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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



The desperate need for fervent prayer for our nation increases by the day. What does it mean to engage in “prevailing prayer”? This issue on “Renewed Passion and Zeal” and other back issues are available at prayershop.org.

Prayer Affects the Heart

In that moment, we were praying over the new families that had recently started attending—and the new influx of children. In fact, the previous Sunday we had been blessed with the largest number of kids we’ve had in Sunday church for many years.

Chuck shared that he was in the foyer after the service, with kids running around everywhere. He was nearly knocked over.

Uh-oh, I thought, where is he going with this?

Then, through a choked-up voice and watery eyes, Chuck grinned and said, “It was wonderful!”



Prayer Changes Us

During the past year, while we searched for a new senior pastor, a regular topic of prayer in our midweek service was for young families to come to our church and for our children’s ministry to grow.

In January, God brought us a dynamic, young (early 30s) pastor couple with five kids. Several families who previously came only occasionally are now regulars. And we have added several new families. Overall attendance in our small church is up 30 percent—and our children’s ministry increase is close to 100 percent!

Prayer can and does change situations, but it also changes *us*!

Several years ago, I ministered in a church in central Florida that was loaded with “snowbird” retired folks. The weekend I was there, I learned of a problem. The church had hired a new youth pastor who was a magnet for kids. Close to 100 junior high and high school kids were now coming to the church—most without their parents. These unchurched kids had no understanding of what was appropriate in and around church. Many of them rode their skateboards on the patio outside the church.

People started getting upset and wanted the youth pastor to do something about it. “Ban the skateboards,” they pleaded.

But that might keep these kids from coming. What to do?

We helped the seniors understand that these kids did not know any better, and that they needed prayer. A plan was initiated to get each senior to pray for specific kids.

As they did, over time something happened. God changed their hearts for the kids. They started loving these kids and showing excitement that they were coming!

When we pray, the Holy Spirit engages our hearts with His purposes and changes our hearts to align with those purposes!

As I have been praying for growth and more families and kids, something has happened to my heart, too. A few days ago, my wife mentioned that Courtney, our kids’ ministry co-director, asked if we would lead the first graders at VBS this summer.

“Do you want to do that?” my wife asked, thinking I would say, “No!”

“Sure,” I said.

What happened to Jon? Prayer and the Holy Spirit—that’s what! Bring on those urchins.

— Jonathan Graf

Getting Unstuck in Your Prayer Life | By Dana Olson

Feeling stuck in your prayer life? Same old, same old? Wishing you could break free?

Praying God's Word—praying Scripture—is the key to overcoming arrested prayer development. God's Word is full of riches to enable you to pray with greater depth, insight, hope, confidence, and joy.

Here's an idea: pray with echoes of Nehemiah's prayer (Neh. 1:4–11).

Stuck Away from Home

Nehemiah is a man far from home. Talk about being stuck! He's a slave in the court of a foreign king, yearning for news from his homeland, just one of the Jewish exile captives.

When he hears a report from home regarding the trouble and disgrace facing the tiny remnant who remain in Jerusalem, including the city's broken-down walls and destroyed gates, Nehemiah is moved with great emotion and responds with this realization: only God can bring breakthrough. *Only God!*

So, Nehemiah begins to fast and pray. After all:

- the people back home are defeated and broken
- the city wall is worthless and no longer offers any protection
- Nehemiah is a man far from home and under obligation as cupbearer to an unbelieving king
- there is strong opposition in the region to rebuilding Jerusalem
- Nehemiah has no resources available to rebuild the wall.

Insurmountable obstacles. All seems lost. Yet, God is able.

While obstacles are inevitable, Scripture

is full of examples where God bears His mighty arm and pours grace into such situations. Obstacles are the occasion for our Mighty God to work!

Listen In

Nehemiah's outpouring of prayer is recorded for our benefit.

- He begins by recognizing God's greatness, awesome power, and covenant-keeping steadfast love.
- He repents by confessing his own sin, as well as the sin of his family and nation. He pulls no punches.
- Nehemiah recalls God's past promises of redemption and faithfulness and love.
- And he humbly but boldly requests success in undertaking this "impossible" project.

God hears and answers his cries! Feast with joy on chapter 2 as well as 6:15–16:

So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

These two verses record something astounding. Not only is the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem accomplished in record speed (52 days!), but even the enemies who opposed the work knew in their hearts this key fact: only God could have done it. "We know them. There's no way they could do this on their own. They must have the true and living God on their side! This has been accomplished

with the help of their God."


Who is like our God? He overcomes the obstacles. So much so that even the enemy is left shaking in their boots.

Nehemiah-Like Prayers

What are your challenging circumstances? What about the great troubles of our nation and world? You can pray with Nehemiah:

- Begin with a burst of praise and adoration, for our God is merciful, powerful, and able to do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20).
- Confess your own sin as well as the sins of the church and our nation. Licentiousness and rebellion are headlines of our news feed every day.
- Express to God your hope in Christ based on all the remarkable promises of Scripture. He has promised, and He is faithful!
- Tell God, humbly but boldly, what your heart desires. Describe in prayer the Kingdom success that would bless you and make a difference in our needy world.

Then step forward! Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and rolled up his sleeves. He prayed, then took action. The results left Israel's enemies breathless—and still amaze us to this day. Only God could have done it! God did.

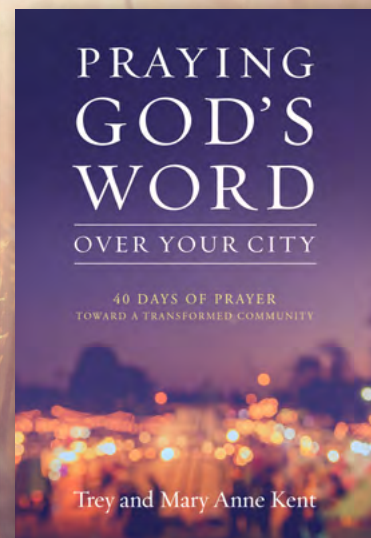
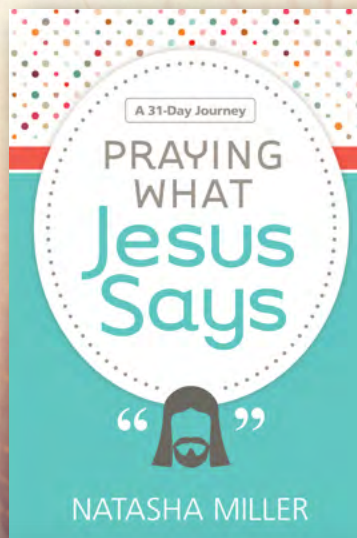
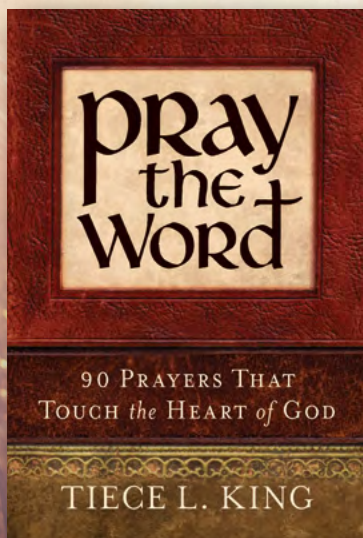
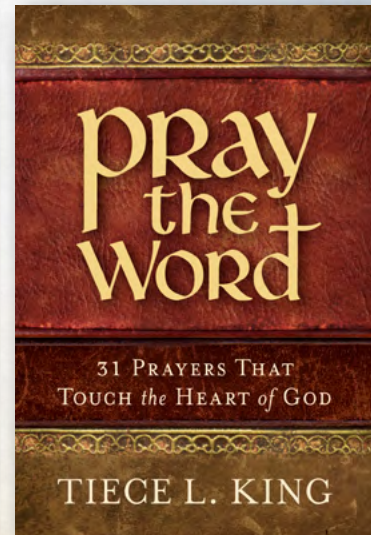
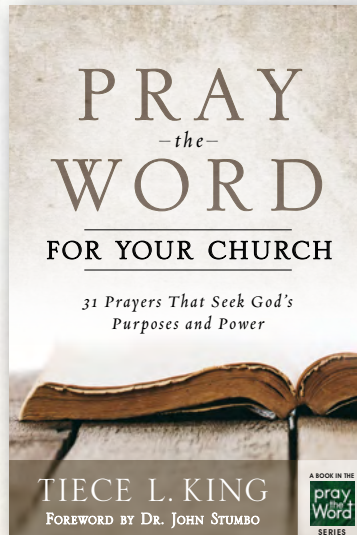
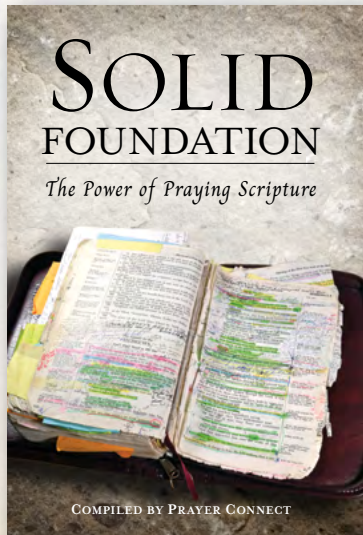
How does God want you to enter into the answer to your prayers? 



