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PRAYERCONNECT

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Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

There are a number of gifted speakers associated with *Prayer Connect*. Jonathan Graf regularly ministers in churches of varying sizes. Carol Madison is also available to minister in the area of prayer for revival and community transformation. Our parent organizations, Harvest Prayer Ministries and the Church Prayer Leaders Network, have many speakers associated with their ministries. You can find their contact information at the respective emails or websites.

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The mission of **PRAYERCONNECT** 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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Previously in Prayer Connect

Prayer is not only critical to missions—it is the *power* behind all great mission efforts. Prayer for missions and the spread of the gospel is

the forgotten command of Jesus. In the November/December 2013 issue of *Prayer Connect*, you will be challenged to pray *with* missionaries and “Ask for the Nations.” Order this and other back issues at prayershop.org.



Prayer, Facebook, and Droids

Recently I was sitting at a gate in an airport waiting for my flight. There were easily 40–45 people in the waiting area. As I looked around (actually, as I looked up from my phone), I began to chuckle. An odd scene unfolded before me. Absolutely every person in the room was on his or her phone! Most were looking down and probably either texting, playing a game, or answering emails. A few were talking out loud, oblivious that all of us could hear at least one side of their conversation. But not a soul was interacting with another person in the room.



I am not an expert on this, but I surmise that modern technology and social networks have certainly changed a lot of things: the way we interact with each other (most would rather speak through a device than have significant interaction), our abilities to stay with the same train of thought (we are a world of “attention deficit” people now—and that is largely due to television and the Internet’s rapidly changing images and sound bites), and our reactions to situations and things we read or hear (everything is super-hyped and considered an emergency).

All this makes me wonder how this is affecting prayer. Is it damaging prayer? Or could technology be a plus?

Since I have passed the half-century mark—and I hate change—I naturally struggle with all these developments. But as I look at the dramatic changes, I need to think about the possibilities.

Believers today can regularly participate with other like-minded people of prayer in online prayer meetings via chat rooms or conference calling. People who live miles apart can Skype or FaceTime and pray together. Recently a denomination hosted a 24-hour prayer meeting streamed live around the world with thousands of participants in dozens of locations. While people in remote locations watched a live video feed, they could participate via Internet chat and then pray with others in their location at the same time the group at the main site prayed. It proved to be a very cool prayer meeting!

In addition, a growing number of excellent apps (programs designed for phones and tablets) related to prayer are being developed. There are apps to help you keep track of requests and the names of those you pray for, apps that provide prayer guides, and apps for prayer discipleship.

Our newest resource, *Pray the Word*, has released an app of powerful Scripture-based prayers designed to teach people the power of praying God’s Word. The goal is to move people from fix-it praying to praying the things on God’s heart for their lives.

For me, as a middle-aged adult, rather than complaining and muttering about technology that is proving daunting for me to grasp and use (and bemoan the good old days), I need to embrace new technology and find ways to use it in my own prayer life. This year I plan to use multiple prayer resources on my phone and tablet to find ones that will make it easier for me to connect with God through prayer.

I hope you will embrace this “can do” attitude and join me. Let me know what good apps you find by emailing me at jong@harvestprayer.com.

—Jonathan Graf

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Passing a Prayer Torch from Church to Church

Revival. Renewal. Transformation. Holiness. These words express the vision and goal for the churches in the Mid-Atlantic District of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. But there is a sense these things aren't happening. Programs aren't doing it. New initiatives have stirred some interest, but they quickly fizzle. Hard work by the pastors and church leaders doesn't seem to be working, according to Randall Corbin, district superintendent.

He identified the problem this way: "We have a desperate need for the manifest, tangible presence of God in our churches and among our people that will take us to holiness and a drive to proclaim the gospel here, there, and everywhere."

As he wondered how this could happen, he saw a news article in a 2012 issue of *Prayer Connect* about a prayer torch taken from church to church in a particular community.

Corbin says this birthed an idea for a 28-week, district-wide prayer effort using a prayer torch that would travel from church to church throughout the Mid-Atlantic region (Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.). As the vision was rolled out, pastors and church

leaders began to share the excitement of hosting the prayer torch in their churches for a week of concentrated Kingdom prayer.

