

Why Not Here, Lord?

Faith-filled Prayer Breakthroughs

By John Robb



My cell phone spurs me on each time it powers up with AT&T's motto, "Rethink Possible!" Marketers, in this case, are good theologians—and Christians in the Western world would do well to take this exhortation seriously.

When it comes to praying for God's miraculous intervention, why is it so easy for us in the West to default to the position of unbelief? Why do people in the Third World seem to experience more of the miracle-working power of God?

How can we grow in faith and pray history-shaping prayers for our community and nation and world—and rethink possible?

A few weeks ago, while I was pondering a new development that could result in a new ministry opportunity, some friends from Southeast Asia came to visit my family. I had pretty much concluded that this "possible opportunity" was a long shot. But in that moment of wondering, my visiting friends presented my wife and me with a beautiful pewter wall piece etched with the words, "Nothing is impossible." I had jumped to an unbelieving conclusion. And their gift was a loving rebuke.

Assume the Possible

Why do we so readily assume that things will not go our way or that they're impossible to attain? I can hear the Lord saying to me as He did to His slow, unperceptive disciples, "Where is your faith?"

Our same visiting friends had been in Myanmar in 2010 to help launch the Children in Prayer movement in that much oppressed nation. And in January 2011, I had the privilege of joining hundreds of ministry leaders for a second, similar effort. Out of those two events, an estimated 40,000 children mobilized to pray for their nation.

Nothing seemed to budge in Myanmar—spiritually or politically—until the children began to intercede. Then, in short order, the whole nation seemed to shift. The military junta, which had dominated the land with an iron grip, released political dissidents from prison, including the Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Greater economic freedom was granted. Reconciliation efforts suddenly began between some of the ethnic groups that the government had been fighting for many years.

Political news commentators did not know how to explain such a precipitous turn-around in a nation so long accustomed to tyrannical oppression. But the prayer ministry leaders believed that "God's secret weapon," the prayers of children, were a major factor.

When I was with World Vision, an international humanitarian and childcare organization, we witnessed the same phenomenon. As director of prayer ministries, I asked field staff in five countries to have the children in the program pray for their very poor communities for one year. All of us were astonished by the miracles that occurred in those communities where the kids were praying for specific needs: the infrastructural changes, such as digging wells and establishing new clinics,

resolving community splits, the healing of people with terminal illnesses, and the prevention of terrorist invasions in the places where the prayer was happening!

Staff people asked if we could renew the children's prayer effort for another year. After a second consultation, people recited an even longer litany of miracles to the wonderment of all. The Children in Prayer (CiP) effort spread by word of mouth to 20 national offices, and later about 50 of our World Vision national offices continued developing CiP efforts. Even after I left World Vision, the prayer movement spread beyond that organization with an estimated 75–80 countries supporting CiP efforts. This is all to the glory of the Lord who loves the prayers of children!

Learn the Children's Secret

Why are children's prayers so powerful? How can they serve as a model to us more skeptical, slow-to-believe adults?

Jesus taught that He has delegated authority to believers so we can even bring Satan down in our communities and nations. Jesus said He saw Satan "fall like lightning from heaven" and that the authority of Jesus will enable us to "trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:18–19).


Moments later, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was rejoicing as His people overcame the devil and brought deliverance. He joyously praised the Father for revealing these things to "little children" (v. 21). Apparently children have a greater openness to receiving such a revelation from God. The implication is that His adult disciples will be slower to grasp such a reality unless they cultivate the same childlike hearts. In other places, Jesus said that the Kingdom of God belongs to people who are like children, and that we adults should seek to be like them (Matt. 18:2–4, 19:14). Why? Because adults tend to be encumbered by the baggage of doubt,

fear, and wrong belief systems that keep us from simply trusting God to do what He promises to do.

We have become captive to a materialistic and non-supernatural worldview. We may not realize how deeply we have become affected by this corrosive influence. But if we ignore God's promises to do the impossible (if we will simply ask, trusting Him like small children depending on their parents), it is as if we, in effect, have taken scissors to Scripture.

