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The mission of **PRAYER CONNECT** is

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

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Strife among nations has always existed. And turmoil in our own nation is on the rise. How do we not lose hope and instead pray biblical prayers in troubling times? This issue and other back issues are available at prayershop.org.

Pound the Gates with Prayer

One reason many believers do not pray much is that they do not understand the Kingdom purpose of prayer. In His sovereign plan, God has chosen to work through the prayers of His people.

The apostle Paul tells us that “though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:3–4).

What is this primary warfare weapon? *Prayer!*

In Matthew 16, Jesus has a conversation with His disciples about who people say that He is. Then He asks the disciples the same question. When Simon (Peter) answers that He is the Christ, the Messiah, Jesus praises him:

“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [hell] will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:17–19).

When I was a kid, I thought these verses meant that when we become a believer we enter a war—the war of forces of hell vs. forces of heaven. Satan is going to attack us, but don’t worry, we win in the end. But I got those verses wrong.

Verse 18 talks about the *gates* of hell. Gates are a defensive weapon built to hold out an enemy. The verse is talking about us attacking Satan—primarily with prayer!

Every time we pray for a lost neighbor to come to Jesus, we pound those gates. Every time we pray for the transformation of our community, we pound those gates. Every time we pray for a marriage to be saved, we pound those gates.

As followers of Jesus, we are not meant to sit back at camp and stay out of the battle. We need to pray Kingdom-changing prayers over the situations and things around us. *All believers need to pound the gates of hell with prayer!*

Powerful Prayer Initiatives

Here are three powerful prayer initiatives with a Kingdom-changing outward focus:

- **Pray for Our Nation:** Use [*We Declare: 31 Days of Intercession for America*](#) by Dave Kubal and Intercessors for America. We recommend using this guide starting near July 4th or sometime prior to the November elections.
- **Pray for Schools and Kids in Your Community:** Use [*Reclaim a Generation Volume 2: 21 Days of Prayer for Schools*](#) as your children head back to school. Many churches and believers are praying through this together August 1–21.
- **Pray for Revival and Spiritual Awakening:** [*Do It Again, Lord! 30 Days of Hope-Filled Prayer for Revival*](#) is an excellent resource to get your people praying for revival in their hearts and for spiritual awakening in our nation.



—JONATHAN GRAF is president of [Church Prayer Leaders Network](#) and the publisher of [PrayerShop Publishing](#).

Blunt Honesty in Prayer: Psalm 69 | By Dana Olson

The blunt honesty of David in Psalm 69 has long ministered to my soul. It has freed me from the tendency to think that I need to dress up my prayers and make them pretty or nice—like a young girl dressing up her paper dolls. God’s shoulders are broad enough to carry any burden weighing me down.

Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in the miry depths,
where there is no foothold.
I have come into the deep waters;
the floods engulf me.
I am worn out calling for help;
my throat is parched.
My eyes fail,
looking for my God . . .
Those who hate me without reason
outnumber the hairs of my head;
many are my enemies without cause . . .
You, God, know my folly . . .
(Psalm 69:1–5).

Tell It to God

Do you feel like you’re sinking in the muck today? Are you drowning in an abundance of cares and concerns and corruption? Tell it to God!

Do you feel like God is silent in your hour of great need? Yes, sometimes when we long to hear the voice of God, His silence leaves us “waiting for my God.” Then, too, tell it to God!

Your boss’s demands leave you upset and disillusioned, ready to quit a job you desperately need. Your cancer has spread and you hear the medical staff speaking in hushed tones. Your toddler

is drawing on the walls or your teenager is suspended from school or your adult child has gone prodigal. You turn on the news and get the distinct impression that the world has gone mad and the nation is coming apart at the seams.

It’s no time for paper-doll, dressed-up prayers. It’s time to tell God like it is.

“Father, I feel like I’m drowning! I’m sinking in the muddy muck of life. I don’t know what else to do. Hear my cry. Please rescue me!” (paraphrased prayer from vv. 14–15).

What a relief to know our heavenly Father is not sitting in judgment over our prayers. He’s not scoring our prayers like ice skating judges at the Olympic games. He knows we don’t live a Ken and Barbie life in an earthly utopia.

God knows our hearts. Before we cry out, He is fully aware and already working. It’s true that His timing is not our timing; His agenda is more complete than ours. Nevertheless, we can cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

As we read on in Psalm 69, we hear echoes of the cross and Christ’s suffering. “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst” (v. 21). That’s helpful as well. Along with the psalm encouraging us to pray bluntly about the circumstances and situations that are troubling us, so also it points us to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died to pay for our sins and rose to give us the hope of eternal life.

This world is not our home. Those who are in Christ will see tribulation in the present but are buoyed up by the

promise of the Holy Spirit now—and then eternity with God. Our present heartaches will give way to hallelujahs at the throne of God. Present distress will turn to delight at the return of Christ. Forever beckons.

I will praise God’s name in song
and glorify him with thanksgiving
(v. 30.)
Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and all that move in
them,
for God will save Zion (vv.
34–35a).

To pray through Psalm 69 is to be guided by God’s Word into several different kinds of prayer:

- We *confess* to God the utter folly of our own sins.
- We tell God honestly that life is hard and recount the things troubling us. We *ask* for deliverance.
- We pray the gospel truth of Christ’s suffering, *thanking God* for the hope of the cross.
- We *praise* God that He reigns over all. We *exalt* His name and trust His timing. We sing!

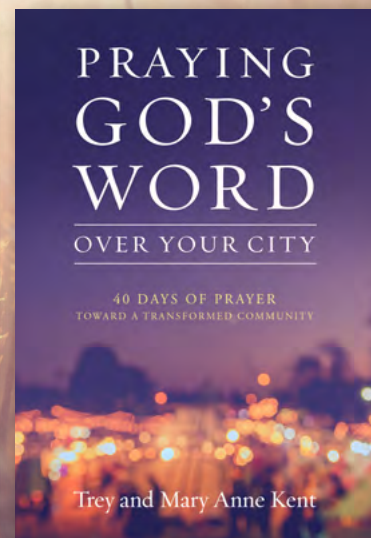
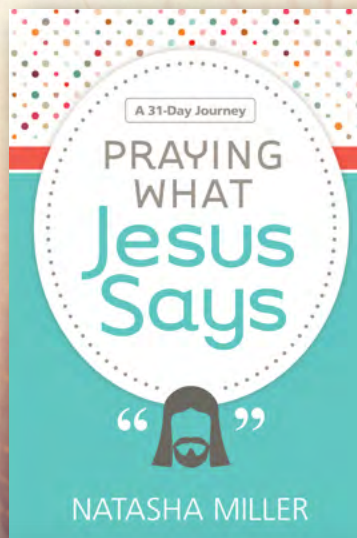
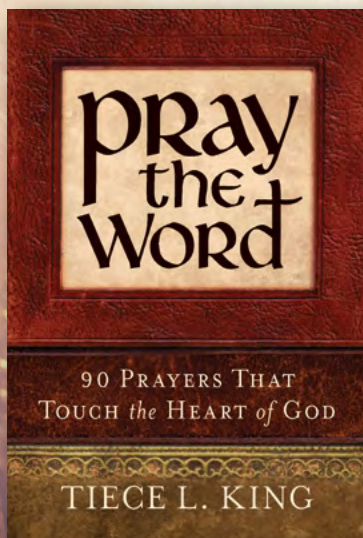
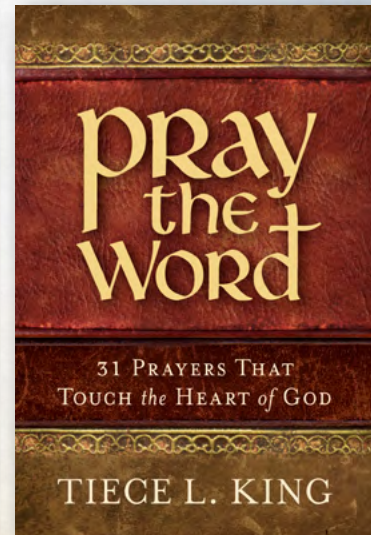
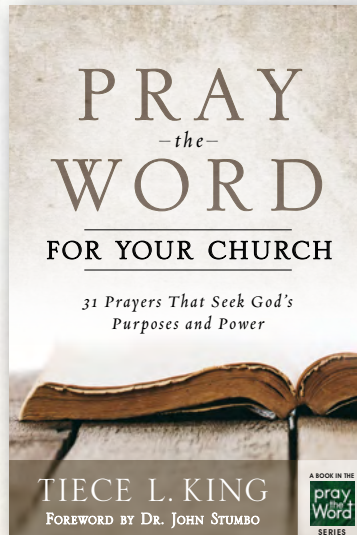
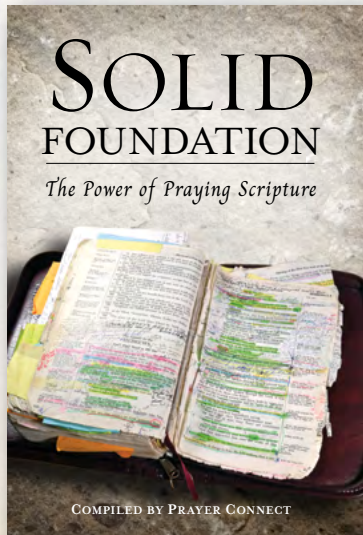
One beauty of the blunt honesty of Psalm 69 is this: as we put into words the hardest distresses of our life and tell Him bluntly what is burdening us, the very act of doing so reminds us to turn to the Source of deliverance, the Source of hope, the Source of everlasting life. **PO**



