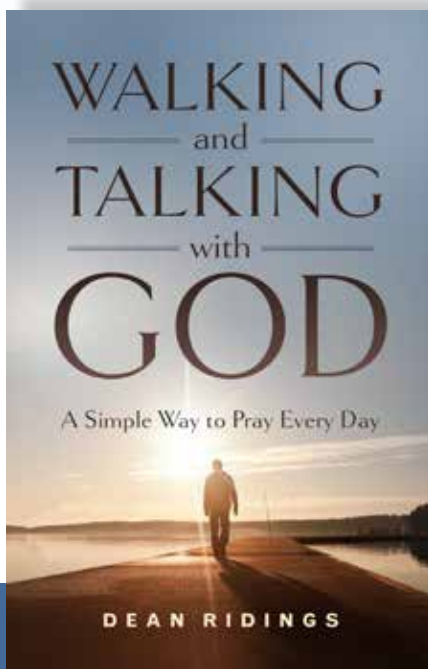
So, count it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you experience spiritual attacks. The enemy is pointing you straight toward a sin that needs repentance or a wound that needs healing. By submitting to God in those areas, you can build up the strength to persevere through anything. This is how we become mature and complete, not lacking in anything. 

<sup>1</sup>While the identity is changed to ensure privacy, every detail of this story is true.

# Develop a Walking-and-Talking Relationship WITH GOD

*Walking and Talking with God* will deepen your relationship with God through prayer as it moves you from praying just for your own needs to focusing on God's purposes for everyone in your world. It will teach you a simple way to pray every day and help you remove the barriers to prayer in your life.

While helpful for anyone, it is great for believers who struggle in prayer and want to grow in intimacy with the Father and for new believers who are just getting started with prayer.



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**KYLE DAVISON BAIR** serves as pastor for prayer ministries and counseling at New Hope Church in New Hope, MN. He writes regularly at [pastor-kyle.substack.com](http://pastor-kyle.substack.com).



# "A Simple Way to Support a Pastor"

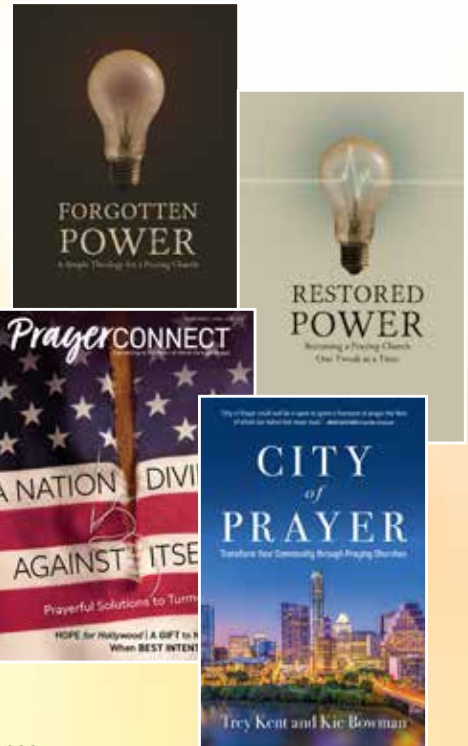
## The Pastors Resource Project

**Pastors Need Our Help!** A pastor is the key to growing prayer in the local church. But with all the things that demand a pastor's attention, it becomes hard to grow a church into a praying church without support and encouragement.

The Church Prayer Leaders Network and PrayerShop Publishing have launched the Pastors Resource Project to do just that. We are raising funds to put a **FREE** prayer resource pack into the hands of pastors.

Each pack includes 4 key prayer resources that can equip and encourage pastors to become champions of prayer in their churches. The packs include:

- **City of Prayer:** *Transform Your Community through Praying Churches*
- **Forgotten Power:** *A Simple Theology for a Praying Church*
- **Restored Power:** *Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time*
- A copy of **Prayer Connect magazine**, and a coupon for a free one-year subscription



### How Can You Support Pastors?

By giving a gift to the Pastors Resource Project! Every \$40 raised puts a resource pack into the hands of a local church pastor. A gift of any amount will help.



To give, go to [prayerleader.com/a-gift-for-pastors](http://prayerleader.com/a-gift-for-pastors) and give online, or send a check made out to:

**Church Prayer Leaders Network**  
**P.O. Box 10667**  
**Terre Haute, IN 47801**

Indicate that you desire your gift to go to the Pastors Resource Project



## Nine Reasons to Change the Way You Pray

In my early years of ministry, I tended to lead prayer gatherings based on what I had seen others do—without evaluating the biblical basis for these methods.

Soon, I learned this approach was not effective for life-giving experiences. Eventually I stopped using these common approaches and embraced the preferred ideal of Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, worship-based prayer.