I believe this is a major reason why serious and persistent prayer is not on the agenda of most Christians and ministry leaders in the West. We live in a material world seemingly controlled only by laws of nature, so we have imbibed the idea that prayer makes little or no difference. Humanism's teaching that "man is the measure of all things" has also crept into our thinking. Both are false philosophical teachings that cut off the realization that God is the One in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Let Science Increase Your Faith

In one sense, believers in today's world have a greater reason to pray with faith than earlier generations did. Science has revealed that the material universe —and therefore its Creator—are far more awesome than past observers could imagine. Astrophysicists now tell us that our sun and its place in the universe is comparable to one grain of sand on all the beaches of the entire earth—one of 300 billion trillion stars. The psalmist confirms that, because the Creator is so much greater than His creation, He "stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth" (Ps. 113:6).

On the other end of the creation spectrum, the cell—the building block of all life—is far more complex than anything a human being could create. No wonder Jesus could say that the Lord, in His love and concern for each human being, even keeps a running total of all the hairs on our heads (Matt. 10:30)—in

spite of our losing some in the shower each day!

Realizing how incomprehensibly awesome and great God is should turn us all into 24/7 intercessors! If we, in our generation, could internalize what modern science has uncovered about the greatness of the Creator and begin to apply His staggering promises regarding faith-filled prayer, our own lives, cities, and nations would be transformed.

Christian astrophysicist Hugh Ross writes, "Prayer is the most powerful capacity God has made available to us." And author E.M. Bounds says that "prayer can do anything that God can do." Wow, what an astounding resource we have at our disposal every time we pray—if we will only lay hold of the Lord in faith!

Believe We Can Change History

It has been my great privilege to be part of numerous national and international prayer initiatives throughout the world for more than two decades. Over and over again, my colleagues and I have witnessed the stupendous works of God when His people have prayed in unity, together releasing their faith. To His glory, history has literally been reshaped through these efforts!

Many of these prayer initiatives have happened in war zones where insoluble ethnic conflicts, full of atrocities, ground on for years—where all hope had been lost. Here are a few examples:

Bosnia, August 1995: More than 250,000 people had been killed and millions left homeless. But then believers from all three warring ethnic groups chose to come together in two cities. After a deep time of reconciliation in which representatives confessed atrocities their own people group had carried out against those from the opposing groups, they all prayed with unity of heart. In their combined faith in the Lord, they trusted Him for His intervention. They trusted His promise of

Matthew 18:19—that anything we ask in agreement will be granted.

Richard Holbrooke, the main peace negotiator, was amazed when the hardened dictator and war criminal Slobodan Milošević pushed a peace proposal across the table at him four days later. It led to the Dayton Peace Accords that brought an end to the civil war.

Cambodia, 1994–1995: The Khmer Rouge, a Maoist terrorist group that had killed two million Cambodians, were hiding in jungle camps. They continued to reappear and murder whole villages of people. Thousands joined in prayer with a specific request that “the Khmer Rouge would dissolve.” Three months later, on February 7, 1995, the New York Times proclaimed on the front page: “The Khmer Rouge are dissolving!”

Afterwards an international team of prayer facilitators led Cambodian Christian leaders through a process of repentance and reconciliation. Faith-filled, united prayer resulted in a noticeable change in the spiritual atmosphere of the nation. In just a few years, the Church experienced meteoric growth to more than 40 times its original size.

Sierra Leone, May 2000: An ongoing civil war (made more famous, after the fact, by the movie Blood Diamond), resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people. In an orgy of blood lust, a force of 50,000 rebels hacked off the limbs of even small children as they ransacked and terrorized the whole nation. But then, 1,200 Christian leaders (more than 90 percent of the national church leadership) came together in desperation to cry out to the Lord for His deliverance.

The rebel leader was arrested after the first day of prayer. However, things did not improve immediately as hoped. Instead, rebel forces moved toward the capital city to attack. But they were repelled by a new alliance of militias and a British expeditionary force.

Participants in the initiative across the nation continued praying. In the succeeding months, the rebels voluntarily handed over their weapons to the UN peacekeepers, who broke them up and made them into farm implements!