DANA OLSON, veteran pastor and prayer leader, is Director of *Prayer First Heartland*, part of the Converge family of churches.

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Praying for Elected Officials | By Gloria Robles

We are in no small need of prayers for our government. The president and the administration, the Supreme Court, and the Congress, along with our governors, legislators, judges, mayors, and state and local officials on every level—they all play a huge role in the decisions affecting our lives. They all have a part in keeping this country going.

What a monumental task! There's certainly an abundance of criticism for these officials—through letters, phone calls, and over social media.

But what if we were to counter all that criticism through prayer? What if we prayed for our elected officials with the same fervency we apply to other things?

Well, Scripture tells us prayers of righteous people will be powerful and effective (James 5:16). So, as we pray, let's make it *personal*. Let's lift our officials up before Him *by name*.

Pray, Not Prey

Praying and *preying*: two similar-sounding words—homonyms—but what a vast difference between them! *Preying* is *predatory* and savage in nature, while *praying* is *precatory* and submissive. We must submit ourselves to the Lord and to His will.

If we are honest, how many of us in our zeal will aggressively pursue rather than quietly trust—letting the Holy Spirit lead us in prayer? *Preying* is forceful and demanding, but *praying* is an act of love.

This is important in our prayers because certain leaders, especially the plainly ungodly ones, can affect the way we pray. Our prayers can become critical and un-Christlike when we disagree with officials. To be sure, love is a powerful force, but it is also patient and kind.

Pray for Souls

We are told to pray for and make supplication for those in authority. We must stand in the gap for officials—and this is a humble call for help.

We can also offer thanksgiving to God for our elected officials. This is good and acceptable to our God, who desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

Regardless about how you may feel about the president or your legislator, governor, or local official, God desires for that man or woman to be saved. When we pray with that in mind, God will give us His heart toward the official.

The following prayers are key ways to pray:

1. Lord, Give Them Integrity
Father, we lift our elected officials up to You. We pray according to Philippians 2:3–4, that they will not act out of selfish ambition or vanity, but rather out of a servant's heart, like Jesus. We pray that they will selflessly and to the best of their ability look to the interests of the people they are called to serve. We pray that they will serve with integrity and fulfill the responsibilities of their office with godly character.

2. Lord, Give Them Strength and Courage
Father, when they are feeling overwhelmed by the tremendous weight of the demands before them, may they find rest in Your presence. Impart Your strength to them in every area of their lives. Raise their hearts up when they feel hopeless, so that they will be pointed back to You. Lord, You are the source of all strength and the God of all comfort. We pray that these leaders will lead by example, and that they will exhibit

bravery in the face of evil. Grant them the courage to do the right thing, even when it's not popular. Help them to rely upon You and Your mighty power.

3. Lord, Give Them Wisdom
Father, we seek Your wisdom for our officials. Help them give careful thought to the path they are on and to remain steadfast in all things. We pray that they will recognize their need for wisdom and discernment to govern rightly. May our officials receive a double portion of discernment so that they will be able to distinguish clearly between right and wrong. Your ways, Lord, are true and right, and we desire for our leaders to exhibit humility and do Your will.

4. Lord, Give Them Guidance
Father, please instruct our officials in the way that they should go. And we pray that they will listen. Counsel them and watch over them. We pray for their staff members too, that they will offer the officials they serve only counsel that is good and godly. We pray that our officials would not follow wicked advice, stand with sinners, or remain in the company of mockers. May our officials never lean on their own understanding. Instead, please direct their paths as they acknowledge You.

Partner with the Lord

Ask the Lord to show you how to be effective intercessors for those in leadership. And invite Him to give you a heart for elected officials so that you can remain faithful in standing in the gap on their behalf. **PC**

INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA (ifapray.org) has mobilized prayer for this nation for 50 years. Gloria Robles is an IFA contributing writer.

NATIONS IN TURMOIL

Biblical Prayers in Troubling Times

The long-beloved Christmas carol describing an idyllic and peaceful place of welcome for the newborn Jesus isn't quite accurate anymore. "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie" does not describe today's city of Bethlehem, just a few miles down the road from Jerusalem.

This was one of my biggest surprises during a trip to Israel. Our visit to Bethlehem did not match any images I conjured up based on the biblical history. I knew I wasn't going to see a preserved manger from Jesus' birth, but I had no idea how different Bethlehem was from the culture of Jerusalem, Galilee, and other key sites in Israel.

Bethlehem is now a walled city. But the walls and checkpoints are not designed to protect the people within the city. Instead, they are designed to protect Jerusalem and other outlying areas from the hatred that seethes from some of the people who reside within Bethlehem. Cars leaving Bethlehem are stopped at guarded entrances and inspected for bombs or other terror-oriented weapons that might be on their way to Jerusalem.

We were warned as our tour bus entered the winding streets of Bethlehem that it was possible residents would throw rocks at us. Our tour guide said they might sound like gun shots, but not to worry because the windows were designed to hold strong. Our Israeli bus driver clearly was not happy to be there—and we all felt some relief when we drove out of the city gates.

Strife has always been present in the land of Israel—including ancient days when the Romans ruled and current days when surrounding nations threaten to destroy this small and strategic nation.

Turmoil among nations of the world has always existed. And in more recent days, we see the tensions

rising. Wars and rumors of even more wars are in the headlines every day. Calls for peace can seem unheard or ineffective.

In This Issue

So how do we pray when nations are in such turmoil?

Kie Bowman cites the prevalence of war and strife throughout Scripture. What is happening in our day is not new; believers throughout the centuries have faced conflict. He uses biblical examples of godly response to turmoil as a reminder that the Church is called to pray for peace.

Although Dave Butts is now eternally with Jesus, his writing still impacts our readership. We selected an excerpt from one of his books on praying for Israel. Dave and his wife Kim traveled extensively throughout that nation on prayer journeys—and his insights in praying for Israel are just as relevant today.

Kay Horner closes out our theme with instructions from Jesus in how to pray when it seems the end of the world is upon us. Rather than give in to fear, we should be encouraged and excited that our prayers might be the prelude to His return.

Oh, Little Town

Bethlehem was once a town of promised peace through Jesus Christ. There is still hope as reflected in the closing line of the first verse of this Christmas carol: "Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

There's *always* hope in Jesus. **PC**

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect* and author of *Prayer That's Caught and Taught*.



Prayer in the Time of War

IN THE CROSSHAIRS

You have probably never heard anyone describe war as heaven. In fact, it is the exact opposite.

Unfortunately, war is a fact of life in the 21st century. The Geneva Academy recognizes more than 110 armed conflicts in the world today.¹ We almost expect the horrors of war in our world, since in the last 3,400 years there have been only 268 years when war was not active somewhere in the world.²

From a political perspective, there is little you can do to stop terrorism or drone attacks against our Navy or illegal missile tests by the world's most dangerous actors. But in the spiritual realm there is a lot you can do. You make an impact beyond measure when you pray.