DANA OLSON, veteran pastor and prayer leader, is director of *Prayer First Heartland*, part of the Converge family of churches (convergeheartland.org).

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Biblical Ways to Pray for Leaders We Don't Like | By Gloria Robles

The Old and New Testaments provide many models of godly men and women praying during difficult times. Praying for leadership is no exception.

Here are tips on praying for leaders we disagree with—and even for leaders who are evil.

1. Pray *this way*. Paul tells us to pray for all in authority “so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity” (1 Tim. 2:1–4).

Paul taught Timothy to pray first for leaders. Who was the leader at this time? Nero, who is infamous for persecuting Christians and burning Rome, while blaming it on Christians. He executed family members, political enemies, Christians, innocents, and his mother. In some cases, he forced people to commit suicide. His personal sexual choices included incest, pedophilia, child sexual mutilation.

If Paul admonished Christ followers to pray for Nero, we too must pray for our leaders. So how do we do this?

2. Ask God for prayer direction. Paul's heart's desire was to see the Jewish people saved, forsake their own righteousness, and submit to God's righteousness in Christ (Rom. 10:1–4). His heart reflected the heart of God for people.

When Rees Howells led prayer in the famous prayer war room in Wales during World War II, God gave them clear prayer direction for Adolf Hitler. With confidence and assurance of God's will, they prayed, “Bend Hitler.”

Time and time again, Hitler made inexplicable strategic blunders. This was a direct answer to their God-given prayer. A word of caution, though, is necessary. Howells and his team prayed daily for hours. They did not rely on

their own understanding or judgments, but humbly sought the Lord.

3. Separate the policy from the person. Many will refuse to pray for officials they believe are evil or advocate for evil policies like abortion, gender confusion, mutilation, weak law enforcement, or others. Policies can certainly be evil, but we must remember the *true enemy of our soul* behind these policies and working in those who do not know Jesus (Eph. 6:12).

4. Headlines become prayer points. We all need God's help. Elected officials are no different. Many who do not know God may seek His help in times of desperation. When the media reports problems faced by elected officials, it's an opportunity for prayer (John 3:16–18). Pray for them and their families' personal needs. This could be the open door that will lead them to Christ.

5. Pray for removal of hardness of heart and spiritual blindness. Satan is at work to deceive “even the elect” (Matt. 24:24). It is clear that leaders who are not Christians will be blind to truth. Our intercession can incline leaders to godly actions whether they are godly or not. We pray for the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to shine on them (2 Cor. 4:4–6) and for the veil of darkness to be removed.

6. Pray that they will be drawn to repent. Romans 2:4 says that God's kindness leads us to repentance. One cannot truly repent unless the Spirit of God leads us to do so. It's an act of the grace of God. Pray that officials will be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth because it is God's desire that they should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Our prayers could influence their decisions for Christ.

7. Pray that evil will not prosper.

When evil legislation or policies are proposed, rather than praying against the legislators themselves, we can pray that the Lord will frustrate the entire process and the plans will not succeed (Ps. 33:10).

8. Pray for godly aides. Daniel is an excellent representation of a godly young person whose integrity influenced four kings of pagan nations. Pray for the men and women who influence our leaders to be people of integrity and bring wise counsel. Pray that they will be salt and light (Matt. 5:14–16).

9. Give thanks. You may wonder how to be thankful for elected officials who promote and protect evil. We find help in this verse: “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:18). We do not give thanks *for* evil, but we can give thanks in the midst of evil.

We understand that the Lord raises up leaders and removes them (Dan. 2:21). He uses leaders to serve His purposes. We may not always understand the purposes of God, but we can trust Him (Rom. 13:1–4).

Make an Impact

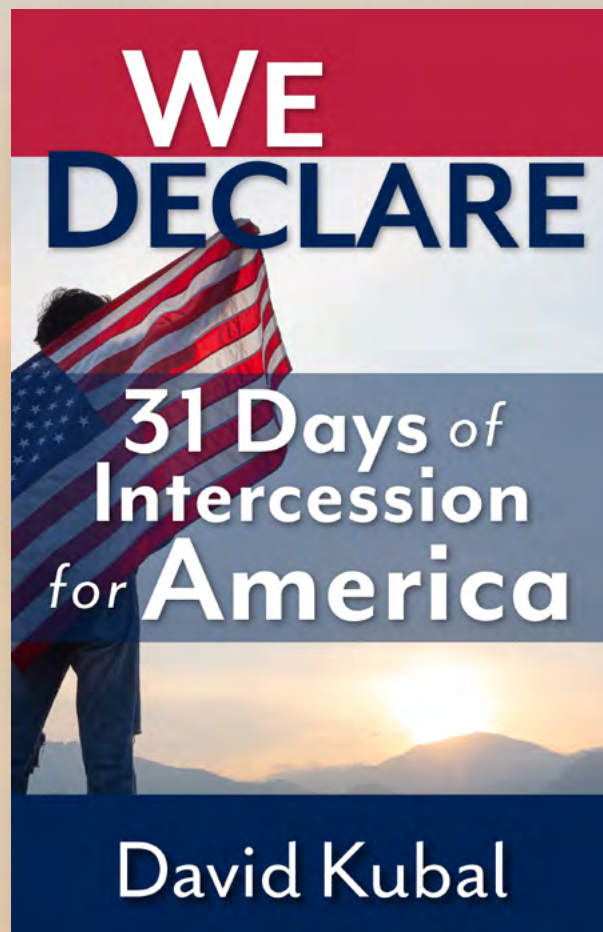
Don't doubt the impact of intercession. Remember, it's the fervent prayers that are effective (James 5:16). What if we fervently prayed for our elected officials, even the ones we don't approve of? Would it make a difference?

We can find out by praying for them and asking the Lord to do what only He can do. **PC**

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

AMERICA NEEDS PRAYER!

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the issues that face our nation.