Peace, security, and development returned to Sierra Leone. The current president, a Christian, helps lead the national prayer efforts along with one of our African colleagues.

These are a few of many stories from 58 national prayer initiatives around the world. We do not always see the same dramatic impact. But we always see God's gracious hand bringing about positive, tangible changes during and after such initiatives. They have resoundingly demonstrated that the Lord can use His people and their united, Spirit-led prayers of faith to transform any difficult situation a community or nation faces.

Get Desperate

In every case I can remember, such history-changing prayer initiatives have been characterized by the participants' sense of true desperation. Circumstances of war, suffering, or corruption seemed overpowering and impossible to change—by human means. Christ's people were driven to seek the Lord with all their hearts, realizing there was no other hope.

Of course, this is exactly what our God is waiting for us to do as well. He said, "If . . . you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 4:29). I believe this is the kind of desperation God wants us to cultivate in the West. Because everything here is usually predictable, comfortable, and convenient, we are often blind to dangers that threaten us internally and externally, spiritually and physically.

It is time to wake up, becoming both vigilant and desperate in praying for the Lord's transforming breakthroughs. Let's "rethink possible" and trust Him to do as He promises—far

beyond all we can ask or think—in our lives, communities, and the entire world!

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Applying Scripture to the Impossible

Throughout 20-plus years of ministry, and in many diverse situations in 58 national prayer initiatives, my colleagues and I have found certain Scripture passages and principles to be especially helpful in releasing our faith—and the faith of the local people who have participated in prayer with us. It is the release of our faith together in unity, through the enabling and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that “moves mountains” and accomplishes astounding breakthroughs in prayer.

Here are some of those Scriptures:

John 14:13–14: “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

The sky is the limit. We can ask the Lord for anything. We can accept the invitation He has extended to us, releasing our faith in His enormous capacity to do the impossible.

Matthew 18:18–20: “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Praying with others in corporate unity, even in twos and threes, can change the atmosphere of what is possible in

communities and nations. More than 30 times in the Book of Acts, and in all the great spiritual revivals and positive social transformations of modern history, we see that these movements have been preceded by united prayer. Theologian Walter Wink said, "History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being."

1 John 5:14–15: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."

Praying according to God's will involves both hearing His Word and following the leading of His Spirit. Faith will gradually build within us as we listen to the Lord, follow His direction, and then see His wonderful answers. In this manner we also avoid the presumption and flakiness that sometimes characterizes overly subjective praying that goes its own way.

Matthew 17:20: "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."

God has enrolled all of us in the educational process of learning to trust Him with more and more of our lives. The Lord is always looking for faith, and He tries to draw it out from those who are with Him. Jesus did this with the Syro-Phoenician woman whose daughter was ill, the father of the demon-possessed boy, blind Bartimaeus, and Jesus' own obtuse disciples (me included).

I often take a bag of mustard seeds with me to hand out before we pray for breakthroughs in difficult situations. They come from a seed specialist in my church. The seeds are very tiny black objects, not the partially germinated yellow ones from the grocery store. As brothers and sisters in Christ hold these in their hands together, they realize it does not take a

lot of faith. It takes only the willingness to exercise what we have. As we do, that faith unleashes God's hand to do His wonders.

Ephesians 2:6: "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

Notice this is past tense. It has already been accomplished. We have been raised with Christ to sit in heavenly places with Him. Though we are still very much rooted in this material world, we are already joined through the Spirit to the One who sits on the throne of the universe. Through intimacy with the risen Lord, we share in His authority exercised by faith through prayer.

What an awesome position He has accorded us to rule and reign with Him! When we understand that and live in the presence of the supernatural, all-powerful Lord of eternity, trusting Him for miracles on earth becomes routine, normal behavior.

Let's begin to live and pray from that position so we can see breakthroughs for our world we have not yet dreamed of!

—John Robb

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For Such a Time as This

Desperately Seeking God through

Fasting

By Richard W. LaFountain



I am hypoglycemic. That means I get sudden and unexpected sugar lows. When that happens I go crazy. Sometimes I just get agitated, other times I get grumpy, and still other times I run in circles getting nothing done. The dictionary clarifies it as “an inadequate supply of glucose to the brain, resulting in impairment of function.” What I need is to get sugar (glucose) in my system that restores my metabolism to normal, so I can get things done.