The History of War in Scripture

Joshua was a general (Josh. 11:1–23). David “killed his tens of thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7).

Jesus prophetically described the grisly scene of invading armies coming against Jerusalem (Matt. 24:7–22). The Book of Revelation predicts the final battle will be fought in Israel in the Valley of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14–16).


The Bible takes war seriously. In a sense, human “war” started as armed conflict when Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4:8), and it will end when Jesus defeats an international army after the 1,000-year reign (Rev. 20:7–10).

In these days of international terrorism, armed conflict, and the world holding its collective breath with fear and uncertainty, what principles can we learn from the prayer ministries of the biblical heroes who walked a familiar path? How can we pray in the crosshairs of war?

Pray for Peace

The early Church had no political influence. Soon after Pentecost, the church leaders were arrested and imprisoned (Acts 4:1–20). In fact,

BY KIE BOWMAN



**No matter how bad the situation becomes,
no matter how many drones fly overhead,
or how many tyrants wage senseless wars,
believers are called to pray for peace.**

the Book of Acts is a history of apostolic imprisonments (Acts 5:17–42, 12:5, 16:16–40, 18:12–17, 19:24–41, 21:27ff). Leonard Ravenhill once said, “The early Church had so little influence with men they couldn’t stay out of jail, but they had so much influence with God no jail could hold them.”

While the early Church had almost none of the advantages the American Church takes for granted, they had something we desperately need. They knew how to pray. In fact, “Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him” (Acts 12:5).

In the worst conditions, the Church was, first and foremost, a praying Church.

Their lack of social standing meant they were always at risk of running afoul of some Roman leader or decree. Paul understood that keeping the infant Church out of the “line of fire” politically and socially was a way of protecting the viability of the ministry. This outlook could be the motivation behind Paul’s advice: “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

While they were not in a war zone when Paul wrote to Timothy, the apostle had spent enough time in jail and had been the victim of unprovoked violence often enough to know how dangerous preaching the gospel could be in the Roman Empire. So, he urged the Church to pray so they could live in peace and continue their ministry.

No matter how bad the situation becomes, no matter how many drones fly overhead, or how many tyrants wage senseless wars, believers are called to pray for peace.

Pray with Conviction

The overwhelming majority of Americans believe morals are in a free fall in our country. Almost 80 percent of us think it is bad and getting worse.³

In the face of our moral decay, Scripture describes the results of standing boldly for God, even when a culture is corrupt. Unfortunately, in a morally decadent culture, godliness becomes marginalized—and the evil majority persecutes the faithful. Peter warned us when he said, “They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you” (1 Peter 4:4).

When we see the sexual intemperance, the cruelty and violence, the political corruption, the drug abuse and crime in our cities, and failures among the clergy, we are forced to ponder the question: “Is Western culture too far gone already?”

For instance, in December 2022, Isabel Vaughn-Spruce was arrested in Birmingham, England, for praying silently in public across the street from an abortion clinic. The charges were eventually dropped a few months later. Apologies followed, but the message sent by the original arrest is blatant.⁴ The British pro-life advocate, arrested for silent prayer, was a victim of the culture wars.

Imagine the pressure you might experience if your prayers are ever outlawed during a full-scale military action. It is happening in parts of the world already. What would you do if it happened to you?

More than 2,600 years ago, Daniel rose to political power in a godless nation. But we cannot forget he was there as a prisoner of war (Dan. 1:1–6). God’s hand was on Daniel as he overcame the challenges of serving under five kings and the Babylonian and Persian wars that upended national security. In one of those battles, a new Persian king, Darius the Mede, overthrew Belshazzar the Chaldean (Daniel 5:29–31). In other words, a new country, new culture, new customs, and a completely different kingdom seized power.

Following his ascension to the throne, Darius passed a law that no one could pray to any god except to King Darius himself. To do so would be an act of treason, punishable by death (Dan. 6:6–9). In other words, prayer was viewed as a war crime.

What happened next was one of the most defiant, courageous, and inspiring acts in the Bible.

Daniel waged a counteroffensive against the hot war aimed at his prayer life.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before (Dan. 6:10).

What do we learn from Daniel's response to the war against prayer? For one thing, his testimony reminds us that prayer can give us a steel backbone, eager to stand for God in the face of overwhelming circumstances and impossible odds.

The man or woman who dares to believe that prayer is an act of defiance against the raging wars around them is a person of deep conviction. And remember, conviction is not a belief you hold; conviction is a belief that holds you.

Prayer as a Sacrifice

Pastor and author Craig Groeschel has often said, "We sacrifice what we love for what we love more." As a culture, we do not know much about sacrifice.

In seasons of intense conflict, however, we start to learn the hard way. We know instinctively that if we love something or someone enough, we ignore the price tag. We voluntarily sacrifice what we love for what we love more. We find this principle illustrated in the Book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's opening chapter introduces the conflict—will the privileged courtier find a reason to sacrifice for the suffering people of God? Nehemiah is a comfortable civil servant confronted with the terrible news of the devastated condition of his "hometown." There are Jewish refugees and escapees living in the shadows of poverty and terror, and Nehemiah had ignored his responsibility for too long. So, he prayed (Neh. 1:1–11).

Nehemiah actually had a dream job. He worked in the palace with daily access to the royal family. He ate well, wanted for little, and could have lived the rest of his life surrounded by comforts barely imaginable to the general population. But when he repented, fasted, and wept in prayer for days, God did something new in his heart.

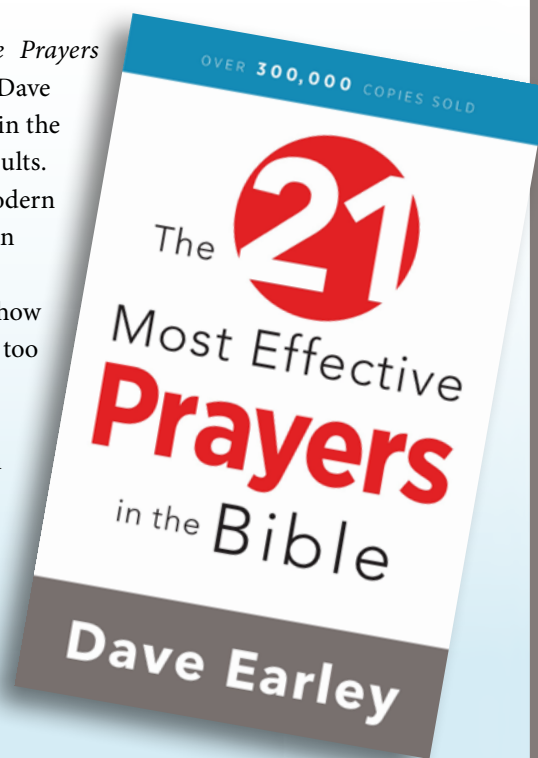
Nehemiah was led to leave his service in the Persian Empire and travel to war-torn Jerusalem—hundreds of miles west across the desert—to lead his people to rebuild the wall as a security system around the battle-plundered city. God led him to sacrifice the known for the unknown—the security of the palace for the unpredictability of a city in ruins, ravaged by war.

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Nehemiah walked away from guarantees and stepped into a life of faith. He found his resolve in the secret place with God, where a man of the palace and privilege became a man of prayer. A nation devastated by the evils of war decades earlier got a second chance through the sacrifice of one man who prayed.

John Bunyan once said, “Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.” We may not see the results Nehemiah saw because we never enter the sacrifice phase of prayer. We pray only when it is convenient and then only briefly.

Nehemiah, on the other hand, prayed in pain for days. His sacrifice in prayer led to the renewal of the Jewish people.

Even though he had to keep his sword handy while he constructed the wall (Neh. 4:17), Nehemiah lived not in the midst of war but in its aftermath. The city without a wall did not know it needed a

man to lead it—one who had been to the depths of personal sacrifice in prayer.