The theme Scripture (Isa. 60:1–5) sparked great enthusiasm and hope—quoted here in part: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you . . . Nations will come to your light."

In a short time various churches signed up to cover all 28 weeks of prayer. But additional churches wanted to participate, so a second prayer torch had to be developed for a second track of prayer.

The prayer torch was commissioned during the closing service of the annual district conference of pastors and lay leaders (October 2013). Delegates gathered around the lit torch, crying out to God that this Kingdom-prayer focus would stir the hearts of the people in the district to revival, renewal, transformation, and holiness. There was a growing sense that "Aslan is on the move. The winter is thawing. Spring is coming" (a



PRAYER TORCH
INITIATIVE

reference to C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*).

In Corbin's role as district superintendent, he took the prayer torch to the first church and commissioned it in a service, anticipating what God was going to do in their midst as they focused on Kingdom prayer. At the close of the week, that church's pastor carried the prayer torch to the next church and commissioned it, sharing what God had done. "Wow!" the pastor exclaimed. "God really blessed us this week as we sought His face. . . . It was amazing to see God's people confessing their sins one to another and being open about their struggles." In the congregation's brokenness, they tangibly felt God's presence, he said.

At the close of the 28 weeks, the prayer torch will be carried back to a gathering of pastors for a Solemn Assembly of prayer and testimonies.

LINDA CORBIN is prayer coordinator for the Mid-Atlantic District of the C&MA. Her husband Randall is the district superintendent.

United Nations Prayer Gathering Focuses on Children

More than 300 Christians from approximately 40 nations came together in the New York City area November 18–20, 2013, to pray for the children and youth of the world and for the efforts of the United Nations to help them. The theme was "Children and Youth: Investing in the Future."

Two unique and historic events—the

Children in Prayer (CiP) Global Consultation and the United Nations prayer initiative—meeting end to end during the same week—carried that theme through all their sessions.

According to John Robb of International Prayer Council, highlights of both events included:

- joining with children and youth

participants in praying for the nations by using a huge inflatable globe

- recognizing an explosive spread of the Children in Prayer movement to the ends of the earth
- attending stimulating workshops and regional sessions for kids and adults, and time spent in a specially designed 24/7 prayer room



- participating in strategic planning sessions and excursions to the Empire State Building to pray over New York, and a tour of the U.N. to bless that complex, its personnel, and its efforts
- being challenged about the next generation and the possibility of a World Youth Prayer Assembly in 2015 or 2016
- hearing a testimony about one Korean church in New York that is impacting hundreds of thousands of children by inviting them to soccer games in stadiums in several nations
- eating breakfast together with other participants in the U.N. Delegates Dining Room along with ambassadors and U.N. staff to hear about

- the needs of children and youth
- being led by children and youth in prayer for the Millennium Development Goals
- praying in the U.N. for a whole day, in agreement for the issues of youth and children—for orphans; for those caught in trafficking; for those in need of health, education, and employment; and for children trapped in war and refugee situations, such as Syria.

Many participants commented that their lives and ministries were affected deeply by the strategic prayer. They now intend to focus much more intentionally and energetically on the next generation in their countries. One participant expressed



appreciation for the representation of so many nations: “The CiP/UN Prayer initiative . . . was such a wonderful and worthwhile time of God’s people coming together from across the nations. The first evening, as we worshiped and sang ‘Worthy is the Lamb’ together, will stand out in my memory as a holy moment.”

The U.N. Prayer Initiative was organized by the International Prayer Council, with John Robb as chairman. This report was adapted from *International Prayer Connect* (ipcprayer.org).

Middle East Prayer Assembly

A prayer assembly hosted in Larnaca, Cyprus, October 2013, drew 130 people from more than 25 nations to pray for the Middle East and hear reports of what God is doing in each nation in that region. The gathering, sponsored by the International Prayer Council and World Prayer Assembly, focused on the need for peace, healing, love, and justice to cover the nations of the Middle East.

The biblical basis for much of the prayer ministry came from Ephesians 2, in which Paul wrote about breaking down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles—and the way Jesus brought peace with God and with one another.