In the spiritual realm I get hypoglycemic as well. I should probably call it heaven-glycemic. When it happens I’m out of sorts. I can’t seem to think clearly or see God’s plan for my future. I have difficulty focusing and discerning the voice of the Spirit over my own internal voices, as well as the myriad of other voices surrounding me.

When that happens I need a heavenly rush. I need an infusion of God’s presence so I can hear His voice and gain my equilibrium to His will. I need the sweet presence of God to calm my anxious heart and get me going the right direction.

Not a Bribe

Fasting is never to be an attempt to get God's attention, twist His arm, or bribe Him with personal sacrifice or suffering. Fasting isn't going on a hunger strike to get God to do things your way. Fasting is giving up food (or anything you treasure) so that you can seek God's face more than anything else. Fasting is about focus. It is about paying attention to God and His voice rather than the cravings for food or anything that distracts you from seeking God's presence.

In the Old and New Testaments we find that men and women of God fasted when they had a problem they didn't know how to solve. Fasting usually involved food, but isn't limited to food alone. It also served as a "time-out" to set aside time to focus on God for a predetermined purpose. In other words, it was a designated time to seek the Lord for His voice and direction.

- Esther fasted when Mordecai heard the Jews would be exterminated (Est. 4:16).
- David fasted and prayed all night for his dying child (2 Sam. 12:16).
- Israel fasted for direction and victory when they had to war against Benjamin at Gibeah (Judg. 20:26).
- Ezra fasted when raising funds for the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 8:21).
- Nehemiah fasted to know the mind of God for rebuilding the wall (Neh. 1:4).
- Jehoshaphat declared a fast when the enemy came in like a flood (2 Chron. 20:3).
- Joel called for the people to fast to avoid God's judgment on the nation (Joel 1:14).
- Jonah and the people of Nineveh fasted in repentance and brokenness (Jonah 3:5).

- Daniel fasted to understand the vision God sent (Dan. 9:3, 10:2).
- Jesus fasted 40 days before beginning His ministry (Matt. 4:2).
- The church fasted and ministered to the Lord before Saul and Barnabas were sent out (Acts 13:3).
- Jesus said His disciples would fast (Mark 2:20).

Keep Attention on God

I believe that if my fasting is for any other purpose than acknowledging my desperate need for God, it is a works-oriented effort to please or impress God. Fasting to try to be or appear more spiritual is wrong. Jesus said it was to be a secret thing to assure that the focus remains on God and not on the person fasting (Matt. 6:16–18).

I have a couple of friends who decided to do a 40-day fast. Neither of them defined the fast clearly, other than they wanted to do it to be more spiritual. Both inadvertently called attention to themselves because they lost a lot of weight. One attended banquets and dinner occasions, making a fuss over eating only broth, which served only to call attention to his fast. This is the danger of fasting to be spiritual—it is pride.

We should fast to pay attention to God. Food has a way of making us contented, self-satisfied, and comfortable. Denying ourselves food for the purpose of seeking God's will and hearing His voice is the real secret of fasting. It's not a marathon. It's not a diet. It's not spiritual showmanship. It's a pursuit. It's a pursuit of God—and that's all.

When I first entered the ministry I tried fasting because I had never done it and thought it might make me more spiritual, more holy, or more powerful in prayer. But all I could do during those fasting days was think about food. It was

distracting. It was frustrating. What was supposed to draw me close to God did the opposite. It drove me to food cravings.

Then I discovered that I was indeed hypoglycemic and could not fast without the adverse physical reactions that defeated the purpose of my time with God. So a friend suggested I do a modified fast. I found if I ate crackers and soup or broth, my time of fasting was tolerable—even enjoyable—and I could focus on God, not on my food addiction.