A New Kind of Leader

Broken cultures rarely realize that their greatest need is spiritual rather than material. The aftermath of war calls for a new kind of leader—one stripped of self-interest and who has plunged to uncharted depths in prayer.

Jesus warned of “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). But Alex and Stephen Kendrick were right about God’s plan for the world when they said, “When prayer becomes your immediate reflex instead of your last resort, the whole battlefield begins to tilt in your direction.”⁵ **PC**

¹“Middle East and North Africa: More than 45 Armed Conflicts,” GENEVA ACADEMY, <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/gallies/today-s-armed-conflicts/>.

² Chris Hedges, “What Every Person Should Know About War,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/books/chapters/what-every-person-should-know-about-war.html/>.

³ Megan Brennan and Nicole Willcoxon, “Record-High 50% of Americans Rate U.S. Moral Values as ‘Poor,’” GALLUP, June 6, 2022, <https://www.news.gallup.com/poll/393659/record-high-americans-rate-moral-values-poor.aspx/>.

⁴ Caroline Downey, “Charges Dropped against British Woman for Praying Outside Abortion Clinic,” *National Review*, February 3, 2023, <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/charges-dropped-against-british-woman-arrested-for-praying-outside-abortion-clinic/>.

⁵ Stephen and Alex Kendrick, *The Battle Plan for Prayer*, B&H Publishing Group, 2015.



KIE BOWMAN is senior pastor emeritus of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, TX, and is currently the National Director of Prayer for the Southern Baptist Convention. He is the coauthor of *City of Prayer*.

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DR. J. KIE BOWMAN

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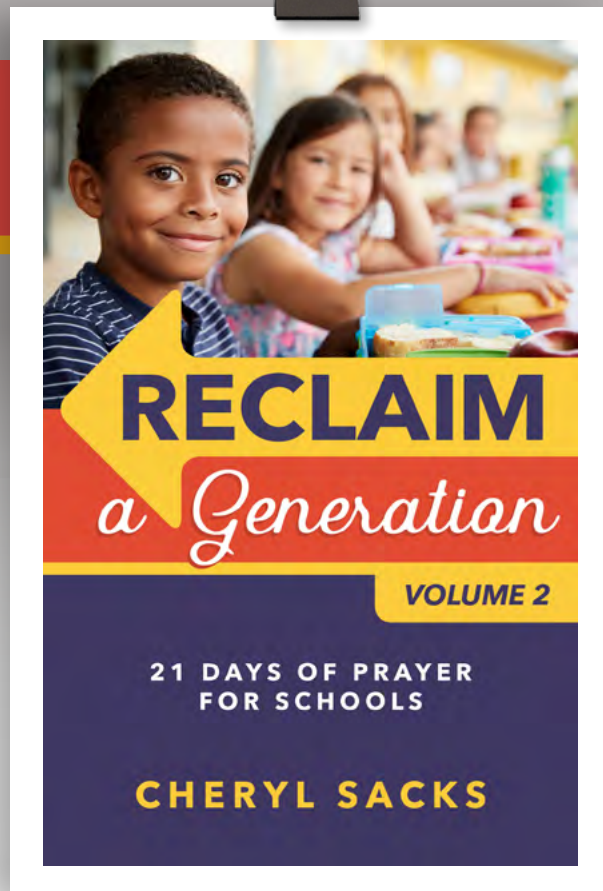
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Our Call to Pray for Peace



ISRAEL AT WAR

It is no surprise that Israel is a source of division and contention, both in the world and in the Church. It has always been so.

So, what are the reasons?

One could look to the unique geographic place of the nation, a bridge of land between warring empires for millennia. Or one could look to the exclusivist monotheism of the Jewish faith that set it apart through the ages.

Modern analysts can perhaps look to the deep-seated antagonism between Jew and Arab as an outgrowth of tribal hatreds born centuries ago, even reaching back to the children of the Patriarch Abraham. Christianity's emergence from the root of Israel has led to a confusion of relationship that has shifted like sand through the years, ranging from love and respect to outright persecution.

Though all these points are true to some extent, I believe there is a spiritual source—literally, a demonic one that underlies the controversy.


Supernatural Origin

From the beginning, the great adversary Satan has hated the Jewish people. They were the ones chosen by God through which the purposes of God were to be carried out on planet Earth. It was through the Jewish people that God's redemptive plan for mankind was to be enacted, thereby assuring Satan of defeat.

The persistence and ferocity of anti-Semitism through the centuries can only be explained by a supernatural force. Satan has tried to destroy the out-working of God's grace by destroying the people God would use to demonstrate His greatest grace.

From Haman to Hitler might be a good, if chilling, title to a book about the deadly nature of anti-Semitism. In the biblical days of Esther and her uncle Mordecai, the Jews faced an enemy in the person of a Babylonian official named Haman whose desire was to have all the Jews killed. Though Haman perished, the spirit behind his deadly schemes

BY DAVE BUTTS



With Israel playing a central role politically, religiously, and prophetically in the Middle East, much effective intercession needs to be made on her behalf.

did not. History records again and again how hatred against the Jewish people erupted into violence and persecution.

For instance, the efforts of Hitler and his Nazis to eliminate all European Jews during the Holocaust was such a monstrous act that it is hard to imagine such large-scale murder apart from demonic involvement. Certainly, Christians who pray for Israel will want to deal significantly with issues of spiritual warfare on behalf of the Jewish people.

Biblical Admonition to Pray

This may be hard for some to believe, but even praying for Israel can be a point of controversy for followers of Christ. The significance of the existence of the modern State of Israel is a point hotly disputed among Christians. I am guessing that the majority of those reading this article believe the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 was an astonishing fulfillment of biblical prophecy and that events surrounding Israel are key to understanding the Last Days.

That is certainly my view! But I have many godly friends who hold firmly to the Word of God yet believe differently.

I am not here to convince people to my view, but to present effective ways to pray for Israel. Those who do not see modern Israel as a fulfillment of prophecy may well not have the sense of urgency to pray for Israel. But my encouragement to them is still to pray. At

the very least, all Christians can join in obedience to the biblical admonition to pray for the peace of Jerusalem according to Psalm 122:6:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.”

Peace in Times of Trouble

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

So, then, how do we pray for Jerusalem (Israel)?

Certainly, there is the aspect of protection from war, violence, and terrorism that we all desire for Israel. While it appears prophetically that there will come a time when God’s hand of protection is withdrawn for a time from Jerusalem, until that time we are to pray for God’s peace.

This aspect of peace involves a cessation of hostility and attack. If, despite our prayers, it appears that violence still occurs, we can only imagine to what extent there would be unbridled violence without our prayers.

In one way, Jerusalem will never completely know peace until the Prince

of Peace comes (again) to reign. There is, however, a peace that comes to the human heart when Jesus is made Lord of that heart and life. I believe it essential that we pray for the peace of Christ to come into many hearts in Israel. It is this peace that will comfort and endure, even through times of great trial and tribulation.

On the first Sunday in October of each year, many in the Church have come together for the International Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem. If your church has not become involved in this prayer event, please check out their website at daytopray.com. Praying for the peace of Jerusalem is so much more than a one-day event, but this day of prayer can help ignite your prayers for the rest of the year on Israel’s behalf.

Effective Intercession for Israel

With Israel playing a central role politically, religiously, and prophetically in the Middle East, much effective intercession needs to be made on her behalf. My friend Sandra Teplinsky, in her book *Why Care About Israel?* gives us some ways to pray for Israel:

- Blessing and strengthening of those in true spiritual authority
- Outpouring of grace leading to repentance for unsaved Jews and Arabs
- Revival and maturity in the Israeli “body of Messiah”
- Blessing and wisdom for government authorities and others in leadership
- God’s sending and sustaining of laborers into Israeli harvest fields, opening doors for Messianic Jewish Aliyah (return)
- Sending of resources to the Messianic community in Jerusalem and the rest of Israel by believers in the nations
- Jerusalem’s (Israel’s) protection from enemy attack, physical and spiritual

- Jerusalem's (Israel's) enemies to be delivered from darkness into light
- Your nation's blessing of Jerusalem and Israel
- The nations' recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's eternal capital city
- Protection from the spirit of anti-christ
- The fulfillment of Jerusalem's redemptive purpose on earth as the "City of the Great King," a city of peace that blesses the nations
- The gift of intercessory tears to be shed on her behalf until these things come to pass.

