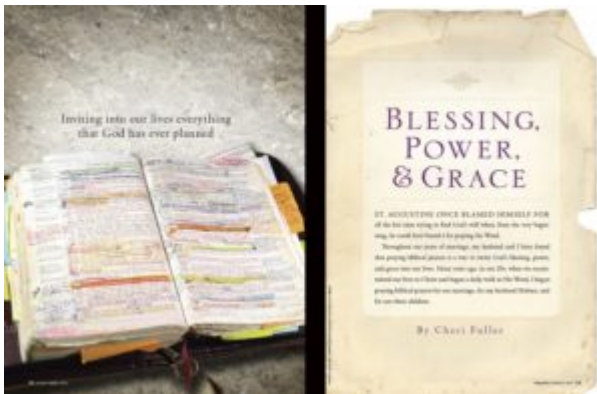


Blessing, Power, and Grace

Inviting into Our Lives Everything that God Has Ever Planned

By Cheri Fuller



St. Augustine once blamed himself for all the lost time trying to find God's will when, from the very beginning, he could have found it by praying the Word.

Throughout our years of marriage, my husband and I have found that praying biblical prayers is a way to invite God's blessing, power, and grace into our lives. Many years ago, in our 20s, when we recommitted our lives to Christ and began a daily walk in His Word, I began praying biblical prayers for our marriage, for my husband Holmes, and for our three children.

Daily as I would read the Bible, I'd notice a special verse and I'd put a date by it—"For Holmes 5/88" or "For our marriage, 10/95." Then I'd write the verse on my current index prayer card or in a journal and pray it, often many times.

One of the first passages God led me to—as if He took a big highlighter and said, "This is what I want for Holmes"—was Psalm 1. So I wrote his name by it, and over the years I have prayed it scores of times for him: "Lord, may Holmes be a man

who delights in your Word and meditates on it day and night—so he will be like a tree planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit in every season of his life. May his leaves never wither, and may he prosper in all he does” (see vs. 1-3).

A few years later, in a search at the library to find the meaning of his name, I discovered Holmes means “from the river” or “with roots going into the river.” I didn’t know this at the time I began praying Psalm 1, but God knew my husband was going to go through very trying times in his business life—and He wanted his roots to sink deep into the soil of Christ’s love, feed on the truth of Scripture, and drink from the River of Life. When Holmes later suffered through several years of serious depression and seasons of financial drought as a builder, I continued to pray these verses for him. I’ve seen the fruits of those prayers and God’s faithfulness.

God Knows Our Children

God can show us how to target our children’s needs with just the right Scripture, even when they live away—on campus or across the world. I had prayed and prayed for our college son Chris (second oldest), but needed new direction from the Lord. So I asked Him to reveal a special verse that would be right in line with His heart toward our son.

One night soon after, I had a dream. In it, Chris was standing beside me, holding a Bible and pointing out a verse as if to say, “That’s me, Mom.” The verse was Acts 17:28: “For in him we live and move and have our being.” I sensed the Spirit saying that this is the truth about our son and I should pray that he would realize who he is in Christ. For many years since, I’ve prayed Acts 17:28 for Chris—when he was in medical school, serving in Iraq as a battalion surgeon saving Marines’ lives, and as a father and husband in medical practice. As the

Spirit continues to point me back to this verse, He reminds me to remember that He is the One who began a good work in Chris and He will complete it (Phil. 1:6)!

I've never run out of scriptural prayers to pray—especially when praying our three children through childhood and adolescence, college years, marriage, and now praying for their children. A verse I prayed continually during my seven-year journey of prayer for our oldest son was Ephesians 1:17-18: Lord, open the eyes of his heart and give him spiritual wisdom and understanding so he will grow in the knowledge of You. I pray that his heart will be flooded with light so he can understand the wonderful future You have for him.

Justin did not appear to be walking in the light at the time nor did he seem spiritually inclined. In fact, he was enamored with the world and all it had to offer from high school through his first two years of college. As I continued praying Ephesians 1:17-18 and other verses for him, I gathered other mothers, concerned about their teens, to pray in agreement together each week. When my spirits flagged, God seemed to say, "Persevere in prayer and trust Me."

