

It's Heavy Lifting Time

Mentoring the Next Generation in Prayer

By Carol Madison



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

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

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

I didn't sense it was time to simply “pass the baton” to the

next generation, but I did understand that my role was changing. God had placed me in the position of leading the prayer efforts for Together, but He was also calling me to support this next generation as they take their places in the Kingdom of God.

Conveying Hope

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

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

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

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

They took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you

always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me” (John 11:41–42).

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

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

Telling Stories

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

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

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

We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power,

and the wonders he has done.

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

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

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

Being Accountable

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

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

restore. Mentoring reminds me to pray like I believe it!

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

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

Getting Started

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

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

Then I had the simple idea (no doubt from the Lord) of mentoring six women for six months. A short time after that, the Spirit prompted some younger women to ask me to mentor them. Suddenly I had a group of six younger women eager to learn. I went session by session, seeking the Lord about what to do next. By the end of our time, I had 12 sessions' worth of my best prayer practices to share with more mentor groups in the years to come.

Here's a checklist of ideas to get started:

- Invite God to remind you of stories you can retell of His goodness and power. Draw from Scripture, history, and your own prayer life. Record them as illustrations for prayer principles.
- Research prayer resources that resonate with your heart and experience. Take note of prayer practices that fit

with the way God has equipped you.

- Develop your own file of teaching topics that you can pass on to others. Here are some sessions I've led: praying Scripture, Jesus' prayer life, prayers of Paul, hearing God's voice, fasting, contending in prayer, and prayer personalities.
- Be strategic. Look for opportunities to invest in others. Start with your own family—and expand. Perhaps it's one-on-one or in a small group. Ask God to direct you to those who might be open to mentoring.

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

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

Lifting the Incoming Boxes!

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

When the boxes were being tossed around on that sweltering day in Washington, D.C., I cheered on the next generation—and had enough sense to duck at the appropriate times. I was OK with my shifting role because I realized my entire lifetime has been God's preparation for this mentoring assignment.

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

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be-released book that contains many of the stories and lessons she uses with her prayer mentoring groups. It will be available at prayershop.org and anywhere you purchase your Christian books.