I love the balance of these intercessory pleas on behalf of Israel. There is no attempt to accept everything that the modern State of Israel does as an act endorsed by God. Israel is a secular state that has made many mistakes.

Nor is there anything that demonizes the opponents of Israel. Instead, in prayer, we choose to align ourselves with God's redemptive and prophetic purposes to use Israel as an important part of what God is doing and is going to do on Earth.

For His Glory

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

Because your prayers for Israel are such a critical part of God's end-time purposes, these prayers will become more intense as the time approaches. I believe the day-and-night prayer movement that began several years ago and continues to intensify is a sign of the approaching end of days. This 24-7 prayer movement is an act of obedience and fulfillment of the command of Scriptures:

You who call on the LORD, give

yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth (Isa. 62:6-7).

The ten days of day and night prayer in Jerusalem before Pentecost launched the Church in her mission more than 2,000 years ago. In the early 1700s, the 100-year, day-and-night prayer meeting of the Moravians began the modern missions movement.

I believe the current day-and-night prayer movement will usher in the fulfillment of the mission of the Church, the glorious appearing of Christ. Let's pray for the soon return and reign of the Prince of Peace!

A Prayer of Hope

God of Israel, how amazed I am at the way

You have brought Your people back into the land of promise. In our day we have watched with our own eyes as You have restored Jerusalem to Your people Israel and, against all odds, have brought into being a nation that many have said could never exist again.

Now Lord, pour out that spirit of grace and supplication upon Jerusalem (Zech. 12:10). May Jesus be recognized as Messiah by His own people. Bring peace to Jerusalem as the Prince of Peace is enthroned upon the hearts of the Jewish people and all who dwell in the land. 🙏



DAVE BUTTS was the executive director of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the author of many books on prayer. He was also the chairperson of America's National Prayer

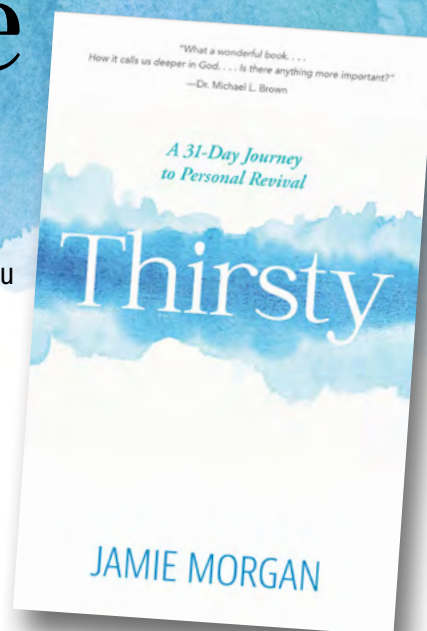
Committee. Dave and his wife Kim led many prayer journeys to Israel before he passed away in 2022. This article is excerpted from his book *Prayer and the End of Days*, published in 2013.

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A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light-colored lace dress, is kneeling on a sandy beach. She has her head bowed and her hands covering her face, suggesting a state of grief or distress. In the foreground, an open Bible lies on the sand, with its pages illuminated by the warm, golden light of a low sun. The background shows a calm sea and a hazy horizon under a soft, orange sky. The overall mood is one of sorrow and seeking comfort.

Eyes Fixed on Jesus in Troubling Times

CONQUERING THE FEAR OF LENGTHENING SHADOWS

The church prayer meeting opened with worship songs, a Scripture reading, and the usual prayer requests. In customary mode, I knelt to pray with my Bible and prayer journal open before me. However, I seemed to encounter the spiritual equivalent of Moses' words: "The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze [giving no rain and blocking all prayers], and the earth which is under you, iron [hard to plow and yielding no produce]" (Deut. 28:23, AMP).

Nevertheless, I persisted with praise, worship, petition, and listening for the voice of the Lord. After a while, words began to flow from my spirit like the tears streaming from my eyes and onto the pages of my journal. I sensed the Holy Spirit was speaking about our church and surrounding community. When war erupted in the Middle East a few weeks later, I realized these words conveyed greater significance for the Kingdom of God:

You are dealing with the shadows in this place—shadows of the past that are

being lengthened by the hurts, unforgiveness, leadership battles, hidden heart shadows, and present struggles for power and jockeying for position. The time has come for the dawning of a new day and a new way, free of tradition and control.

Shadows lengthen at the end of the day, but they vanish with the awakening of the dawn. I am challenging, even commanding, you to pray that the "sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2).

"And the light of the full moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the wound He has inflicted" (Isa. 30:26, NASB).

Then my people will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall as they tread down the wicked—the magnifier of shadows.

BY KAY HORNER



The key to our freedom from the fear of lengthening shadows is to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

War and Conflict

Struggles for power and jockeying for position existed before Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Debate surrounds possible dual meanings of passages such as Isaiah 14, which refers to a king attempting to raise his throne “above the stars of God” and “ascend above the heights of the clouds,” making himself “like the Most High” (vs. 12–15).

A similar vying for position is described in Ezekiel 28 when the exalted heart of a created being, claiming to be God, is corrupted and ultimately brought down.

Later, John the Revelator is shown a war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels, who were not strong enough and were thrown down. He clearly identifies this dragon as “the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

The human conflict that began with Cain and Abel intensified with Ishmael and Isaac. Jacob and Esau faced leadership struggles from the womb that continued among their descendants throughout the Old Testament. Battles between Jews and Gentiles, the Law and grace, were evident in the New Testament.

From early modern history until today, we have consistently witnessed brothers fighting against brothers in the land of Israel and in the Church. Some of you reading this may be struggling with hurt, unforgiveness, and hidden heart shadows that threaten to eclipse your faith in the “Son” of righteousness,

our Healer, and Prince of Peace. The fractures remain unhealed.

Propagator of Fear

The length of a shadow changes as the angle of the sun changes. It is the longest in the early morning and late afternoon. As we near the return of the Lord, the shadows seem to be lengthening rapidly. People are aware of the turmoil around our world which heightens fear and confusion. The “end of the world” scenarios combined with threats of terrorists within our borders, wars around the world, discussions of nuclear possibilities, and much more fuel this fear.

Rather than allowing our hearts to be overwhelmed by what we see in the media or hear from end-time, doomsday prophets, we must recognize that Satan, the father of lies, is the author of confusion and the primary propagator of fear. He always writes fictional narratives.

However, Christ—the way, the truth, and the life—has clearly said knowing the truth brings freedom. The key to our freedom from the fear of lengthening shadows is to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). He will instruct us how to pray and anticipate God’s work amid the turmoil.

Prayer Insights from Jesus

Let’s focus briefly on Jesus after His last visit to the temple. As He sat with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, they would have had a full view of the sacred temple

that He prophesied would be destroyed. Undoubtedly, the western sun magnified the lengthening shadows making the gigantic walls and massive stones appear even more imposing and majestic. Only four close followers—Peter, James, John, and Andrew—came to Him privately saying, “Tell us . . . when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3).

Do you suppose they recalled His earlier words to the Jews, following the cleansing of the temple: “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19)? Perhaps, John’s clarification did not come until after the resurrection: “But the temple he had spoken of was his body” (v. 21). Their perspective of Jesus had been skewed by the shadows. Regardless, the Teacher proceeded to address their questions and unspoken fears.

The Olivet Discourse is recorded in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21). Its apocalyptic language can be overwhelming as Jesus speaks of wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilence, false prophets, apostasy, persecution, the abomination of desolation, and great tribulation!

However, the Greek word, *apokalýptō*, simply means “uncover, bring to light, reveal.” Paul told the Romans, “For in the gospel the righteousness of God is *revealed*—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Rom. 1:17, *italics added*).