Many Christians still embrace what I describe as prayer “misfires.” Perhaps it would be helpful to examine each and explain a better way.

*Misfire #1: “Does anyone have any prayer requests?”* We’ve all been in prayer times that started with this question, typically followed by 30 minutes of detailed descriptions of a vast array of human needs ranging from slipped discs to the destructive impact of liberal politics. Clearly, our Father knows our needs, cares deeply for us, and wants to work in our lives for our good and His glory.

A request-based prayer time begins with a man-ward focus rather than a God-ward focus. This is in stark contradiction to the pattern Jesus gave us in the model prayer, which instructs us to start in worship of our Father in heaven and the grandeur and holiness of His character.

*Misfire #2: “Let’s all just pray as we feel led.”* This opening instruction is common and often assumes that everyone is automatically “led by the Holy Spirit” as they start praying. Unfortunately, many in the group are instinctively “led” by personal agendas, troubling world events, or surface relational conflicts.

We don’t really know what we should pray about, or how to pray about it, until we have first given quality time to seeking

God’s face and yielding our will to His. I pray best about my needs after I have worshiped and surrendered completely to His truth and character.

### Reasons to Change the Way You Pray

I have learned that the best way to start a prayer time is with this statement:

“Let’s all turn in our Bibles to. . .” Here are nine reasons why the Bible is the best starting place for prayer times:

- First, the Scriptures reveal to us the character, names, and works of God—turning our thoughts God-ward rather than man-ward.
- Second, as we follow the pattern Jesus commands for His disciples (Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4), we must look to the Bible to provide reliable truth and inspiring insight about our Father in heaven and the holiness of His name.
- Third, the Bible gives us the best language for prayers that are according to the will of God, since His Word is His will.
- Fourth, the Bible is living, active, and penetrating (Heb. 4:12). It reveals the real needs of our hearts and lives, taking us beyond surface prayers about circumstances and people. This leads to authentic confession and trust.
- Fifth, the Bible unites those who pray as every heart and mind is aligned with God and His Word.
- Sixth, the Bible empowers us to pray in faith since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).
- Seventh, as the Bible inspires faith, our prayer time is pleasing to God

because we are coming to Him in the truth of who He is, confident that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

- Eighth, the Bible prepares us for victory in the spiritual battle. As our prayers are infused with Scripture, we are equipped to take the sword of the Spirit, God’s memorized and spoken Word, as we confront temptation—just as Jesus did in the wilderness (Eph. 6:17; Matt. 4:1–11).
- Ninth, the early Church began their prayers from the Bible (Acts 4:23–31). We see that they started with God’s character and Word, not their personal or collective needs. Their concerns were very serious, as they were facing hostile persecution, but they sought God’s face before His hand, just as Jesus had commanded.

Calvin Miller noted, “Too often, we go into God’s presence with a list of pleas, trying to talk God into granting our desire. But this kind of praying makes us ‘one big mouth’ and God ‘one grand ear.’ But when we pray the Scriptures, it makes God the voice and leaves us as the ear. In short, God gets His turn at getting a word in edgewise.”<sup>1</sup>

So, the next time you pray together, don’t misfire. Instead, allow God’s Word to work powerfully to bring great blessing and benefit to your prayers. He is worthy of it and we are in need of it.

<sup>1</sup>Calvin Miller, *The Path to Celtic Prayer* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 57.

**DANIEL HENDERSON** is president of Strategic Renewal ([strategicrenewal.com](http://strategicrenewal.com)). Copyright © 2022 Daniel Henderson. Used by permission.



## Circling Jericho

In April 2020, Britain, hard-hit by COVID-19, was in lockdown. No one was to come or go except for essential purposes.

At a backyard barbecue near London, Tom Moore's family challenged the 99-year-old, who had broken a hip in 2018, to walk the 82-foot paved perimeter around his garden. Tom and his walker answered the challenge. This led to a fundraising page, with the goal of 100 laps by his upcoming 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, with the money to go to the hard-pressed National Health Service of the UK.

The appeal—and daily videos of the stooped old man, in coat and tie, circling the garden—went viral. Donations poured in. Tom Moore raised an astonishing \$40 million. And in the process, he lifted a nation's spirits.

### Small Laps Around High Walls

As Tom persevered, he undoubtedly thought about what he was up against—a 99-year-old trying to make a difference by going in small circles with a walker.

Hmmm, small circles. . . .

"Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in" (Josh. 6:1). Lockdown.

"March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days," the Lord instructed Joshua (vs. 3). To a people accustomed to desert wanderings, circling the nine-acre city was a lap around a garden.

Besides, they couldn't overcome the fortifications. They couldn't engage an enemy in lockdown. They couldn't expect to wait out residents who had access to spring water and plenty of food from the recent harvest.