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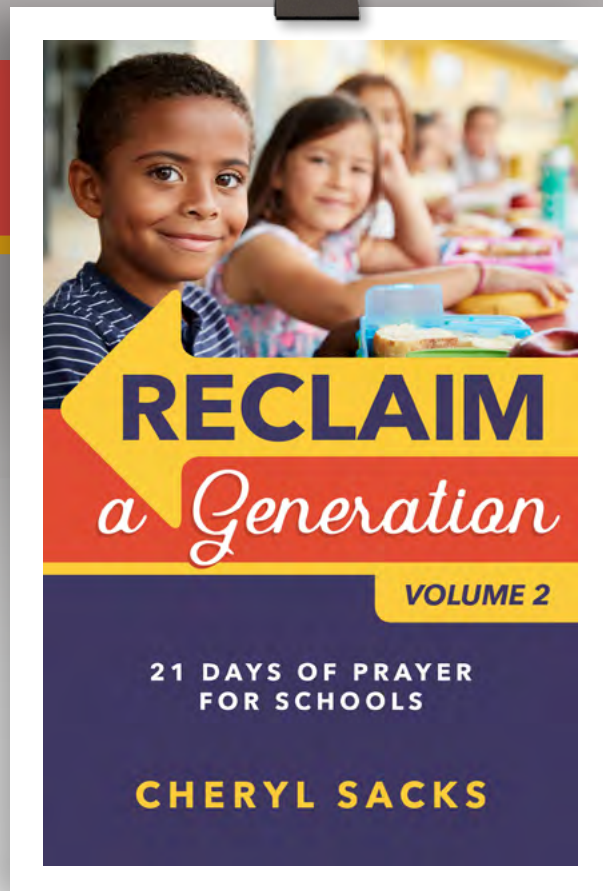
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THE SHAPING OF A NATION

Our God-Given Prayer Assignments

It was an accident. I did not intend to speak at our local school board meeting.

A friend asked if I would show up to pray while several parents planned to speak out against the sexually explicit materials available to children in the school resource center.

My friend directed me to a website where supposedly I needed to register my attendance. I was surprised a few hours later when I received a notice from the school board chairperson that I had mistakenly signed up to speak—and I was allotted just three minutes!

This was clearly not my sweet spot of public speaking. I had just a few hours to decide if I would bail or if I could put together a coherent message to the school board. I joked that God tricked me, but I managed to gather my thoughts about protecting the innocence of children and allowing parents to make critical decisions for those under their care.

It was challenging and a bit ugly. The room was packed and divided by opposing viewpoints. One man spoke with a voice dripping with hatred and threats as he called out those of us who spoke to the removal of materials—stating that we should be berated, shamed, and never

allowed to run for public office.

People from both sides showed up to subsequent meetings to hold the school board accountable for a decision. Eventually, the board decided to take away the voices of concerned parents. Only one school board member—a strong believer—stood with parents who desired to protect their children.

Time to Step Up

It was especially disheartening because parents who needed to speak for their children were either afraid or disengaged. Much of the Church failed to show up.

As the months dragged on, reality set in. This is a spiritual battle that goes beyond elections and public engagement—although both are critical. This is a battle for the souls of children and the next generation. Demonically inspired agendas are taking over our schools and our nation.


This is a battle that must be fought on a whole new level—strategic intercession with a warfare mindset. We have God-given prayer assignments to shape the direction of our schools, our cities, and our nation. It's a battlefield like none we've ever encountered—and it feels like it is the final hour to step up.

In This Issue

Dave Kubal writes about America's unique destiny and how God has given His Church divine authority to rule with Him and help direct the nations. We as citizens must be fervent in our prayers and discerning in our votes. We have an assignment to be relentless pray-ers.

According to Bunni Pounds, God's people are called to stand in the gap and intercede for our nation—for the upholding of Christ's righteous standards. She proposes a strategy of *pray*, *vote*, and *engage* to impact a nation.

As a pastor, Geoff Eckart tackles the challenge of leading a congregation to pray in unprecedented ways for unity in unprecedented division—even within the Church.

I thought I made a reasonable argument to the school board, but they couldn't hear it. My prayers have since expanded beyond protecting the children to the salvation of our leaders. Whether on a local level or in our national leadership, everyone needs to encounter Jesus. It's the way forward to shape our nation in God-honoring ways. 

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



A UNIQUE DESTINY

The Greatness of Christ's Government and Peace

THE PROPHET ISAIAH foretold the coming of a child—a son—and he declared that the government of all things would be upon the shoulders of this unique child, this son.

Isaiah also said that this son's government—his rule—would increase, and that it would keep right on increasing, without end. Not only that, but his government would also bring in universal peace, and this too would be without end (Isa. 9:6–7).

The Bible teaches that God is the Almighty Sovereign over all kings and all nations—for all time. His rule is all-encompassing, transcendent, and supreme.

But here's a surprise: He is also pleased to give His Church divine authority to rule along with Him—to help direct the nations in accordance with His will and as He pleases. He makes His chosen people co-regents in His peaceful worldwide rule.

BY DAVE KUBAL

Probably the most important way we're to be Christ's co-rulers and His joint-heirs of all things can be summed up in just one word: *prayer*.

That's right: ceaseless, fervent, faithful prayer—that's our chief means of exercising Christ's divine authority in the earth. Our calling as intercessors is paramount. And it's non-negotiable.

It's our divine calling and privilege to pray to the holy Sovereign of the universe for the prophesied increase of Christ's rule among all the nations, and for the spread of His peace, principally by means of advancing His gospel of salvation throughout the whole earth. This is our first responsibility as Christian believers.

GOD HAS BLESSED
AMERICA *in allowing us
to bless other nations by means
of our unique destiny.*

Fulfill or Forfeit

But, especially here in America, God has given us yet another means of exercising His dominion and authority in the governance of all things. This can be summed up in two words: *the vote*.

I really can't stress strongly enough the vital importance of those two things for us as Christian citizens and believers: to pray fervently and to vote wisely.

Let's look at these things a bit more closely. The increase of Christ's rule in the earth certainly has a personal or individual component. We see this in the worldwide advance of the gospel of His Kingdom—soul by soul, person by person.

Remember, this aspect of Christ's dominion began in the first century with just 120 believers in Jerusalem. Today, only 2,000 years later, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ number nearly 2.5 billion worldwide. That's what I call *increase!*

But the increase of Christ's rule also has a *civil* component. And that means nations.

Patrick Henry once said, "There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations."

Did you catch that? Entire *nations* have destinies, just as individuals do. That is both exhilarating and sobering: It tells us that we as a nation have a destiny before God that we can either *fulfill* or *forfeit*. This is an awesome responsibility.

Every nation is unique, and every national destiny is unique. And the most unique thing about America's destiny is *our system of government*, and that can be described in one word: *freedom*.

America's Unique Destiny

We Americans have cherished our freedom since the very founding of our republic in 1776. We thank God for our freedoms to speak and think and worship—and we thank Him for our freedom to choose our leaders by voting.

Maybe the very best thing we've been able to give the nations of the world is our model and example of a free and electoral system of government. Not quite 300 years ago, *not a single nation in the world* had any chance to participate in electing any of those in authority over them. But the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution helped us, by God's grace, to establish ourselves as the first nation to choose its leaders through a democratic process. And that initial model of freedom has been growing in the world ever since.

Today, in 2024, *more than 60 nations*—totaling nearly half the world's population—will hold elections to choose those who govern them. This represents more voters in total than ever before in history. It's extraordinary.

God has blessed America in allowing us to bless other nations by means of our unique destiny.

All of this brings us back to this: Our responsibility to exercise Christ's heavenly Kingdom authority, as His co-heirs and co-regents and also as citizens of the earthly kingdom, involves equally our prayers and our votes. We must be fervent and faithful with the first, and wise and prudent with the second.

God has ordained the Church to foster our spiritual lives, and He has ordained the government to administer our civil lives. The Church is not to seek to be a theocracy, and the government isn't charged with providing spiritual leadership to the people. There needn't be any kind of a "wall of separation between Church and state," as we often hear, but in Scripture God has instituted a clear distinction between the roles and functions of the two.

Still, it's clear that the Lord expects

government leaders to have integrity, to be worthy of respect, and to have a fear of God. The Church, for its part, is not to enforce law, but it is to inform morals and teach a proper understanding of civics.

Relentless Prayer

We are now entering an election season in our country that many are rightly calling unprecedented in its scope and significance. Politically, this country is vitriolic, divided, and polarized as never before. Corruption is rampant. Public trust is at an all-time low. We can't even trust the legitimacy of our own elections. And we can't trust the news media, either. In too many ways, our national security has been compromised, jeopardized, and imperiled.

Not only that, but powerful elites in our culture and government grow increasingly bent on silencing all non-establishment opinion and dissent, up to

and including the public expression of religious values and opinions—especially Christian ones.

This is quite a fall for the nation that was the first in the world to hold democratic elections and to have constitutionally established freedom of speech, of religion, and of the press.

So, what do we do?