Discerning God's Will

During my 42 years of ministry as a missionary and pastor I discovered fasting to be an essential ingredient to finding the will of God and discerning matters of importance. So I fast with purpose. I seek one thing—to discern the mind of God and hear the voice of the Spirit. Usually I set apart time away from everyone and ministry distractions to focus on soaking myself in the Word and His presence. I seek a private solitude in a retreat center for several days while I focus entirely on the matter before me, seeking the will of God.

Before accepting a call to a church that I did not want to go to, I covenanted to fast and pray to seek the mind of Christ, fully expecting to turn down the offer. During that three days of fasting God clearly revealed His call to pastor that flock. In addition He gave me His plan of action for the church for the next ten years. I wrote it down in my journal as He revealed it to me.

Over the next ten years that became God's game plan. The Lord did each one of those action items just as they were revealed, and the church went from around 100 people to nearly 1,000 people in ten years. When we called our youth pastor, he came with Bible training and some experience with youth groups. But he had no clear plan from God. So the elders sent him away to fast and pray. He was not to come back until he had a clear

vision from God.

He did so and chose a retreat center that did not allow any food on the premises. It was his first fasting occasion and he said it drove him to his knees. He returned home with a complete outline of his ministry tasks as God revealed it to him. Over the next 12 years he guided the youth and children's ministry from a non-existent state to a large and spiritually dynamic youth ministry in our town.

Our church was considering expansion and a building plan for our overcrowded conditions. We decided to call the church to a week of prayer and fasting, after which we would vote on the direction we would take. God took a church of overly cautious people from timidity and fear to faith to do the impossible.

Then our consultant told the board we needed more land to provide for parking and expanding ministries. The next morning our neighboring farm land had a "for sale" sign on it. We didn't have the money needed to buy it, so for a year we prayed and played with plans to acquire it. Someone suggested we fast again and pray to ask the Lord what to do. We did and God directed us to believe Him to provide. He did. Within a month the property was purchased without any obstacles. It gave rise to a saying in our church: "What God orders, He pays for."

So Many Good Reasons

Jesus, though filled with the Holy Spirit, was still driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to fast and pray before setting out on His ministry. If it was necessary for Jesus, how much more is it for us?

Jesus also promised that when He was gone His disciples would fast and pray (Mark 2:20, Luke 5:33–35). And Jesus warned that some things are too stubborn to break through with only

prayer. Fasting and prayer go together when things need a breakthrough or we need wisdom to know what to do (Matt. 17:21, Mark 9:29).

I see two main principles concerning fasting in Scripture: 1) When you need to hear from God, get away from everyone and everything, and 2) When you want to know where to go or what to do, fast and pray.

Elmer Towns, in his book *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, suggests additional reasons to fast:

- For lost souls
- For understanding God's Word
- For deliverance in times of trouble
- For a miracle when all seems lost
- For healing from a prolonged disease
- For miraculous provision in times of need
- For employment when you need a job
- For God to send help in time of crisis or trouble
- For God to send revival to His people.

Whenever the will of God is involved and you need to be led of the Spirit rather than by voices of men or your own opinion, then fast and seek the mind of God. When you are desperate enough to go to unusual measures, God uses your fasting to call you to draw near so you can hear Him.

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Publisher's Note

Prayer or Panic?



I enjoy Facebook. Over the years that I've had a personal page, I have reconnected with dozens of friends from my childhood and college days. It has been great. I also like the political and spiritual banter that takes place in my news feed, though I admit the posts often get out of line and people are hurt by the short, snide comments. It is difficult to talk about sensitive areas of disagreement when you are not conversing face to face.

I've also noticed that on Facebook people have a tendency to display their emotions without a filter. They often say things they might not say in a personal conversation. I am not sure why, but somehow people have fewer inhibitions on the Internet.

One recent disturbing trend relates to the alarming perspectives shared about current events—and people's attempts to relate them to the need for prayer. With both the ISIS situation and the Ebola scare last fall, I was stunned by how panicked many believers were—even some leaders who should know better—and how openly they displayed that panic on Facebook.