But they could walk.

So, they marched small laps around an impenetrable stronghold, wearing down a path of obedience in hopes of gaining their Promised Land. After each

turn, they camped and waited, until . . .

"On the seventh day, march around the city seven times" (vs. 4). Then, as trumpets blow and people shout, "the wall of the city will collapse" (vs. 5).

And it did!

### You'll Never Walk Alone

I've done circles like that. I'm doing them these days, as I pray for someone I love who is walled up and locked down.

And God's orders in Joshua 6 remind me that I also need to enlist the priests with trumpets (my praise) and the ark of the Lord (God's presence). In other words, I'm to be encircling my Jericho



with obedient prayer, *praising God all the while, in company and in step with the Holy Spirit* (vs. 13).

Day after day after day.

It might sound monotonous, but I find it spiritually invigorating that God and I are repeatedly making laps of obedience around an entrenched holdout. I can't know the outcome. But I know God is intentional about this, and I'm anticipating His results.

Does your world include a Jericho? Is God calling you to circle an obstacle, a person, a need, with obedient intercession? If He is, take up the challenge and begin praying, around and around and around. Until the wall falls down.

**SANDY MAYLE** is a frequent contributor to *Prayer Connect* and resides in Erie, PA.

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## Targeted Prayers for Your Church |

**E**ach year my church designates a month of prayer and fasting for our congregation. The month of July works best for us because many of the normal activities are scaled back, which gives freedom to host various prayer events such as a family prayer night, a bus prayer drive in the community, and a healing prayer time.

We also try to unite our people around a prayer theme. This year we added a 31-day prayer plan called “Targeted Prayers for Your Church,” written by Sandra Higley.

### Biblical Prayers

Here are some sample prayers from the 31 days, including a written prayer by Higley and Scriptures to support it:

**Elders:** “Lord, I lift up my elders (church board) to You. Help us respect and honor them as they direct the affairs of our church. May they wholeheartedly give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Keep them above reproach, devoted to their families, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, and able to teach. May they be gentle and honest as they deal with people” (1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 6:4; 1 Tim. 3:1–2; Titus 1:7).

**Children/Youth:** “Lord, I lift up the children and youth in my congregation to You. May the little ones remain humble examples of what we adults need to become in the Kingdom. Let their conduct always be pure and right with reputations that show they remember You, Creator God. Teach them to declare Your marvelous deeds. May they flee evil desires and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace” (Matt. 18:3–4; Prov. 20:11; Eccl. 12:1; Ps. 71:17; 2 Tim. 2:22).

**Speakers/Teachers:** “Lord, I lift up

the speakers and teachers in our church. May everyone who holds that position—pastors, Sunday school teachers, small group leaders, guest speakers—rightly divide Your Word of truth. Let them admonish and teach with wisdom. Reveal the mysteries of Your Word to them and encourage them to speak those mysteries courageously and fearlessly. Let them speak with a spirit of faith that springs from their relationship with You” (2 Tim. 2:15; Col. 1:28; Dan. 2:47; Phil. 1:14; 2 Cor. 4:13).

**Behind-the-Scenes Workers:** “Lord, I lift up the people who work behind the scenes at our church. Thank You for every nursery worker, parking lot attendant, office volunteer, building janitor, etc. who have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. Bless them for the obedience and generosity they have displayed—may You receive praise as a result! Keep them in an attitude of humility that comes from wisdom and wholehearted service to You rather than to be noticed by others” (1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Cor. 9:12–13; James 3:13; Eph. 6:7).

**Spiritual Level:** “Lord, I lift up the spiritual temperature of my church. Revive us! Refine us so that we burn hot for You. Give us singleness of heart and action so that we always fear You and follow Your precepts. Pour out a spirit of Josiah on us so that we turn to You with our heart, soul, and strength. Open our minds to understand Your Word so that our hearts burn within us” (Ps. 85:6; Rev. 3:14–18; Jer. 32:39; Ps. 111:10; 2 Kings 23:25; Luke 24:32, 45).

**Finances:** “Lord, I lift up our church finances. May we sow generously into our church without reluctance or compulsion. Make all grace abound so we have all we


need for every good work You’ve assigned us. Make us rich in ways that result in generosity on our part so that You will be praised. Keep reminding us of Your promise to throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out blessing on all who bring the whole tithe into Your house” (2 Cor. 9:6–11; Mal. 3:10).

**Our Neighborhood:** “Lord, I lift up our community, especially the surrounding neighborhood. Let us love people as we love ourselves. May our concern for their needs override other things that take our time and focus. Rebuild and restore areas that have been devastated. Renew our community—send Your peace and prosperity into this place where You’ve planted us. Bless each individual home and family. Build each house from the inside out; watch over our city” (Gal. 5:14; Prov. 3:28; Isa. 61:4; Jer. 29:7; Luke 10:5–6; Ps. 127:1).