Many moving reports were shared, both of sorrow and sadness but also of breakthroughs leading to reconciliation, harmony, and great joy. Delegates listened to each other, prayed, and had fellowship with each other.

Isaiah 19 was a key chapter in guiding participants to understand God’s purposes for this region. Most of the

chapter describes God’s judgment on the idolatry of Egypt, but then it refers to ways in which Egypt, Assyria, and Israel will together become a blessing in the midst of the earth with a highway of worship and prayer between them.

Approximately 50 houses of prayer have been set up in this region, with a new one soon to be launched in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. This is a partial fulfillment of the Isaiah 19 vision. Delegates were also given some of the biblical background to the House of Prayer movement from Amos 9:11–12 (quoted by James in Acts 15:16–17), Isaiah 56:5–8 (a house of prayer for all nations), Psalm 27:4 (David’s one desire to worship in God’s presence), Rev. 4:8–11 (vivid description of heavenly worship), and Rev. 5:7–10 (worship and intercession combined—harp & bowl).

A music team, drawn primarily from Lebanon, led worship, using a combination of songs and medleys from the worldwide church.

A delegation from Syria could not join the assembly, but two brave sisters

from a Maronite Convent attended and gave a disturbing report from Syria. They said that the events in their country were not so much military, political, or even religious, but, rather, eschatological. Jesus is coming again and we need to prepare for Him, they said. Later on they led the delegates in a dance of joy amidst the suffering and sorrow.

The prayer assembly was supported by people representing the worldwide church and prayer movements from China, Indonesia, Korea, India, Brazil, and the U.S., as well as from the World Prayer Centre, Birmingham, UK. Several delegates had been at the World Prayer Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia, in May 2012.

Delegates also prayed for the “peace of Jerusalem” and especially for Damascus, with some strong “breakthrough prayers” based on Psalm 46. Leaders also demonstrated a concern to pass the baton to the next generation, some of whom were present for the prayer assembly.

Taken from *International Prayer Connect* (ipcprayer.org).



RESET Movement Partners with OneCry

During the fall of 2013, the RESET Movement visited 27 cities across the U.S., on a mission to empower a generation of students and young adults to live fully for Jesus and energize the Church. According to founder Nick Hall, RESET (resetmovement.com) has a three-year goal of taking the message of a “supernatural reset” to 200 cities, culminating in 2015 with the largest Jesus gathering in American history.

RESET is now partnering with OneCry (onecry.com), a national movement of prayer for revival and spiritual awakening. RESET’s initiative is multi-generational, calling for and praying for the older generation to encourage the younger. OneCry represents thousands of people—many in older generations—who are unified for the cause of revival.

Randy Hekman, national director of OneCry, says, “While RESET’s exciting mission is focused primarily on motivating massive numbers of students and young adults to live their lives fully for Jesus, OneCry produces content encouraging Christians of all ages toward *extraordinary prayer and radical obedience*.”

Hekman adds, “Scripture and history make it clear that crying out to God in unity with other believers and cheerfully doing His will leads to the healing of individuals, families, cities, and nations.”

OneCry leadership believes the RESET Movement will draw young adults with their idealism and youthful enthusiasm to join the existing efforts for healing the nation. This age group can provide much of the energy needed to



power the revival so desperately needed.

“As RESET continues their events, it will be our privilege to invite the 9,000 people who are part of our OneCry national prayer team to uphold these events in prayer,” says Hekman. “We will also consider it our joy to assist in calling those who attend these gatherings to go more deeply into lifestyles of fervent prayer and God-honoring obedience to His Word.”

Mom’s Day of Prayer Goes Worldwide

“When we pray in unity, God moves mightily,” says Kathy Coleman, founder of Mom’s Day of Prayer (MDOP).

“This can be [true for us] as moms when we come together and pray in unity—[as] a husband and wife praying together in unity, as a church body praying together in unity—God hears our prayers and answers us,” she says.

Coleman, who has lived in Fort Smith, AR, for almost 40 years, read an article in the 1990s about a mother in Brazil who gathered other mothers to

pray for their children because of issues such as sexual immorality, drug abuse, and alcoholism in their country.