We are living in tough times, and I sense they could keep getting worse. But as people of prayer, how should we respond with a biblical perspective? Maybe I am an odd person spiritually, or maybe it is due to my upbringing in a denomination that focuses strongly on the second coming of Christ, but I look at what is going on with interest—and even awe. No one will convince me that we are not living in the

last days before Christ's return. (Yes, I understand that others thought the same thing thousands of years ago as well.) Personally I think we are fewer than 20 years away. That's not a prediction, just my gut feeling.

So I watch and pray with interest. What is Satan doing in various places? What is God doing to bring people to Himself? What is God doing to set up history for the final days? I watch with awe because we are seeing more and more clearly the battle is "not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12). You only have to look at the absurd anti-Semitism that is rising around the world—even in our government—to realize that Satan is controlling the minds of many people.

No matter what rapture position you hold, the tribulation will not suddenly come upon us with an overnight change in tough situations in the world. Even if believers are raptured away prior to the tribulation, evil will be running amok well before it—perhaps as evil is doing now, and worse. I don't want to panic about any of it. Instead, I want to pray. Pray for what? Mercy, certainly. Peace and comfort for suffering believers, yes. But I plan to spend more time praying for Jesus Christ to be glorified in the midst of all this turmoil. As evil tries to take the upper hand, God is going to bring many souls into His Kingdom before His return.

Therefore, I am guarded in how much I try to "pray away" hard times. Many revivals came during times of economic and social desperation. In these last days imagine what God could do with a Church that rises up and prays, "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus," instead of, "Help, get us out of this, Lord."

Maybe we should pray for more trouble, not less!

—Jonathan Graf

A Manifestation of God

By Tony Marshall Anderson

CLASSICS
Time-tested Truths



When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4: 31, KJV).

This remarkable manifestation of God reveals the effectiveness of prevailing prayer. It vividly discloses the fact that prayer can accomplish much. It is apparent that neither the apostles, nor the assembled company of devout believers were astonished at the marvelous visitation of God. They had assembled together in one place for the express purpose of achieving victory over the opposition of wicked men, and they fully expected the Lord to answer their united prayers in His own way.

Perhaps the shaking of the place where they were assembled together was an extraordinary occurrence, but receiving a direct answer to their importunate praying was neither unusual nor unexpected. The believers had assembled for the specific purpose of producing a miracle in the spiritual world, and not for the purpose of producing a phenomenon in the natural world.

We do not need a manifestation of the supernatural to arrest

the attention of a pleasure-seeking world. God does not often shake the shackles off His imprisoned saints, and open the doors of the jail with an earthquake. [But] He can do the unusual and the unexpected when necessary. We do not need the Lord to do something to astonish us, but we do need Him to do something to alert us to our dangers.

Shaken Out of Lethargy

We cannot ignore the fact that we desperately need a startling manifestation of God to shake us out of our spiritual lethargy and selfish complacency. We cannot substitute a program for power and have the least semblance of hope that the unsaved will be attracted by it.

The believers were praying in a desperate crisis when they said, "Lord, behold their threatenings" (Acts 4:29). We are aware that some of the most enduring results recorded in sacred history were obtained when some devout person prayed in an hour of crisis. Abraham prevailed with God in prayer when the angelic messengers told him about the destruction of Sodom. . . . Moses prayed importunately for the people when they incurred the fierce anger of God by worshipping the golden calf. It was a critical time in Israel when Elijah prayed earnestly on Mount Carmel. Jesus was praying in an hour of crisis when He said, "Father, the hour is come" (John 17:1).

The believers were confronted by a desperate situation when they said, "Lord, behold their threatenings." With them, it was a case of life or death, victory or defeat. The odds against them were tremendous, but the God [who] was for them was Almighty.

There is nothing in the sacred records to show that they had the slightest intention of compromising the truth in order to have favor with men. They did not call a meeting of the official board to discuss ways and means of evading the

fundamental issues involved. They did not take refuge in a stupefying pessimism, saying that nothing could be done to remedy the situation confronting them. Neither did they deceive themselves by saying that things would work out satisfactorily to all parties concerned.

They were willing to accept the conflict that challenged their faith and hope in God. They did the most natural thing in the sight of the Lord when they assembled together with one accord in prayer, and lifted up their voice in one concerted petition to Him for help.