We approach our voting and this election season in the power of relentless intercessory prayer. We dare not do any less. We must not waver. This is no time to quit praying. If anything, we'll have to press in all the harder—maybe harder than we ever have before. We'll have to pray and keep praying as if everything depends on it.

Because it does.

In Order to Thrive

Good government is essential, even vital,

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if any nation is to thrive. Even some reports from such decidedly not American or Christian entities as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank suggest that nations thrive when their governments focus on enforcing the rule of law, decreasing corruption, and ensuring trustworthy elections. These actions on the part of governments tend to produce citizens who are economically productive and live satisfied, peaceable lives.

Equally important, religious faith is imperative for a healthy society. One Pew Research study of 25 nations found that people who are actively religious as part of a faith community are about 50 percent more likely to describe themselves as fulfilled or even “very happy.”¹

In taking on our responsibilities as free citizens of what we’ve always known as a free nation, we need to

vote prudently and with all the wisdom that comes from God. We need to stay informed from trustworthy sources, and we must always vote our values—as formed by the Word of God.

Above all, we must vote with a heart that is after God’s own heart. That matters more than anything else.

Pray and Vote

Let’s remember: ours is a unique calling. We’re called to declare the greatness of the Kingdom of Christ and the increase of His government and His peace. We’re called to spread His dominion. We’re called to exercise His authority in all aspects of human life. And we’re called to pray for the establishment of His rule in all things.

And our nation still has a unique destiny—a destiny that has come direct from the Divine Sovereign Himself.

What if our prayers make the difference between forfeiting that destiny and fulfilling it?

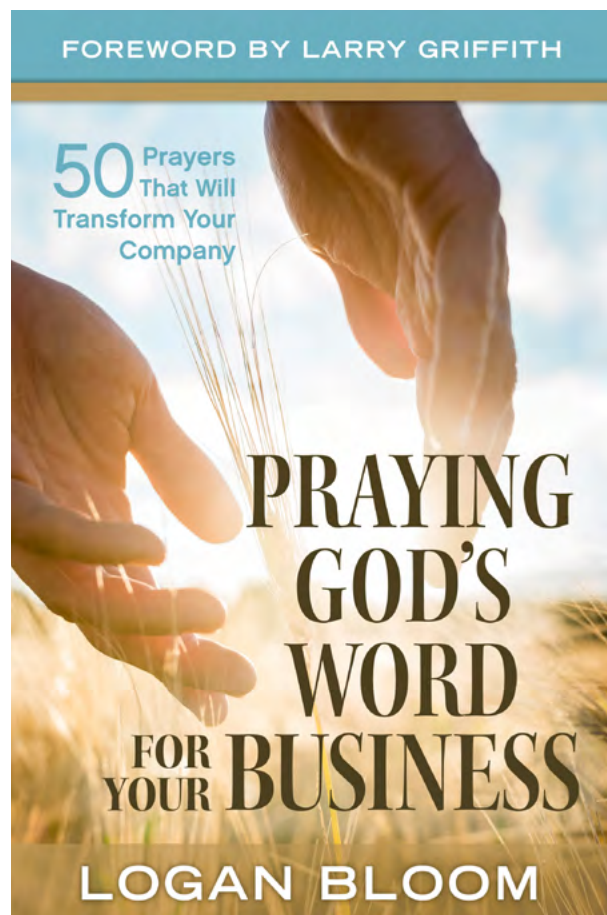
Vibrant church life and lawful civil government are both important, and both are necessary if America is to continue to thrive.

That’s the way we ought to pray and to vote going forward. **PC**

¹Pew Research, “Religion’s Relationship to Happiness, Civic Engagement and Health Around the World,” January 31, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/01/31/religions-relationship-to-happiness-civic-engagement-and-health-around-the-world/>.



DAVE KUBAL is CEO and president of Intercessors for America (ifapray.org). He also serves on the boards for America’s National Prayer Committee and the National Day of Prayer Task Force.



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LIFT UP A STANDARD

Pray for Those in Authority

LET'S BE REAL. We watch Fox News, NBC News, BlazeTV, and more—and yell at the television as our frustrations reach a boiling point. We see the injustices, the lawlessness, and the bankrupting of future generations. We know instinctively that both parties are to blame in some way. We shake our heads in anger and feel overwhelmed with the depth of our national problems.

Yet, we forget one powerful thing: as believers, we serve a Living God who sees what is going on

and knows what we are feeling.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear (Isa. 59:1, NKJV).

In the prophet Isaiah's day, the people of Israel were living with iniquities that separated them from God (Isa. 59:2). Their hands were defiled with blood, lies were spoken everywhere, and perversity

BY BUNNI POUNDS

WE ARE THE ONES *to carry the love of God and the presence of God to a hurting world.*

was rampant (v. 3). Truth was failing (v. 15).
Sound familiar?

So truth fails,
And he who departs from evil makes himself
a prey.
Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him
That there was no justice.
He saw that there was no man,
And wondered that there was no intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought salvation for
Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him
(Isa. 59:15–16, NKJV).

Isaiah also declares, “When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him” (vs. 19). When God couldn’t find anyone to stand in the gap and lift up this “standard” against the enemy (a wall of righteousness found in the foundations of Scripture), He sent His own Son to be the Redeemer (v. 20).

Jesus Became Intercession

Jesus Christ Himself became the intercessor who would lift up a standard for the purpose of redemption. When there was no justice, Jesus was justice. When there was no one righteous, Jesus was righteousness. When there was no salvation, Jesus was salvation. When there was no intercessor, Jesus became intercession for the people whom He loved.

In the same way, we are called to be intercessors for our nation in our generation. We are the ones to carry the love of God and the presence of God to a hurting world.

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like

Jesus (1 John 4:17).

So, the question is, how do we stand in the gap and intercede, specifically in the context of our nation—the United States of America?

Go Find the Awakening Church

In 2018, after 14 years as an activist, campaign manager, and political consultant for members of Congress and state clients, I ran for Congress. It was a race I never saw coming. I spent a million dollars, had more than a million dollars spent against me—and then lost. I was devastated.

I sat on my couch, exhausted, and opened my Bible as the Holy Spirit spoke to me out of Romans 13:11: “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep . . .” (NKJV).

Then I heard Him say to me clearly, “I am waking up My Church. Go find the awakening Church and give them the tools they need to engage for America.”

Though still in recovery from a brutal six-month political race, in the following months I wrote 20 pages worth of notes centered around these three words: *pray*, *vote*, and *engage*. I had written down plans on how to plug the body of Christ into habits of prayer, voting, and engagement for the well-being of America. A year later a new national ministry was born.

The roadmap to national impact goes like this:

- We pray for our nation and elected officials.
- We vote in every local, state, and national election.
- We engage our hearts in civic education or involvement for the well-being of our local communities and our nation.

Simple. But if we, as believers in Jesus Christ, can be consistent week after week, year after year with these three points, we can impact our nation for generations to come.

Pray for All Who Are in Authority

When the apostle Paul instructed Timothy to pray for all men, but specifically for “kings and all those in authority” (1 Tim. 2:2), it was not a peaceful time. They were dealing with a Roman empire that was hostile to the new Christians. The Roman leaders were much worse than American politicians through the years. And yet, the Church was still instructed to pray for them.

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions,

prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority . . . (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

First, God exhorted His people to talk to Him about the leaders of the day—to not just complain and revolt in anger, but to go to Him, understand His heart for the situation, and then partner with Him in the place of intercession. It was a massive shift, I am sure, for those young believers.

. . . that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (v. 2).

It was in their own interest that they pray for their authorities. Don’t we all want to lead “a quiet and peaceable life” and be left alone to worship God, to raise our children according to our beliefs,

and to provide for our families without chaos all around us?

This is good, and pleases God our Savior . . . (v. 3).

Praying for our leaders actually makes God happy. As believers, don’t we want to please God?

. . . who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (v. 4).

Ultimately, the reason we pray for our leaders and the reason we pray, vote, and engage is so that people can be saved and “come to a knowledge of the truth.” In the American context, if we don’t retain our freedoms or our economic stability in this nation, how will we be free to be share the gospel? Or how will we create the resources to send the gospel to the unreached people groups of the world?

God is not dependent on the United States to carry His good news across the earth, but this nation invests billions of dollars into non-profit groups each year, many of which are for the cause of world evangelization.