If we are going to live by faith and not fear, we need to focus primarily on Jesus. Allow Him to unveil valuable insights and practical instructions like He gave these four inquiring disciples in response to their questions.

We’ll incorporate only a few in our prayer targets.

- Beware that you are not fooled! (See Matthew 24:4–5; Mark 13:21–23.) Consistently keep your eyes upon Jesus by worshiping and exalting Him as the true King of kings and Lord of

lords. Know the truth! He is God's only anointed Messiah.

- Don't panic or give in to your fears (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7). If "perfect love drives out fear," and "Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them" (1 John 4:16, 18), maintain a deepened, personal relationship with God and people of faith. Pray for the body of Christ to live Great Commandment lifestyles as we unite to pursue the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt. 22:37–39, 28:19–20).
- "And the gospel must first be preached to all nations" (Mark 13:10). Pray for the gospel of heaven's Kingdom to "be proclaimed all over the world, providing every nation with a demonstration of the reality of God" (Matt. 24:14).
- "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt. 24:44). Pray for the Holy Spirit to permeate your life and the Church with passionate anticipation for the return of the Lord as we actively wait, watch, and pray. Join with others locally, nationally, and globally, seeking God for a true Christ-awakening among His people and the lost (see Mark 13:33–37).

Jesus' discourse is bookended with a focus on exalting Him, as earlier He declared, "For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:39, italics added).

After He leaves the Mount of Olives and arrives in Bethany, a woman with an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment pours it on His head as a prelude for His burial. He says of her, "She has done a beautiful thing to me. . . . Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (Matt. 26:10, 13).

Those who are faithfully worshiping, serving, and watching for the returning Redeemer can be confident and even excited that we might be witnessing the preludes of Jesus' return.

Don't Fear the Shadows

A few days after the church prayer meeting, I was in a smaller prayer group and continued to meditate on what the Lord had spoken to me. The Holy Spirit encouraged us with these words: *Do not fear the dark shadows because you dwell in the shadow of the Almighty. My cloud was the shadow by day that protected the Israelites from the heat of the wilderness sun. I am a shade by day and defense by night, so you are covered 24/7 in every situation or circumstance.*

Before the day of the Lord—His second coming to earth—the knowledge

of His glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). Like the rising sun at the dawn of a new day, Christ's glory will bring salvation, healing, and freedom to His people.

When He comes for the final time, everything will be made right. God's people will leap for joy like young calves released to run free at last. **PC**

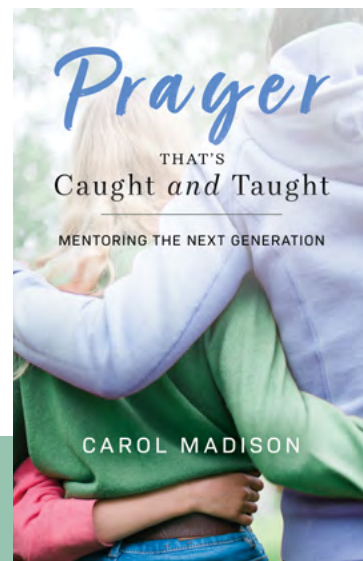


KAY HORNER is executive director of the Awakening America Alliance (awakeningamerica.us) and a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

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Rethinking

Not All Pray-ers
Look Alike

Prayer



The speaker was mesmerizing. She was inspirational. And she was going to transform my prayer life. All I needed to do was buy the \$24.99 prayer notebook that would forever organize my prayer lists into seven divided sections—one section for each day of the week.

I was eager to write down prayer requests on a checklist, date them, pray, and then wait for God to answer. I dove into this new prayer system enthusiastically and followed that routine for about a month.

Then life happened—the life I lived as a mom of four kids, a high school English teacher, and a church volunteer. And then guilt followed because I couldn't keep up with the daily lists.

One morning I found myself asleep face down on the prayer binder.

Help, Lord. I'm a prayer failure.

Not the Be-All

People have all kinds of advice about how, when, and where prayer should be incorporated into a believer's life.

They tell others what they do, convinced that their own praying practice is the be-all and end-all for everyone. I even do this because I get so excited sharing how prayerwalking changed my life 25 years ago.

But maybe we haven't considered that God has given each of us a different personality, and our natural rhythm of prayer may not look like someone else's. As I've studied the prayer practices and prayers of biblical people, I've noticed that while they all seemed to pray differently, God heard their prayers. There are various ways we could characterize biblical characters' praying styles, and what I've noticed is some seem more cerebral in nature, some are emotive, some are devotional, and some are physical.

Cerebral Prayers

Just as some people approach life rationally, logically, and argumentatively, they might also pray in that way. We see this in Job's attempts to understand his suffering and in Gideon's requests for God's assurance. Then there was Moses, whose dialogue with the Lord appears much like a back-and-forth tennis match.

Here are paraphrases from Exodus 3 and 4 when Moses tried to get out of God's calling to lead the Israelites out of Egypt:

Prayer Failures

By Janet Holm McHenry

Prayer is a perfect outlet when thoughts turn heavy and overwhelming.

God: Go to Pharaoh to bring My people out of Egypt.

Moses: Who am I to try such a thing?

God: I will be with you and you will worship Me.

Moses: But who should I say sent me?

God: You tell them I sent you. Get the leaders together.

Moses: What if they won't listen to me?

Then the Lord performed two miracles: turning a staff into a snake, then back into a staff, and turning Moses' hand leprous and then normal again.

God: Do that so they believe you.

Moses: But God, I am a lousy public speaker.

God: I made your mouth. I will put the right words in it.

Moses: Please send someone else.

God: Your brother Aaron will be your mouthpiece. The miracles will help too.

We may also be cerebral pray-ers if we need signs, explanations, and clarity—and if our prayers are short and to the point. And if so, we can feel the freedom to explain ourselves in prayer, to ask God for understanding of hard circumstances, to take our problems to the Problem Solver, and to use God's Word to guide our prayers. Natural praying practices would be to pray on the spot when a need arises, to pray "on the go," and to pray big, bold prayers on behalf of others.

Emotive Pray-ers

Those of us on the California leadership team for the National Day of Prayer meet weekly for an hour or more on a prayer call with others from around the state and beyond. It's interesting to hear others pray. While I tend to be succinct and

to the point, others pour out heart-stirred words accompanied by tears and even sobs.

These folks are what I would call emotive pray-ers. We all have emotions that can influence how we speak and even pray, but emotive pray-ers carry others' burdens emotionally into the throne room of prayer.

There are several emotive pray-ers in the Bible. Hannah was so overcome with emotion that the priest Eli thought she was drunk. "No," she told him: she was "deeply troubled" and simply pouring out her heart of anguish for a child (1 Sam. 1:9–16).

Another emotionally charged pray-er was David, who left us with about half the Psalms, some of which are penitential in nature, some laments, and some praise and thanksgiving hymns. We can also remember that David danced and sang to express his worship—much to the disapproval of his wife Michal (2 Sam. 6:16–22). And Jeremiah wrote a whole book filled with laments.

If prayer is an emotion-packed experience for you, you might find inspiration from worship music for your quiet time. You might also find that creative expression comes naturally through practices of dancing, painting, creative journaling, or even writing poetry.

Prayer is a perfect outlet when thoughts turn heavy and overwhelming. Another helpful practice might be to turn biblical promises into declarations, shifting from melancholy thoughts to ones of hope. And some emotive pray-ers find a prayer closet the perfect place for the freedom of pouring out prayers.

Devotional Pray-ers

You may have a friend who is so close to God that she's the first person you contact when you need others to pray. She seems to have such an otherworldly connection with the Lord that she walks and talks with Him as a natural course of her day. Maybe she has said things like, "Jesus is my best friend" or "Jesus told me the most amazing thing the other day" or "God just gave me the best idea!"

Devotional pray-ers seem to always be in touch with the Lord, so much so that you might wonder if they're already halfway into heaven! Their mindset is synched with God's Word and they see life prayerfully.