Other prayers include single parents, worship leaders, men/women, the hurting, and an evangelism/outreach emphasis.

### All Year Round

Encourage your congregation to insert names into the prayers as people come to mind. This is a great way to personalize the prayers and help your congregation engage more with leadership and the ministries of the church. These prayers can be prayed throughout the year.

“Targeted Prayers for Your Church” is available through PrayerShop Publishing ([prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org)). 



**CAROL MADISON** directs the prayer ministries at Hillside Church of Bloomington, MN. She is also editor of *Prayer Connect* magazine.



## Awaken the Sleeping Giant | By Remco Brommet

Imagine if the nearly 85 million Americans who identify as evangelical Christians—born again, baptized, assured of salvation, Bible-believing—discover that prayer matters to God and start devoting themselves to intercession with unprecedented ardor.

Imagine if every church in the U.S. has a weekly prayer meeting that rivals their Sunday morning service in attendance and fervor, where believers cry out together for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done in every aspect of life and in every tribe and nation.

Talk about waking the sleeping giant!

### Increasingly Post-Christian

That has been my daily prayer for the past two years: *Lord, awaken the sleeping giant that is the American Church. Awaken us from our Laodicean slumber* (Rev. 3:14–22).

We seem to be moving rapidly deeper into the end times. Wars, shakings, diseases, natural disasters, and shifts in the global balance of power are unfolding in rapid succession. Meanwhile, ever-greater violence and lawlessness among the people and alarmingly totalitarian measures by the governments of even the staunchest democracies are on the rise.

Intensifying persecution and attacks on churches that are common in countries where Christianity is illegal—until now far from our bed where we still enjoy freedom of worship—are suddenly on our doorstep. Because of our stance on biblical truths regarding gender identity, abortion, freedom, and other moral absolutes, an increasingly post-Christian American society that is moving away from such truths now considers us bigots, haters, and

hindrances to progressive thinking.

Even the most faithful Christians in my own circles have expressed shock at how quickly all this has come upon us. But anyone familiar with the words of Jesus knows that tribulation and persecution are coming. We are just not sure what it will look like.

Unfortunately, prayerlessness, biblical illiteracy, and addiction to comfort have lulled us to sleep. We've become unaccustomed to spiritual warfare, forgotten the power and importance of priestly prayer, and lack dependence on the fullness of the Holy Spirit at work in us and through us.

So, we are caught off-guard.

### Now More than Ever

*That is why I believe an awakening of prayer is needed today more than ever!*

Prayer without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) ensures we are firmly attached to Christ the Vine to receive everything we need to live in an unstable world and face hatred on account of Christ (Mark 13:13).

Not only that, but prayer is the power behind missions as we work toward finishing the Great Commission. Without it, the advance of the gospel stagnates. Prayer moves the hand of God in the lives of those we pray for, believer and unbeliever alike.

Prayer is God's appointed means to win great victories and accomplish mighty things. The prayers of all the saints are received upon the altar in heaven before the throne of God and return to earth as mighty acts (Rev. 8:3–5).

Those reasons and more are why we need a new movement of prayer in our churches—not just when there is a crisis that shocks us into realizing we need God, but because we know that

prayer matters greatly to God and should therefore matter to us. We must realize that if we don't pray, we will continue to weaken spiritually and leave the blessings God intends to pour out on His Church and on humanity through the prayers of His people locked up in heaven.

At its core, praying for an awakening of prayer in our churches is praying for the ignition of desire for the presence and supremacy of Christ in the hearts of His people. He must be uppermost in our thoughts and affections.

### Ignition of Burning Desire

I invite you as prayer leaders and mobilizers to pray with me for a renewed conviction that prayer is vital to our personal and corporate walk with God, and for the ignition of a burning desire for Him amid the turmoil of our day.

In addition, I encourage you to evaluate your church's prayer culture. Is it need-focused or Kingdom-focused? What do we need to teach and do differently to restore the centrality of thirsty, Kingdom-advancing, demon-busting, revival-seeking prayer in our churches?

Don't be discouraged! I sense God is getting ready to prepare His Bride for the return of the Bridegroom. Your work for His Kingdom to awaken prayer in our churches is vital. He delights in and responds to your prayer for Him to awaken the sleeping giant and ignite prayer in your church. **PC**



**REMCO BROMMET** has pastored several churches, served as a law enforcement and fire service chaplain, and led prayer movements for revival and spiritual awakening around the country. He is the author of *Prayer Matters* and blogs at [deeperlifeblog.com](http://deeperlifeblog.com).



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