Let’s be honest, it is not easy to pray for our leaders, especially ones who stand antithetically against our biblical values. Do we really believe that God can reach them—either through saving them or accomplishing His will through them?

How to Impact America

Several months ago, I was on a national broadcast show that had a call-in segment at the end.

We received our first caller, and he was frustrated. “I’m not praying for the Schumers, Bidens, and Pelosis of the world.”

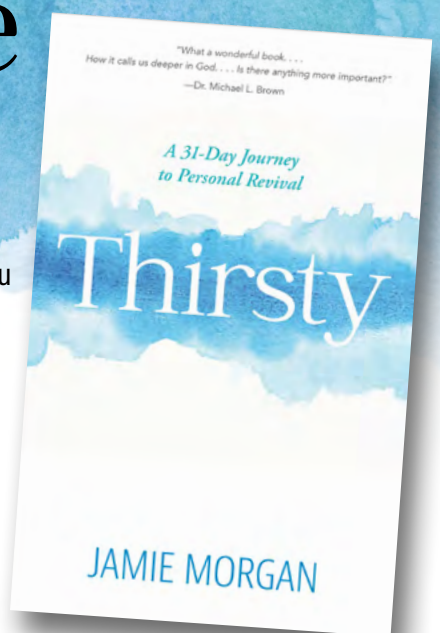
I started out my comments by referring to 1 Timothy 2:1–4. The host and I laid out the fact that Paul exhorts

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us in that passage to pray for all men and “kings” in authority, regardless of whether we think they are promoting good or evil. We paused and went to more callers, and then got another one who had a similar sentiment to the first.


At that point, I shared a story from my new book, *Jesus and Politics: One Woman's Walk with God in a Mudslinging Profession*—where I had to work through the pain of what I felt was “injustice” in my race for Congress. After I didn’t win, I found out that my opponent’s consultants had floated all his invoices during our Republican runoff and didn’t bill him until after he won. Even though I had outraised him by more than \$200,000, I still couldn’t win because of this unfortunate legal tactic. It felt to me like an unjust loophole.

To overcome my anger and bitterness, I had to confront it head-on more than a year later. I spent many hours that year in prayer for my former opponent and his family. Then I asked my now-member of Congress if I could host a fundraiser party for him to help pay off the rest of the debt he was still carrying from our race. That exercise of obedience—raising more than \$35,000 for his campaign as a volunteer and seeing him pay off the rest of that liability—set my heart free from bitterness.

This is what prayer does. When we release our burdens upon the strong arms of Jesus, this connection changes us. It truly makes a difference! As we pray, vote, and engage in obedience, God will impact America.

John 16:24 says, “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” And Proverbs 21:1 reminds us: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes” (NKJV).

Are we willing to become intercessors like Jesus, stepping up on behalf of our nation and laying down our lives in obedience to God? Every prayer that we speak is heard by God and every prayer, when we partner with Him for His will, impacts the hearts of men.

This is how we lift up a standard in our generation. 



BUNNI POUNDS is the president and founder of Christians Engaged, a ministry activating the body of Christ to pray, vote, and engage regularly (christiansengaged.org). She is also a motivational/gospel speaker and author.

Will God grant us one more nation-shaking, world-transforming move of His Spirit?

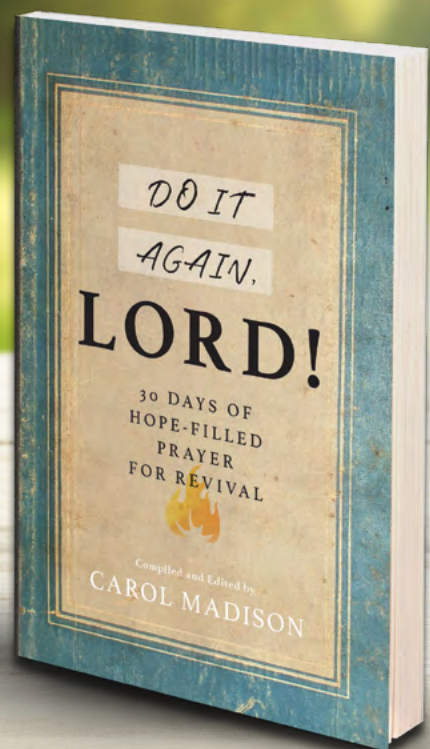
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WORDS, WHEAT, AND WEEDS

Praying and Leading in Divisive Times

MORE THAN ANY TIME in our lifetime, the Church in America is more divided than ever. The Super Bowl proved this.

This was the year Super Bowl advertisers tried to avoid airing a commercial that would be seen as controversial. And no commercial emerged as controversial—except one. One commercial stood out and broke that rule. And everyone was talking about it.

The *He Gets Us* campaign produced what is

known as the “Footwashing” commercial, designed to get people talking about Jesus. And it worked. People not only talked about this commercial, but they also debated it from every angle you could imagine.

The reaction was divided, but in a way you may not expect. People who don’t favor the Christian faith were against it. No surprise there. But while many Christians liked it, many were opposed to it. I’ll admit, the amount of negativity from Christians

BY GEOFF ECKART

towards this commercial surprised me. While some believers saw it as a great way of engaging in a cultural conversation about Jesus, other believers didn't see it as a good representation of their Christian faith.

A Different Approach

This split reaction within the Church is indicative of the hyper-polarization that exists between believers in America. My friend Will Ford says, "God will use a united church to reach a divided world."

I agree! Oh, that the Bride of Christ would be united in love and purpose.

In addition to an already divided atmosphere, we are also in a presidential election year. Many are bracing for the worst when it comes to debates online and disagreements

**BELIEVERS MUST
BE MINDFUL** *that the
world is listening to our words
about the Church.*

in our churches. In fact, one of my longtime online "friends" is permanently leaving all social media platforms to avoid these discussions altogether, solely because of the upcoming election.

Due to the "weather" surrounding the 2024 election and the "climate" of a longer-term cynicism enveloping our culture, a different approach is needed. What will unite us? Will marketing campaigns? Will social media strategies? Will events? Will theological agreements? Will strategic partnerships?

While all might help, they will fall woefully short. So, let me state the obvious.

Prayer Unites

Prayer is our best and most effective strategy to unite the Church. Here are three ways to pray and lead within your church in a divisive time:

1. Lift Up the Church to Others with Your Words.

If you're reading this, you have a platform. Use it for building up the Church, not tearing her down. There's no room for publicly criticizing the Church. Even with all of her (our) faults, she is still the Bride of Christ and the primary way God has chosen to show His love to the world.

Imagine saying to a friend of yours who is married, "I just posted on social media all the things I don't like about your wife because the world needs to know."

I don't think that would bode well for the future of that friendship!

Remember the words of Jesus in John 17:20–23, where Jesus reveals His heart for the unity of His Bride:

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Believers must be mindful that the world is listening to our words about the Church. Before every spoken or published word about the Church, we must carefully weigh the reality that those outside of faith are being influenced by what we are saying.

2. Lift Up the Church to God with Your Prayers.

I've lived in Grand Rapids, MI, for the last 25 years. Living in West Michigan, I've become accustomed to the non-collaborative ministry environment that exists there. God recently reminded me that although in the past and

present this has been our “normal,” I should not settle for it staying that way in the future. And I’ve been personally praying for the people of God in West Michigan to unite in new and unprecedented ways.

Do you pray for unity in the Church locally, regionally, and nationally?

Praying for unity is needed now more than ever. As intercessors, we must continue to keep this prayer for unity at the forefront of our hearts as we lift up prayers for the saints.

The greater the unity, the more effective the Church.

3. Work with the Wheat, Not the Weeds.

In Matthew 13:24–30, Jesus tells a parable about wheat and weeds.

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is

like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

“An enemy did this,” he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

“No,” he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Workers discover weeds in their master’s crop and offer to remove them. But the master says no—that they should wait until the harvest. At that time, the weeds will be separated out. This story has a simple yet startlingly profound conclusion: *Don’t spend your energy on the weeds, but rather on the wheat.*

As I’ve pondered this parable, the ramifications of its message seem revolutionary. What if we stopped focusing on what is wrong and instead put our efforts towards the good that God is growing?