The article weighed on Coleman, who attends East Side Baptist Church in Fort Smith, and she asked then Pastor Bob Ford if a day of prayer for mothers could be held at their church. He agreed and suggested the name “Mom’s Day of Prayer.”

Founded on 1 Samuel 1:27–28, MDOP began in Fort Smith and has since spread worldwide. It has been observed in a number of countries and most states in the U.S. Coleman began the movement to encourage local mothers to gather to pray for their leaders, families, and children. Her organization hoped to schedule MDOP events in all states in the U.S. and all countries worldwide on January 18 (momsdayofprayer.com).

Reprinted and edited with permission from *Arkansas Baptist News*.





Prayer Calendar

Collegiate Day of Prayer
Thursday, February 27
collegiatedayofprayer.org

Seek God for the City
March 5–April 13
waymakers.org

National Day of Prayer
Thursday, May 1
nationaldayofprayer.org

Global Day of Prayer
Sunday, June 8
globaldayofprayer.com



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Icelanders Sensing Revival in Reykjavik

It normally takes a lot to move Skúli Barker to tears. But what he witnessed simply doesn't happen in Iceland. "My wife was sobbing next to me," Skúli says. "And I started to cry. It's just amazing."

It started off as a few souls responding at the end of Franklin Graham's gospel message during the Festival of Hope (September 28–29, 2013). Before Skúli knew it, throngs were flooding the stage, elbow-to-elbow, hundreds of people packed in, aisles backed up. People *wanting* to meet Jesus. And willing to say that out loud. Pray that out loud.

Skúli doesn't want to be overly dramatic, but he's a native Icelander in his 40s, and he's seen the state of Icelandic people when it comes to talking about God or anything spiritual.

"There's a joke here that we are the 'Frozen Chosen,'" Skúli says. "But it's really true. In Iceland, people don't show their feelings. So for Icelanders to come forward to receive Jesus. . . ." With these words Skúli's voice trails off. His eyes are red. "It's just been a real fight here for Christians," he says. "And *this* gives us hope."

In one sentence, Skúli summed up five years' worth of prayers from a core group of pastors and business leaders. He managed to put into words what this meant to the Iceland Festival of Hope executive committee members who put in nine months of hard work.

"It was like a child has been born, in many ways," says Ragnar Gunnarsson, Festival of Hope director. "A tremendous experience. This is what we have been praying for."

Nobody wanted to say it beforehand, but Sigurros, an usher at the Festival of Hope, finally puts into words what everyone has been thinking. "I'm hoping," she

says, "this will be the first step for revival."

Sigurros, a believer for two decades, works for the government's environmental department. She signed up to be a Festival usher, but on Sunday night, after a counselor shortage on Saturday night, she was called into emergency duty at Laugardalshöll Arena for the Festival.

On Sunday, Sigurros counseled Soffia, a mother in her 50s, and her teenage daughter Sara. Both attended church "once in a while," quite common in Iceland. "They had both been exposed to the gospel, but they needed a push to make the decision," Sigurros says.

"Both [Soffia and Sara] said they wanted to receive Christ into their hearts," says Sigurros, overwhelmed at how God used her. "It was just tears of joy; I was so happy."

Revival Signs for a Nation?

Is this the start of revival? Perhaps Michael W. Smith said it most succinctly on Saturday night, just before his final song (referring to God): "He'll change a nation."

The signs are already encouraging. Prayer for revival has multiplied in the Iceland evangelical churches. Many of the 41 involved churches at the Festival are now closely working together—with pastors praying together weekly.

"It means a lot for Iceland," says Festival of Hope committee chairman Ómar Kristjánsson. "This will be a new beginning. Something very big."

Kristjánsson—a businessman who five years ago simply followed a call from God to gather pastors and leaders and start praying for Iceland—sums up the weekend in one word: "Magnificent."

Reported by Trevor Freeze. Reprinted and adapted with permission from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (billygraham.org).

Help!

The Heart Cry of Desperate Prayer

I remember where I was standing during the worship service when the realization hit me: I was not truly desperate for God. In the middle of a well-known worship song, I was singing words that declared my desperation for Him. Then suddenly, I stopped singing, interrupted by a jarring thought:

No, you're not.