Strength Renewed

The believers in this day of grace should be impressed by the victory achieved by this praying company of saints. There are many things which threaten us today. We are confronted with serious situations that cannot be overcome unless we keep our strength renewed through prevailing prayer.

Unless the believers in the church today have their spiritual strength replenished repeatedly by the Spirit, they will not be able to overcome the increasing power of spiritual wickedness threatening them today. The church cannot cope with the menacing threat of worldliness except the company of believers pray for power to meet the insidious threat.

God did not answer their impassioned prayer in the hour of crisis by miraculously changing the attitude of the determined opposition. He did not remove the threat which endangered them. The company of believers accepted the fact that such persecution had been foreseen and foretold.

The Lord would have us understand that suffering persecution for His sake is the price to be paid in blood and tears for the unspeakable pleasure of serving Him in the holy way of life.

TONY MARSHALL ANDERSON (1888–1979) was an evangelist and a

college professor associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of the Nazarene. He was convinced that the people of God have not explored the boundless possibilities of prayer. Excerpted from his book *Prayer Availeth Much*.

Prayers for First Responders



Firefighters fighting fire during training

Ways to Show Appreciation and Support

By Dave and Kim Butts

When tragedy strikes, we all look for help.

We believe the vast majority of the U.S. population appreciates and honors those trained to provide crisis-situation help—protection, medical care, or rescue. Yet we also witness our authorities under attack. Growing misunderstandings and distrust can severely affect our first

responders. In a day of global unrest and terrorism it is important that we pray for our police, fire, and medical response teams.

Strategic Prayers Here are ten ways to bless and cover our first responders in prayer. Each point includes Scriptures and a prayer. We encourage you to develop your own prayers based on both the verses and the written prayers.

1. Give thanks to the Lord for those who often put their lives on the line for others.

Peter 4:11: "If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."

Colossians 1:3: "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you."

Father, we are so blessed to have men and women who work diligently for our safety and well-being, even when their jobs are difficult and often thankless. Help us remember to thank You for their sacrifices and service to our community. May we touch heaven with prayers of gratitude whenever we see or personally encounter first responders. Give them the strength that You provide so that as they serve, You will be honored.

2. Pray for spiritual salvation for first responders, and a faith in Christ to sustain them in the face of danger.

1 Timothy 2:1-4: "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. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to

be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Psalm 27:1: “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”

Lord Jesus, we pray for first responders everywhere who have not yet made You their Lord and Savior. Please put Your people in their paths, so that they might learn to seek You first and honor You. It’s so important to have godly men and women in these positions of influence for the sake of Your Kingdom. We also pray that You will intervene in the lives of those who once knew You well but have fallen away from You due to the pressures of their jobs. Reignite their hearts with passion for all that You are, Lord Jesus! Stir people all over our nation to pray fervently that our first responders will be salt and light in dark places and beacons of hope to the hopeless. Help them to minister in a very difficult occupation so that they might be change agents for the sake of Your name!

3. Pray for their protection and safety because many first responders are in situations of significant danger.

Isaiah 54:17: “No weapon forged against you will prevail.”

Psalm 91:1–4, 14–16: “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

“‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy

him and show him my salvation.'”

Gracious God, first responders have such dangerous jobs! Help them to dwell in Your shadow. May You always be their refuge in difficult situations. May they trust in You completely, moment by moment. Show them Your power when they find themselves in unsafe situations or when they face people who threaten to harm them. Keep them safe for the glory of Your name!

4. Pray for wisdom and discernment as they face every crisis. Pray for increased skill and effectiveness in their daily tasks of coming to the aid of others.

2 Chronicles 20:12: “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

Psalms 5:8: “Lead me, Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies—make your way straight before me.”

Lord, every day first responders have to make difficult and complicated decisions. Help them to choose wisely and well in every situation. Give them clarity and help them to stay calm and collected in the most tense moments they face. Help them call out to You whenever they don't know what to do. May they always keep their eyes fixed upon You.



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5. Pray for courage and strength as they enter harm's way.

Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Zechariah 4:6: "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty."

Father, every shift first responders' work requires them to be prepared and ready for whatever comes. Give them the ability to stand strong. Fill them with courage. Help them to be aware of Your presence and see their need for You in every challenging situation.

6. Pray for vigilance as they keep watch. Ask God to give them confidence in their abilities to help others.

Psalms 130:5-6: "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning."

Mark 14:38: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Father, as our first responders watch over us and respond to the needs in our community, please keep them alert and always ready. Keep them sharp, confident, and prepared in every way. May they place their hope in Your Word and wait upon You.

7. Pray for emotional protection for first responders, that the Father would guard their hearts, especially in the face of criticism or anger from others.

Galatians 6:9–10: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Philippians 4:5–7: “Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Father, please keep our first responders emotionally strong but spiritually tender when they are confronted by the evil and brokenness around them. Give them Your peace as they deal with the pain and suffering of others—and at times experience injustice. May they have compassion for those whose lives are broken and may they demonstrate kindness to them. Help them to recognize that when others express hate and anger toward them, they can find their security in You.

8. Pray that the words and deeds of every believing first responder will reflect

the life of Jesus Christ in every situation.

Psalm 141:3: "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips." Psalm 19:14: "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

Father, give words and actions to Your people who serve their community as first responders. Even in the most intense situations, we ask that they will look to You to show them how to react and what to say. May they bring honor to You and be godly examples to their unbelieving coworkers and to others with whom they interact on a daily basis.

9. Pray for peace for the first responders' family members who are aware of the dangers their loved ones face. Ask God to guard their marriage and family relationships.

Ephesians 5:31-33: "'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' . . . each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Isaiah 26:3 – "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you."

Lord God, the families of first responders experience so much stress and fear. As a result many marriages among first responders are broken and the divorce rate is high. Bring Your peace to their families, Lord. Help these men and women to keep their eyes fixed upon You so that they might love their spouses as You have instructed, and so that they might train

up their children in godly ways. Help them to find quality and quantity time with their families.

10. Pray they will feel supported and loved by their communities.

1 Peter 5:6–7: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

Romans 13:7: “Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”

Lord God Almighty, help us to show our first responders how much they are appreciated. May these brave men and women know that their God and their community supports them and cares for them! Give us ways to demonstrate our gratitude and thankfulness for their difficult sacrifices every day.

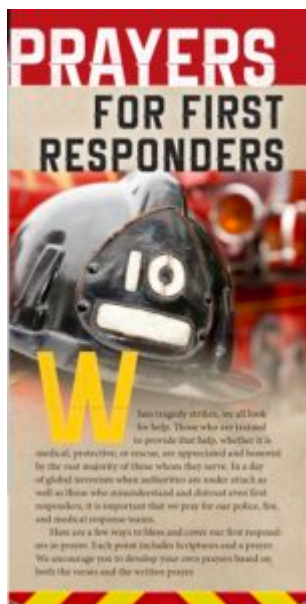
Adding Action to Your Prayers

There are other specific ways that you can express support for first responders:

- Establish a Shield-A-Badge prayer team for first responders in your church or community. This program is designed to pray strategically for police officers (shield-a-badge.org).
- Check out what the city of Omaha is doing through their First Responders Foundation. Their mission is to enhance public safety and build community appreciation and respect for first responders by providing resources (firstrespondersomaha.org/foundation).
- Find practical ways to show your appreciation to first responders and their families. This Pinterest board is filled with great ideas (pinterest.com/erinw27/first-responder-appreciation).

Thank the first responders when you come into contact with them. Tell them how much you appreciate what they do every day—and ask how you can pray for them. If they are receptive, ask permission to do it right then! Pray that God will use first responders to bring peace and security to our families and communities.

DAVE AND KIM BUTTS are co-founders of Harvest Prayer Ministries. They are the authors of several books (available at prayershop.org). Dave is also the chairperson of America's National Prayer Committee. This article is adapted from their prayer guide for first responders.



This guide can be purchased in packs of 50 at prayershop.org.

[Click here](#) for more information or to purchase.