We learn in James 2:23 that Abraham was called "God's friend." That verse also says that

Abraham believed God and was credited with “righteousness.” This friend of God—Abraham—was also a friend of humankind because he was the first recorded person who interceded for others. This man was devoted to God and worshiped in the manner the Lord taught him—through the offering of sacrifices (Gen. 12:7, 26:25).

Judge and prophet Deborah responded to the dramatic victory over the Canaanites with poetic thanksgiving:

When the princes in Israel take the lead,
when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the LORD!
Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers!
I, even I, will sing to the LORD;
I will praise the LORD, the God of Israel, in song (Judges 5:2–3).

Devotional pray-ers pray throughout their day. They thank God for every circumstance that comes their way, including the people around them. They confess their sins as they occur and have God’s Word firmly planted in their minds so that it becomes a springboard for their prayers.

They may be so in tune with others’ needs that they may forget their own—so they may want to remember it’s all right to petition for themselves.

Physical Pray-ers

We do not pray apart from our bodies, do we? Even if we’re completely silent, our minds, hearts, and souls are fixed on the Lord. We use our mouths to utter praise and thanksgiving and to ask God for what is on our hearts. So, yes, all prayer has a physical nature, but some people put more of their physical selves into the practice.

We see a more physical practice of prayer in Jacob, Joshua, and several who fasted: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. While we may feel like we are wrestling in prayer, Jacob literally wrestled with

the Lord (Gen. 32:26–30). On the other hand, Joshua responded to the Lord with obedience, and only once do we hear a complaint from him (Joshua 7:7).

Many fast for personal breakthrough or the breaking of spiritual strongholds. Elmer Towns writes of many biblical reasons to fast, including freedom from addiction, to win others to Christ, and to seek protection from the evil one.¹ This physical expression prayerfully shifts our hearts, minds, and bodies from our own physical needs to a consciousness focused on Jesus.

Physical pray-ers might find any of the following are natural prayer styles: prayerwalking, dancing during worship, kneeling, fasting, and responding with acts of obedience. They may also be responsive to their five senses and intuitive prayer needs through what they see, hear, and otherwise experience.

Release from Guilt

Studying the different ways people in the Bible prayed has helped me find freedom to pray in the way that’s most natural for me and to help others release guilt so that they can discover their own praying style.

This will help them shift from having a *prayer* life to what my writer friend Jennifer Kennedy Dean used to say: a *praying* life—one that feels more like an all-day-long conversation with the Lord God, who, after all, started the conversation with His created ones. **PC**

¹Elmer Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough* (Ventura CA: Regal, 1996), 5–6.




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Contemplating Communion

The observance of the Lord's Supper is one of the few occasions when we as believers pray silently together. As we receive the bread and the cup, where should we direct our prayerful meditation? The Word of God urges us to use these moments:

- **to seriously consider our spiritual condition and our lives.** "Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup" (1 Cor. 11:28).

Are we living in fellowship with God and other people? Like a red flag or a stop sign, we're not to proceed before all is clear. Instead of feeling threatened by the checkpoint, we can welcome it as an opportunity to repent, realign with God, and know that all is well with our souls.

- **to think lovingly of Jesus.** "This cup is the new covenant . . . in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in [affectionate] remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:25, AMP).

Sometimes the chaos of life pushes Jesus to the back of our

minds. At the Lord's Table, we can contemplate a Savior who is "a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). We can tell Him how wonderful He is. We can look back to remember what amazing things He's done for us, then look ahead in expectation because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

- **to celebrate the gift of atonement.** "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:8–9).

Through the ages, Christian tradition has observed the Lord's Supper not only as a solemn remembrance of His death but also as an occasion of praise and thanksgiving. While we do enter into Christ's suffering, it is also appropriate to celebrate the "It is finished!" Redemption's plan is completed and what a difference it



has made in our lives!

- **to anticipate His return.** By our observance of Communion, we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Through Jesus' death we've been invited into God's eternal presence, and one great day, He will return for His own. "Maranatha," we can say to the Lord as His table, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20, NKJV).

By biblically centering our reflections and responses to God, we can come away from the Lord's Table rejoicing in our right standing with Him, filled with adoration for Jesus, celebrating our redemption, and looking forward to His coming again.

All in a few moments of silent prayer!

SANDY MAYLE is a frequent contributing writer to *Prayer Connect*.

When You Feel Helpless to Help

Standing at a nearby clothing rack, I wanted to intervene. But I knew I shouldn't. I sensed the Lord telling me this wasn't my time to step in.

This was the first time I felt distinctly powerless in the face of a need. As a young, single woman—no spouse, no children, few responsibilities—I had enough money to care for myself and

to share with others. On this day, I'd gone shopping at a local thrift store that sometimes offers unique finds. After all, I had cash to spare.

As I browsed, I noticed a man and pre-teen boy looking at shirts. The son held out a plain-looking pullover, pleading with his father to buy it.

"I just don't know what your mama

would say if we spent the money on it," the father answered sadly.

How much could it be? I wondered. The thrift store marked their wares at rock-bottom prices.

The boy quietly asked a few more times; the dad held the shirt in front of him, clearly wondering whether he should shell out money for it. Finally,

they hung the shirt on its rack and walked away.

I'd wanted to buy the shirt for that boy, who might have begun to care about how he looked to his peers at school. But I understood that in this instance, my intervention would instead be interference.

What to do instead? *Pray*. In response to circumstances in our own communities or those happening around the globe, sometimes prayer is the only—and best—means of intervening.

How do we pray in the face of situations where we feel powerless to make a difference?

1. Pray for God's good and perfect will to be done (Rom. 12:2).
2. Pray for the people involved to come to know Jesus (1 Tim. 2:4).
3. Pray for justice for those experi-

encing injustice due to war, wage theft, abuse, wrongful imprisonment, or other ordeals (Isa. 1:17).

4. Pray for God to meet needs (Phil. 4:19).
5. Pray for God to make us compassionate (Col. 3:12).
6. Pray for God to lead those in authority to pursue peace (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

God is at work around the world, in places both near and far. He desires us to be involved with Him in this work, too. And one significant means of doing that is through our prayers to the God who moves and acts according to His good purpose.

ALLISON WILSON LEE served with an interdenominational ministry and now homeschools her two teen sons and writes from central Florida.

How to Pray Your Emotions

Emotions are one of God's greatest gifts. At times, they may feel like enemies. Yet God wove them into each of us for many good reasons.

One of these is to focus your prayers so that they transform your life. To do this, follow a few simple steps:

STEP 1: *Tell God what you*

feel. To begin praying your emotions, be honest with God. Tell Him exactly how you're feeling. Filter nothing. Let it all out.

STEP 2: *Tell God why you feel that way.* As best you can, tell God the reasons, events, or beliefs behind your feelings. You might know immediately where they're coming from. If not, focus on them. Let yourself truly feel them. Then see what comes to mind. Often, that's the source.

STEP 3: *Ask God to help you in the midst of it.* When you pray, don't push your emotions away.

Don't try to find a neutral frame of mind. Feel your pain, even when you don't want to. Remember: "the Lord is near to the broken-hearted" (Ps. 34:18, ESV). Focus on the pain that breaks your heart. Then ask God for help. I promise you—when you hurt, He is near.

STEP 4: *Find something about God that applies to the situation—then pray it.* Pray God's own character and promises back to Him. God loves fulfilling His promises. You might say, "Jesus, You say that You will never leave us. Well, I need You here with me now. I need the peace of knowing You're here, and that You haven't given up on me."

Then breathe—and let God answer.

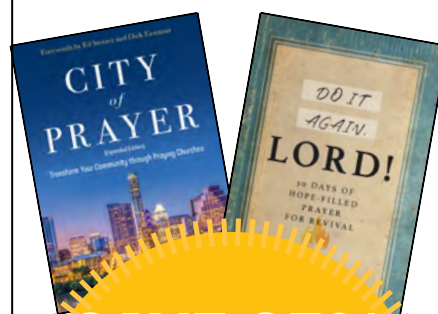
KYLE DAVISON BAIR is the founder of Swift Hope (swifthope.com). This is adapted from his book *Quick Help: Immediate Solutions for Life's Challenges*.