The Spirit's conviction came over me. Life was fairly good at that moment, so the heart cry of desperation was far from my mind. But in my silence I quietly prayed I would never again sing the chorus of that song unless I had come to a place in my life of experiencing desperation for the Lord.

True to God's extraordinary work in my life, soon afterward I suffered through seasons of desperation. I found myself crying out to God with a new depth of understanding. Suddenly I knew how much I needed Him.

First, I went through a painful time of speaking truth in a corporate setting that put me at odds with leadership. I found myself completely alone, unable to share with anyone—except the Lord. I spent many long, lonely nights in prayer, crying out to God. Speaking truth in this situation was proving to be very costly. I desperately needed the Lord—and my prayers reflected that.

Then a job change required an extra dose of faith. Although the Lord had clearly directed me to start my own editorial business, I had no potential clients and no idea how the Lord was going to provide for my financial needs. During that season, I spent a month praying and fasting for God's direction. I found myself in a facedown position much of that time.

Then my dad suffered a serious heart attack. I remember when I got the phone call in the middle of the night and I was uncertain what to do. Should I pack a bag and begin driving at 2:00 a.m.? Should I wait until I knew more details? I found myself on the floor of my bedroom, crying out to the Lord to spare the life of my father. I was truly desperate. That night, God graciously answered my prayers.

The Healthy Side of Desperation

God used those experiences to mentor me in desperate prayer. From there, my desperation for personal intervention began moving toward a new type of desperation: heart cries for God to send revival. Interesting how He uses such personal things to awaken us to the desperate need for God Himself to revive His Church! Such desperation is spiritually healthy.

In this issue, Cynthia Bezek explains how she learned that God *welcomes* desperate prayer, and it can eventually lead to greater trust and intimacy with Him. Jim Jarman challenges us to consider that perhaps the desperation we sense in our lives is actually a longing for connection with the Lord—and we might need to sign out of Facebook and go facedown before Him to find out. And Rick Padgett defines desperation as just you and the Lord. When you get to that place, you can count on God to use desperation in a redemptive way.

I've gone back to singing that song. I trust my prayers will more and more reflect my understanding of how much I absolutely and desperately need God.

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.

A photograph of a person with long, dark hair, seen from behind, with their hands raised in the air. They are standing in the rain, which is falling against a bright blue sky. The person is wearing a dark blue or black jacket. The overall mood is one of freedom and joy.

Dare to Be Des



By Cynthia Hyle Bezek

alking in an orchard in the middle of a violent thunderstorm probably wasn't the smartest thing I've ever done. But I needed to connect with God, and I didn't know how else to do it. My life was falling apart, it seemed. I had recently moved 1,000 miles from the place that had been home for 35 years.

I had not found a church. I had not yet made friends. And,

perate

A Sign of Spiritual Health and Mature Faith

after many months of mysterious, alarming neurological symptoms, my husband had just been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

I had never felt more lonely and scared. And I had never been more desperate for God. But no matter how much I prayed, He seemed silent and far away.

My Bible reading at the time was in the Psalms. I remember being surprised by how raw David's prayers were when he was hurting.

G

od didn't strike me dead for shouting at Him!

"How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (13:1-2).

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest" (22:1-2).

"My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak" (31:10).

Yet David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). It surprised and encouraged me to realize that apparently God wasn't offended by David's desperate honesty.

So one day, while lightning flashed, thunder cracked, winds howled, and rain fell at three inches per hour, I went outside to have a talk with God.

I honestly don't remember what I talked to Him about. I just know I was raw. As I poured out my heart to God, my tears mingled with the rain and my shouts were drowned out by the thunder and wind.

I returned to the house 45 minutes or so later—my body drenched, my spirit drained. But to my surprise, I felt peaceful. God didn't strike me dead for shouting at Him though He easily could have done that since I was walking amongst trees in a severe electrical storm! Instead, I sensed God had heard me and drawn near to me. Oddly and inexplicably, I thought He might have even been pleased that I trusted Him with my deep pain.