An entire genre of ministry has emerged in the digital age that focuses on scandals and wrongdoings—the weeds—in the Church. Popular podcasts and YouTube channels are dedicated to pointing out faults in people’s teachings or how others are doing ministry “wrong” by their standards. Lots of people in the Church are basing their ministry on negativity towards others.

When it comes to leading in a divisive time, the question is this: Is our time better spent on weeds or wheat?

Unprecedented Times

I have hope for new wineskins of unity in the Church. I join the prayer and heart of Jesus for the Bride of Christ to find a unity we’ve never known.

In a time of unprecedented division, we must pray in unprecedented ways for unity in the Body of Christ. **PC**

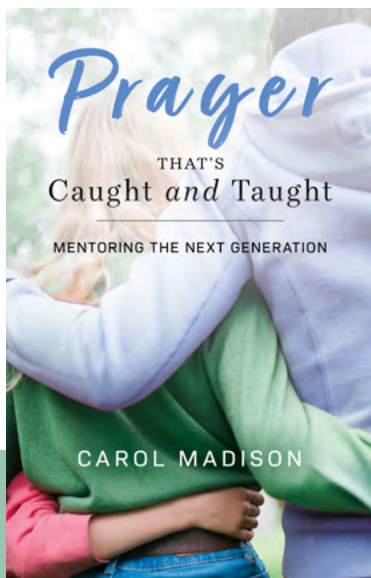


GEOFF ECKART is chairman of America’s National Prayer Committee and lead pastor of Daybreak Church, Grand Rapids, MI. He is also founder of Never the Same (neverthesame.org), a national youth ministry.

For further Bible study on this theme, check out a Bible study written by Cynthia Hyle Bezek. You may also access the study at <https://prayerleader.com/issue-57-study-guide>. This is great for personal study or discussion with your small group.

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BIBLE STUDY

Our God-Given Prayer Assignments

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

People in Bible times didn't have the privilege of praying about elections—citizens don't get to choose their king or emperor, after all. Even today, out of 196 countries in the world, more than 80 are considered “non-democratic.” Voting isn't—and never has never been—an inalienable right for God's people.

But for those of us who live in America, it *is* a right, a responsibility, even. But it's not necessarily easy to discern how to use that right. In the not-too-distant past, many Christians voted largely according to political party lines. They trusted their party to put forth candidates who, for the most part, would uphold their Christian values—even if those candidates weren't professing followers of Christ.

That's not necessarily true anymore.

A recent study of American voters showed that a full one-third feel alienated by their political parties. The candidates running on the major party tickets often display glaring character flaws. Furthermore, the values they stand for are often ambiguous at best.

And yet, as people who care about those who lead our country, and who believe that our one little vote really does make a difference, the burden of discernment can be overwhelming. And the temptation to fear-driven arguing and divisiveness is real. Think of the recent polarization that took place in American churches over COVID-19, to give just one potent example.

So, what does God's Word say to us in confusing times like these? Psalm 37 is a great place to spend some time in deep contemplation. Its message is timeless, offering hope and a path to peace, even in the midst of troubled times.

Discussion Questions

Preparation: Print out Psalm 37 in your preferred Bible translation. If you are doing this study with a group, print out copies of the text for everyone. Provide or have everyone bring colored pencils or pens for the study activity.

At the start of your time together, read the psalm out loud. You can read in unison or go around the circle, taking turns reading verses. After you've read together, dive into the study.

1. Look at Psalm 37:1–9. In red on your printout, underline everything you can find that God's people are *not* to do when all around them seems to be evil. Write below one thing from what you underlined that you are sometimes tempted to do.

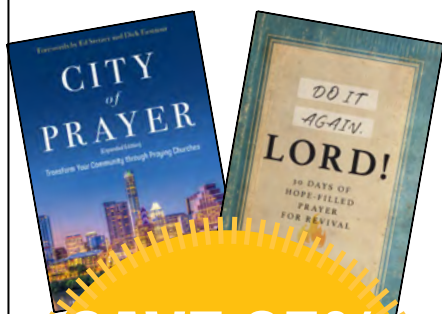
Look at verses 1–9 again. In green, circle everything God's people *are* to do in evil times. Which list is longer, the “do” or the “not do” list? What does that suggest to you?

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Of the things that God tells us to do in evil times, which one seems most challenging or important to you personally? Why?

2. Now look at the entire psalm again. On your marked-up copy, make a blue box around everything in this psalm that God promises to His people who hope in Him. Keep in mind that these promises were made to Israel, so some may not specifically apply to us today. But many still do. Which of these general promises offer inspiration for your prayers? Write the verse numbers here: _____, Now, choose one to use as the basis for a short prayer and write it on the lines provided.

3. Scan the psalm again, especially focusing on verses 21–40. What kinds of actions mark God's people? Using pink or orange, mark them on your printout with a double underline. Choose the one(s) that you wish more Christians, yourself included, were more known for doing.

4. Verse 40 says that the Lord helps and delivers the righteous because they take refuge in Him. What do people, even Christians, sometimes take refuge in other than or in addition to the Lord?

Action Steps

1. Has this study convicted you of any attitude or action that you need to confess to the Lord and turn from? Make a note here of what that is, then spend some time talking to God about it.

2. As you studied Psalm 37, did you sense the Holy Spirit inviting you to be more intentional concerning an attitude or action He might want to help you display more clearly in your life? Note what that is, specifically, and any first steps you could take.

3. Look again at the promises you identified in question 3. Find another one or two you could base prayers from. Incorporate all these new Scripture-based prayers into your regular prayer times, both personally and corporately. **PC**

CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK serves on her church prayer team and is director of curriculum for Community Bible Study (communitybiblestudy.org). She has authored several Bible studies on prayer, including *Knowing the God You Pray To* and *Prayer and the Word of God*, available from prayershop.org.



Dare to Believe the Truth

The Lies Corrupting Our Prayers

The lies we believe about prayer make it far more challenging than it should be.

Prayer should be the easiest experience for any Christian to delve into. Prayer is communication, talking with our heavenly Father. It should be as easy as a child talking to a loving parent.

Yet, the lies we believe corrupt our perception of prayer until it feels difficult, confusing, powerless, or empty. We don't try to believe lies. But over the centuries, a myriad of false ideas have crept into Christianity from cultures and other religions, until our experience with prayer feels rote, boring, or worthless.

Let's uncover a few of these lies and peel them away from prayer, leaving the actual, joyous experience of true prayer shining brighter and clearer.

By Kyle Davison Bair

Lie #1: "I need a mountain of faith to move a mustard seed."


Most of us know Jesus' words:

"Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20).

We know the words—but believe the opposite. We believe that we need to muster up as much faith as we possibly can to accomplish even the smallest answered prayer.

If we truly believed that a mustard seed of faith—the smallest possible amount—can move mountains, then we would never stop moving mountains. We would hunt them down, ready to send them running into the sea.

You might not have a lot of faith that God can heal this cancer, or provide for this need, or save this loved one. You might not have a lot of faith, but you probably have a little. God's Word says if



If we can set aside the lies and genuinely believe Jesus, then we will destroy mountains left and right.

you have any faith whatsoever you can still command that mountain to move, and it will obey you. With the smallest possible faith, “Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Why don’t we believe this? Often, pride gets in the way. We might not like that we contribute so little to the outcome. Other times, we want an excuse for failure: if it didn’t work, it’s because I didn’t have enough faith. At other times, we find ourselves so conditioned by our society of condemnation and cancellation that we can’t accept Jesus’ words of pure grace. Our salvation is by grace through faith, not because of works. So are the answers to our prayers.

If we can set aside the lies and genuinely believe Jesus, then we will destroy mountains left and right.

Lie #2: “I have to convince God to care”

Often in prayer, we try to convince God of the merits of our case. We tell Him why it’s important to get the answer we want. We bargain, offering Him anything we can think of in exchange for an answer. We plead and explain and try to manipulate, doing whatever we can to get God to care enough to answer.

We know the words: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). We know them—but we don’t dare believe them.

If we believed that God cared, our prayers would look different. We wouldn’t try to make God care. We would trust that He already does. We would know His character summed up in this short declaration: “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear” (Isa. 65:24).