Then one summer day after his sophomore year at University of Oklahoma, when I was driving him across the city to get his overheated car stuck on the highway, he turned to me and said, "You know, Mom, I've been feeling so empty and lonely, being so far from God and trying to do everything on my own. I know that God hasn't moved; I have. But what I want more than anything is to have an intimate relationship with Christ, to really know Him."

Justin has never looked back and has been following the Lord ever since. Watching this devoted husband and father of two, who now also prays God's Word for his own children, I have been constantly encouraged by the Lord's faithfulness and grace in Justin's life and family.

As I discovered more of the treasures of God's Word and promises, one of my favorite prayers is based in 1 Peter 5:7: "Lord, thank You for inviting me to cast all of my cares upon You! Here's what I am burdened and worried about today" And then I roll my concerns, workload, and anxieties upon the Lord. Praying this verse on countless days has brought more peace into my heart than anything else I can think of—and certainly more than any stress relief the world might offer.

Breathing the Life of Jesus

In his book *Pierced by the Word*, John Piper said that our general prayers "become powerful when they are filled up with concrete, radical biblical goals for the people we are praying for."

We just celebrated 42 years of marriage and can look back on praying hundreds and hundreds of biblical prayers, not only for ourselves and our children, but also for friends, family, and sisters and brothers in Christ that we've had the opportunity to pray for in healing services, conferences in other countries and in our own community. Each time, I've been filled with faith and hope, in the best of times and the worst of times.

Praying God's Word transformed my spiritual life and did something else: It got my focus off the problems or situations and onto the One who could help us, transform us, and—when needed—restore us. I knew praying Scripture wasn't an overnight quick fix, but my confidence in the Lord increased as I grew to trust Him to fulfill His promises in His way and time. And I was assured—even when the answers were long in coming—that He who said He is able to keep safe what we entrust to Him will do more than we can ask, think, or imagine, because of His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:20-21).

You, too, can find the blessing of praying God's Word for your family and personal life. When we pray God's words and then love those around us through prayer, we breathe life—the life of Jesus, the living Word—into them and into our hearts. Who among us doesn't need more of Christ in our lives and His blessing in our family?

It Takes a Little Practice

While it may not come naturally for you to pray biblical prayers, it takes only a little practice to become comfortable with using God's Word as a powerful prayer prompt. For instance:

- Take the verse in which Jesus said, "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27, nlt). Then pray it back to God in your own words and from the sincerity of your heart. For example, "Thank You, Jesus, for Your matchless gift of peace. I receive Your peace in my mind and in my heart so I won't be troubled or afraid."
- When we pray for someone who is suffering or in need, the Bible is full of compassionate prayers. Recently I was struck by reading Psalm 79:8 when a friend had major surgery and I prayed it right back to God on her behalf: "Let your tenderhearted mercies quickly meet Janet's need, Lord." I sent that prayer to her via text message in the hospital, and she received it when she got out of the recovery room. That prayer for God's tenderhearted mercies echoes from my spirit whenever anyone I know is in the ER, in personal distress, or in physical pain.
- Pray God's attributes. A verse such as Psalm 46:1 assures us that God will be our "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (NKJV). We can call upon God's very nature and character when we pray it back to

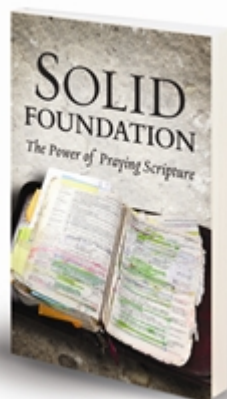
Him: “Lord, You said You will be our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. I ask You to let me experience Your sustaining grace, strength, and power so that problems won’t weigh me down.”

His Word Upholds the Universe

How incredible it is that through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, heaven’s windows are opened and each of us is given access to Almighty God, who hung the stars and moon in the sky and upholds the entire universe by His very Word!

What a marvelous gift God has given us in the treasure of His Word to guide and shape our prayers. In it we can discover His will for our marriages, families, ministries, and all areas of our lives. Even more, when we pray His Word, we are asking that all He’s planned in heaven will come into our lives on earth!

CHERI FULLER is a popular speaker and award-winning author of more than 40 books, including *The One Year Book of Praying Through the Bible*, *When Mothers Pray*, and *A Busy Woman’s Guide to Prayer*. As executive director of Redeeming the Family, Cheri has been a frequent guest on national radio and TV. Her passion is to encourage women and inspire people of all ages to impact their world through prayer (cherifuller.com).



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