That day marked a turning point in my prayer life. Until then, my prayers had seldom involved emotion of any kind, let alone unfiltered dread, angst, or hopelessness. Somehow to me, that had seemed inappropriate for prayer. I had come to believe that prayer was supposed to be nice, polite, and controlled. But I have since come to realize that's not what the Bible teaches.

After that day, I started noticing what God says about praying from a place of desperation. I learned that rather

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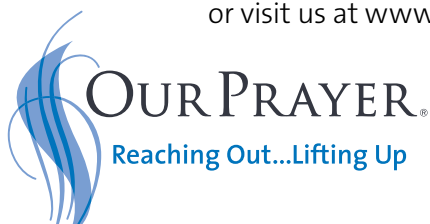
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than disapproving of desperate prayers, God encourages them!

Desperation in Bible Heroes

Some of the greatest heroes of faith prayed almost embarrassingly desperate prayers. I already mentioned David. But consider also Jacob, Moses, Hannah, and Job (to name a few).

Jacob was so desperate for God's blessing that he literally wrestled with Him (Gen. 32:22-32).

Moses prayed numerous desperate prayers as he struggled to lead the complaining, idolatry-prone Israelites. But perhaps the most poignant of his prayers took place after God told Moses that He would not accompany His people to the Promised Land. Moses wouldn't hear of such a thing: "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us?" (Ex. 33:15-16). In other words, "God, if You don't go with us, I'm not going. I cannot—in fact, I will not—do this without You!"

Hannah prayed with such deep anguish and bitter weeping that Eli accused her of being drunk (1 Sam. 1). But God heard her prayer and gave her the son she asked Him for. And that son, Samuel, became one of Israel's great prophets.

Job prayed some of the most desperate prayers I've ever heard of. But his prayers are not likely to make it into the Bible's top-ten "Scripture Prayers." After all, can you imagine praying like this?

"I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. I say to God: Do not declare me guilty, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the plans of the wicked? Do you have

eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees? Are your days like those of a mortal or your years like those of a strong man, that you must search out my faults and probe after my sin—though you know that I am not guilty and that no one can rescue me from your hand? . . . Why then did you bring me out of the womb?

I wish I had died before any eye saw me. If only I had never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave! Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and utter darkness" (Job 10:1-7, 18-21).



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Yet the New Testament affirms Job, praising him for his endurance and patience (James 5:11).

Undoubtedly the most convincing example of all, however, is Jesus. Jesus didn't pray only tidy, polite prayers. Consider His anguished prayers in the garden of Gethsemane. Reflect on what the writer of Hebrews says about the way He prayed: "While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God" (Heb. 5:7, NLT).

Note also that even the Holy Spirit intercedes with strong emotion. According to Romans 8:26, He intercedes with "groanings too deep for words" (ESV).

Desperation Receives God's Affirmation

It was desperate prayers that Jesus most frequently commented on. To the Canaanite woman who kept crying out after Him, begging Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus said, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted" (Matt. 15:28). When the centurion pleaded with Jesus to heal his servant, Jesus said in amazement, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!" (Matt. 8:10, NLT). And Jesus praised the tax collector who beat his breast and cried out to God for mercy. "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

But none of this should be surprising. Scripture says, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18). He doesn't want us to hide our troubles from Him or to pretend all is well when it isn't.

On the contrary, God invites us to draw near to Him so He can draw near to us (James 4:8). After all, His names

are *Savior, Deliverer, Redeemer, and Healer*. His very character moves Him to respond to the cries of His hurting children.

Desperation Indicates God-Reliance

I've come to realize that if I do *not* pray desperately when life hurts, that is probably a bad sign. It might mean that I am self-sufficient, focused on fixing things myself. Or I may have resigned myself to my pain and may have lost hope that God will come to my side. Or perhaps my heart has shut down, hardening itself to the disappointment and fear. I may have concluded that God does not care or that He cannot or will not meet my need.

Any of these responses to the hard stuff of life indicate spiritual trouble. Rather than being a sign of weakness or immaturity, desperate prayer is a sign of spiritual health and mature faith.

When I pray desperately, I am humble and willing to admit my helplessness. I demonstrate faith because I know God can meet my need. I show dependence on God because I candidly admit I need Him. My prayers are fervent ("I really need You to come through, Lord!"), and they usually persevere ("I won't give up until You show up, God!").