If we believed God cared this deeply, our prayers would be comforting, not exhausting. We would collapse into the arms of our Father who loves us, confident in His concern, assured that He knows best how to handle the situation. We could pray boldly, passionately, and power-

fully, without defaulting to praying manipulatively or desperately.

Why don’t we pray this way? Often, we tend to see God as we see people. If we feel like we must twist people’s arms to get them to do anything, we can default to seeing God in the same way.

At other times, we let culture, experience, and human teachers shape our view of God. Our modern world bombards us with flashy videos, blogs, and memes purporting to tell us about God. Yet, they can never portray Him as clearly as He revealed Himself in His Word.

God demonstrated the depths of His compassion for us by dying in our place on the cross. If Jesus cares about us so completely that He died *our death* to save us, how will He not also care about all the other things that are important to us?

If we believed the depths of His concern for us, we would never hesitate to run into His arms and unload everything wearing us down.

Lie #3: “If I am feeling sinful, I shouldn’t expect anything in prayer.”

We really, really like the lie that our behavior affects God’s ability to answer our prayers. We like to believe that if we’ve lived a great day full of obedience to God, then He will be delighted to answer our prayers. How could He not? We were so good today!

But on the days when we fail, we believe God won’t answer our prayers anyway, so why bother? Try harder, be better, and when we’ve cleaned ourselves up, maybe then God will answer.

God knew how pervasive this lie would become. He addressed it at the beginning, in the life of Abraham.

When Abraham lied about his wife Sarah, claiming she was his sister, Abraham got caught. Abimelek, the king whom Abraham deceived, brought Abraham into his court to confront him and accuse him of his lies. Abraham stood guilty. He had no defense. Because of his lies, a plague had infected Abimelek’s entire household.

Yet God had told Abimelek: “Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will

pray for you and you will live” (Gen. 20:7).

Abraham was sinful. He stood exposed in sin, confronting a room full of sick people, all of whom suffered because of his lies.

But Abraham prayed. Even in his sinful condemnation, God answered: “Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again” (Gen. 20:17).

Abraham had no time to get clean. He had no chance to fast for a week and devote himself to spiritual disciplines. In the same court where his sin was exposed minutes before, Abraham prayed—and God answered.

Why was God so gracious? Why did God answer when Abraham was so sinful? Why is God so good?

Because this is who God is. Our sins don’t change His nature. God is equally as good when we’re sinful as He is when we’re righteous.

If we really believed that God is always good, we would pray to Him in every circumstance, without ceasing.

When people believe a certain ritual is good luck, they do it all the time. When people believe a hobby is good fun, they do it all the time.

When we believe that God is a good Father, we will run to Him all the time.

Lie #4: “My prayers aren’t doing anything.”

Even when we think God might be good at answering other people’s prayers, we can believe the lie that He won’t be as good at answering ours. But we can prove this lie false by ourselves.

Grab a prayer journal or start a note on your phone. Record everything you’re praying for. Pray for the requests often, if not multiple times daily. Track every bit of progress and every answer.

In a short time, you’ll build up

solid list of answered prayers. You won’t merely see that prayers get answered. You’ll experience God answering your prayers. You won’t merely be looking at an answered prayer. You’ll have the memories of all your prayers informing each answer, showing you that God answered when you asked.

Some prayers are better answered sooner, and others later. Pray for a diverse list of requests to make sure you always have several whose answers are actively popping up. Use their answers to encourage you as you continue to pray for those answers yet to appear.

If you still doubt that God could be this good, then make it one of your prayers. Pray daily to see God as He really is. Pray daily to trust in His goodness. Pray daily that God will expose anything in your life that is keeping you from Him, and then remove it when exposed. Make sure these prayers are on your list, and

record everything God exposes, every time you see His goodness, every time you see God more clearly.

Genuinely Believe

Your prayer life will be emboldened when you realize how much your prayers are actually accomplishing.

As long as we live in a fallen world, we will encounter lies threatening to corrupt our views on prayer. But the closer we draw to Jesus and the more we genuinely believe what He says about prayer, the more powerful our prayer lives will become. **PC**



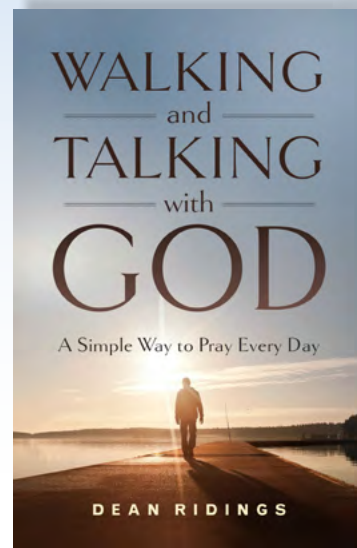
KYLE DAVISON BAIR is co-founder and president of Swift Hope, a prayer-based ministry that encourages healthy leadership. He is also the author of three books that can be

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“Cast All My Cares” List

As a mom of four young adults, I have had years of practice worrying. As the “kids” grow older, my worries just change. Instead of spelling tests and school bullies, my concerns have changed to college decisions, prospective jobs, friendships, and relationships.

And even though I know that logically my worrying in no way helps them or me or anyone, I still naturally lean toward excessive daily worry—even though I know what 1 Peter 5:7 exhorts me to do: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

In a notebook, I have started a “Cast all my Cares” list where I write to God, listing out my concerns and asking Him to take my worries and burdens from my current situations and handle them in the way He knows will work out right. I start out each page with: *Dear Lord, please bless these situations today and help me to know You have it under control.*

I write about my daughter’s long-distance solo trips that she has planned and her desires to be out on her own “adulting.” I write about two of my sons’ upcoming weddings and their jobs and locations and where they will land. I write about direction and friendships and decisions for my son in college.

I write about my husband and me in our new roles as observers and pray-ers in our kids’ lives instead of car-seat bucklers and sports shuttlers. I hand over all our family’s health and faith and relationships and safety. Some days, I go into deep specifics like weekend plans or the broken dryer. I just write about whatever is weighing heavily on my heart at the time—any weight that God can relieve from my shoulders.

“Handing over” my fears to God doesn’t cancel them out instantly, but it helps me to remember that all of my worrying and angst won’t accomplish anything. Only partnering with God



and asking Him for guidance will be my relief. It helps me to refocus my energy on trusting God. He knows the plan. It’s okay if I don’t. As long as we know God, ultimately all will be well.

I’m sure I’m not the only mom (or wife or sister or friend) who holds onto unnecessary worry. Everyone can benefit from sharing their burdens with God in prayer. He wants us to lean on Him. He wants to hold our hands and guide us through.

We just have to decide to let Him.

JESSE NEVE is an author from Minnesota who writes for family publications.

Sight-Impaired Mole Prayers

While prayerwalking one day, it came to me (not for the first time): *I’m praying mole prayers.*

Moles are dim-sighted little creatures that live underground and dig surface tunnels for fair-weather foraging and deeper tunnels for cold or dry seasons.

Like them, I can’t “see” when I’m praying for grandchildren home alone on summer weekdays. For my son hiking that 70-mile trail, that he’ll be safe and

drink enough fluids. For my husband and me, that we’ll stay healthy and able to enjoy retirement.

Those are, in mole terms, my surface tunnels, with direction and results somewhat visible. But I’ve also constructed deeper tunnels—years of sight-impaired intercession for prodigals to find Jesus as Savior and then make Him their Lord. For healing between family members. For forgiveness, long withheld, to be extended. For



the effects of divorce to be mitigated in our grandchildren.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit joins me, praying keen-eyed and God-aligned: “We do not know what we ought to

pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans . . . in accordance with the will of God” (Rom. 8:26–27).

Beyond inability to see well, moles and prayers are alike in other ways:

- Both are *largely hidden*. The mole spends most of his life underground. Jesus taught of personal prayer, “When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen” (Matt. 6:6).
- Both are *intentional*. Like the torpedo-shaped moles, faith-filled prayers are streamlined and deliberate. “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).
- Both are *persistent*. Moles and prayer are active day and night and do not hibernate. When con-

ditions grow cold or dry, they just dig deeper. “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1).