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Wanna Go Swimming? | By Gil Michel

As a pastor of an inner-city church—and one who has been involved with the ministry of prayer in the United States for the past 30 years—I have been both encouraged and discouraged by the range of engagement I’ve seen by the local church. Let me highlight a Scripture that serves as a backdrop to my observations.

In Ezekiel 47:1–12, we witness a scene where the prophet is viewing water coming out from under the threshold of the temple, particularly near the altar. He sees a man measuring every 1,000 cubits, and he is astounded by the increasing depth to the water. The Lord is so intent on Ezekiel understanding the progression that He asks, “Son of man, do you see this?” (vs. 6).

The Progression

The first stage of water is ankle-deep. This is the stage where many local churches may find themselves. They may not have an established prayer ministry and are elated if five people show up to pray for the needs of their congregation. After all, the experience of just getting wet is better than nothing.

The next level involves standing knee-deep in water. This can be a frustrating level because you don’t feel like you’re going very far in prayer. Perhaps a prayer rhythm hasn’t really been established—and consistency is not always reality.

The next stage involves finding oneself in waist-deep waters. This stage is pivotal because it can determine whether a prayer initiative is impactful or just full of activity. This is where staffing and scheduling becomes more involved, and the possibilities seem endless.

The final stage is described this way:

“... and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one *must* swim” (Ezek. 47:5, NKJV, emphasis mine). Oh, that we would enter realms of prayer that are too deep for us—rather than sticking with experiences we can control!

I believe we are in a season that calls for the Church to enter realms where we *must* swim. When the Church engages in this level of prayer, there are two very clear benefits.

The Benefits

The first benefit felt by this river of water is *fruitfulness*—a healing of the land, if you will. When the prophet returned and saw the effects of these waters, he realized a “great number of trees” had grown on the banks on either side of the river (vs. 7).

I understand that we don’t always see the immediate effects of our prayers. Not every meeting generates the results like Peter experienced when an angel released him from prison in real time (Acts 12:12–14):

When this had dawned on [Peter], he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

However, I believe that when we are given over to prayer and we relinquish full control to God, we enjoy a level of fruitfulness that just doesn’t happen otherwise.

Healing is the second benefit when we allow God’s waters to rise. The passage tells us in verse 8 (NKJV) that “when it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.” The far-reaching influence of the prayers of the saints have tremendous power.

We, as a Church, must give God free reign. We must relinquish control. It will mean the healing of nations, governments, families, and souls.

Abandoning ourselves to the ministry of prayer creates a groundswell so poignant that it heals whoever is in its path.

Desperate Need of Our Land

As I connect with intercessors and prayer ministry leaders, I see a rising tide emerging within the Church. People increasingly realize that we are thirsty, dry, and in need of Living Water.

In this Scripture passage, you would expect the deepest waters to be at the source. However, the waters got increasingly deeper as the prophet moved farther away from the altar (the place of intercession).

If we want to see change in the world of education, media, government, and other spheres of influence, then our humanistic approach of trying to change these centers will fall futile. We must swim in the source of the rivers that proceeds from the altar.

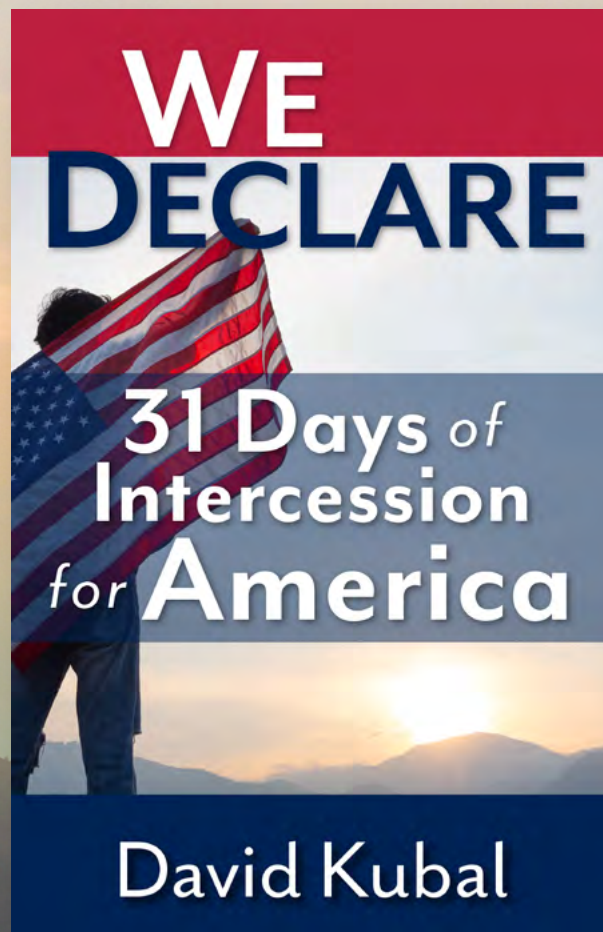
So, let’s pray. Put on your swimming gear and let’s swim in the ocean of God’s power to bring fruitfulness and healing to a desperately needy world. **PC**



GIL MICHEL is founding pastor of That Church Downtown, a multi-racial, inner-city church in South Bend, IN. OneCry (onecry.com) is nationwide call to prayer for revival and awakening.

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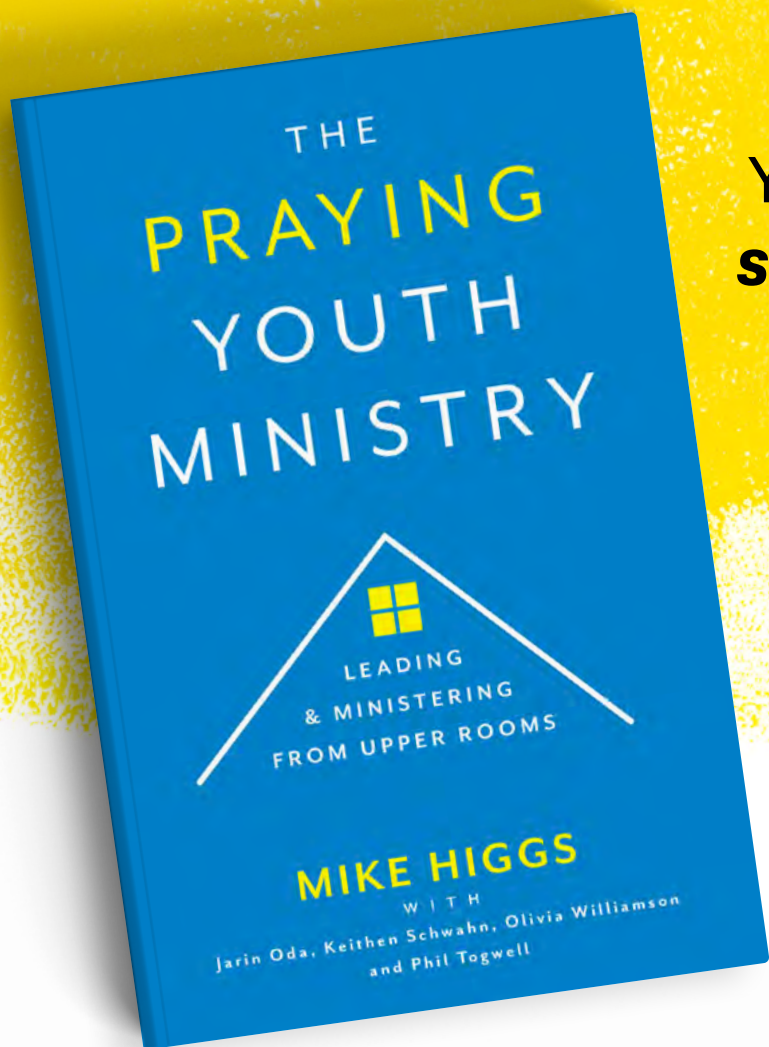
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