- Both have *enemies*. The moles’ enemies have pulled out the stops with remedies, from flooding their holes to using pickle juice or unleashing attack ferrets! Likewise, Satan schemes against prayer, the world distracts, and the flesh protests. But Paul urged those engaged in spiritual battle to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Eph. 6:18).
- Both have *worth* (although prayer’s value easily surpasses that of moles!). It’s said that the mole’s digging improves drainage, benefits plants, and reduces flooding.

Through our prayers, God redirects lives, heals families, and redeems failures. Our Father saves those treasured prayers in “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people” (Rev. 5:8).

Mole prayers, then, are Spirit-aided, Satan-resistant, and very effective. And if we don’t have a ton of these zipping about the lawn of our world—digging prayer tunnels and raising prayer hills—we and ours are poorer for it.

So, pray those blind but persistent prayers today with confidence that the Holy Spirit is joining you. Send them off and watch them go—your little underground torpedoes speeding, all unseen, to the Father.

Mole prayers.

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

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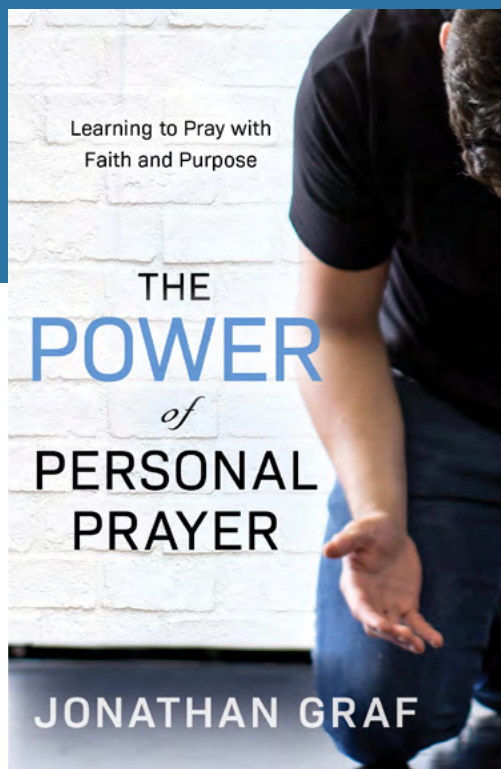
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Break the Silence! | By Byron Paulus

We can no longer afford to play “The Quiet Game.” Parents have been playing this game for generations. When things get too boisterous, they challenge their children to see who can go the longest without making noise.

For some reason, kids love the challenge. But for Mom or Dad, the quiet feels a little cheap. They know that instead of dealing with the root issues of their children being out of control, they have simply diverted their attention.

The diversion trick may work with small children, but not with a big God. In fact, there are times when He expects us as His children to refuse to be hushed by the world’s tactics that keep us quiet and on the sidelines about the spiritual emergency in our nation.

Where Are the Voices?

Where are the prophets who will not be silent? Where are the John the Baptists who willingly declare with every last ounce of courage that there is no hope without turning back to God in humble repentance (Luke 3:1–20)?

Where are the Isaiahs who willingly exclaim, “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch” (Isa. 62:1)?

Where are the Jeremiahs with strong tears of lament: “Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent. For I have heard the sound of the trumpet; I have heard the battle cry” (Jer. 4:19)?

Where are the voices and leaders like

Peter who, in the mist of confusion and chaos, are willing to stand up and speak out to bring clarity, context, and community during an outpouring of God’s Spirit (Acts 2:14–36)?

Throughout history, when it seemed everything was about to come crashing down, God would begin to stir hearts and raise up voices. They became heralds to prepare the way for a great work of God.

Pursuing Spiritual War

When our nation’s founders decided to convey America’s independence publicly and formally, they used the term *Declaration*, signifying that the days of debate were over. Urgent times required a commitment to be made, a cause to be embraced, a price to be paid.

But it was the First Great Awakening that provided the force of character and hotness of heart that undergirded the beginnings of America’s government and laid the foundation for what would become the greatest gospel-preaching, missionary-sending, social-caring nation in all of history.

Frelinghuysen, Whitefield, Edwards, Tennent, Brainerd, and other leading ministers of the Awakening were not waging physical and political wars as much as they were spiritual wars. They, like godly leaders throughout history, paid a high price fighting against the enemy for the souls of men.

They put their physical well-being, reputation, comfort, and convenience on the line. As citizens of another Kingdom, they sacrificed family time, vocational pursuits, and personal pleasure to fight for something of even greater value than a sound government—the knowledge of the glory of the LORD covering the earth

as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14).

They understood that being a revivalist was more important to God than being a survivalist. No one understood this more than noted martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he exclaimed, “We will not and must not be either outraged critics or opportunists, but must take our share of responsibility for the molding of history in every situation and at every moment, whether we are the victors or the vanquished.”

Nothing Else Matters

During the weeks ahead, it is prime time to let the world around you know that while electing the right leader is important, turning to God is even more important. Calling out to Him is truly the *one cry* that can make a difference.

Several years ago, two Christian leaders met privately in the Oval Office to discuss the rapid moral decline taking place in our nation. Unexpectedly, the president extended the meeting by 45 minutes. As they were leaving the meeting, one leader turned to the other and hopelessly stated, “If we do not have revival, nothing else really matters.”

The other leader wisely and enthusiastically replied, “And *if we do have revival*, nothing else really matters!”

During these days of unprecedented darkness, division, and distress, we must not only declare there is no hope apart from revival, but that *there is no hope like revival!* **PC**

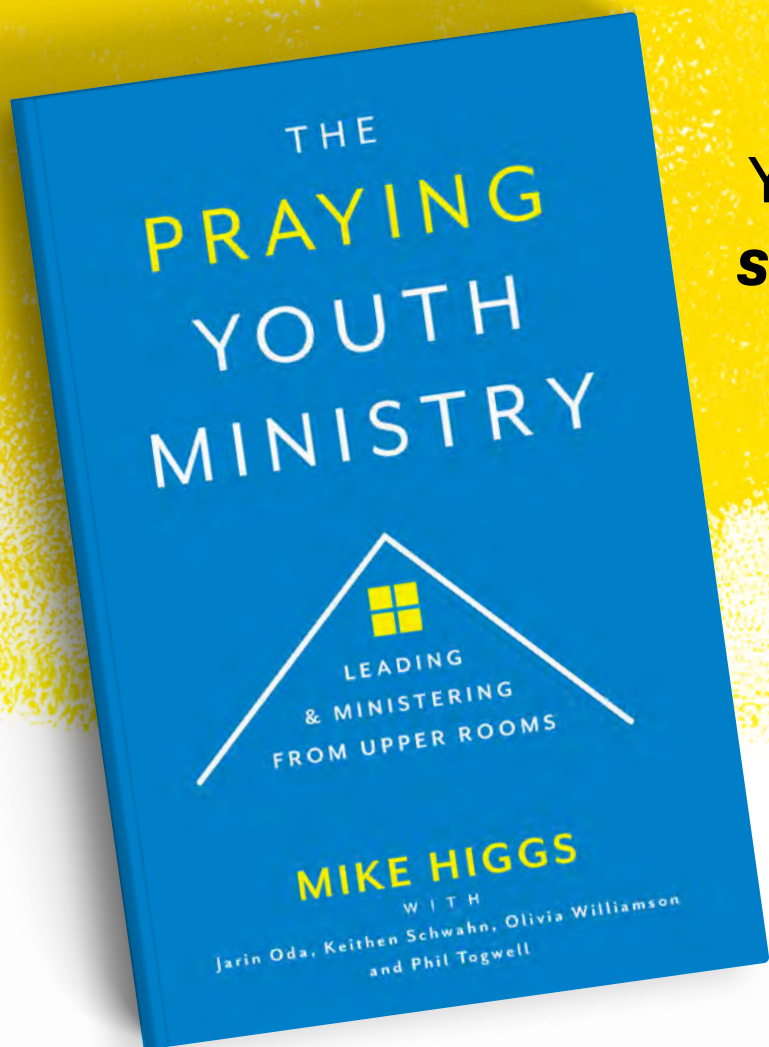


BYRON PAULUS is the founder and president of OneCry, a nationwide call for revival and spiritual awakening (onecry.com).

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