The great evangelist Leonard Ravenhill went so far as to suggest that desperate prayers are the most powerful kinds of prayer. "Now I say very often—and people don't like it—that God doesn't answer prayer. He answers desperate prayer! Your prayer life denotes how much you depend on your own ability. . . . The more self-confidence you have, the less you pray. The less self-confidence you have, the more you have to pray."

Desperation Can Lead to Deeper Intimacy

Desperate prayer can result in a deeper knowledge of God. It inspires worship

and dependence upon Him. This is often what happened to David. Frequently he would begin his prayers (psalms) in desperation and end them in praise and God-confidence. In Psalm 71, he pleaded with God this way:

In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me. . . . Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel. . . . For my enemies speak against me; those who wait to kill me conspire together. They say, "God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him." Do not be far from me, my God; come quickly, God, to help me (vv. 2, 4, 10–12).

By the end of the psalm, though, he was praising God and placing strong confidence in Him:

As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long—though I know not how to relate them all. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone (vv. 14–16).

For me, personally, the shift from desperation to eventual patient trust took a lot more than one desperate prayer. It took many such prayers. I haven't arrived yet, but the more I prayed my gritty, honest, and desperate prayers about my husband's illness and my fear, the more I experienced God's presence and understanding.

God didn't heal my husband. In fact, my husband eventually died from his illness. But through that painful journey, I came to know God more deeply than I ever would have known Him otherwise. And I believe that relationship came through my honest, desperate

prayers—and God's faithful, comforting responses.

May deeper trust and closer relationship be the goals of our desperate prayers. Then God-directed desperation can bring greater dependence on Him, more fervent worship of Him, and more intimate relationship with Him.

Those things don't happen automatically, of course. Jonah is a fine example of someone who prayed desperately, yet he had no apparent heart change (see Jonah 2, 4). If our desperate prayers are to result in closer relationship with God and deeper confidence in Him, then we need to ask Him to examine our hearts. Here are some good questions to ask:

- What is behind my desperate prayers?
- Why do I want what I want so badly?
- If God were to answer my most desperate prayers, would I cherish

the answers more than I cherish Him?

If we find that we seek His gifts more than we seek Him, then it's time to confess that and ask Him to change our hearts.

Until we reach heaven, we will never pray with absolutely unselfish motives. Our prayers may be tinged with fear, doubt, or self-centeredness. However, that's no reason not to pray. God can purify our motives in the process of our desperate praying. The important thing is for us to pray—honestly, humbly, and desperately. **PC**



CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK is the former editor of *Pray!* magazine. She is the editorial director for Community Bible Study and the author of *Prayer Begins with Relationship* and *Come Away with Me*, both published by NavPress. She blogs regularly on prayer at cynthiaprayblog.wordpress.com.

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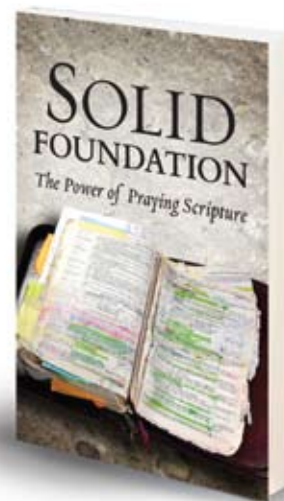
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The Redemptive Pur Des

By Rick D. Padgett

You and I might be impressed with a remodeled vacation house, a shiny and powerful SUV, a great winter jacket, or expensive new boots, but God is looking at our hearts. That's what attracts His attention, and He proves it in the life of David. When Samuel was considering candidates for Israel's second king, God steered him away from those who appeared impressive on the outside.

The Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Despite all of David's later excesses, God never lost His fascination with this shepherd-king. If anything, God's promises to David became more extravagant. Among the strongest, unbreakable promises God made to a man in Scripture are those He made to David. God said, in effect,

pose of peration

When It's Just You and Jesus

W

e rarely feel so alone as when we face desperate situations.

“There is no way I’m ever going to change my mind about the house of David. I will set one of your descendants on the throne forever. It’s never going to change” (2 Sam. 7:16, my paraphrase).

I’ve often thought, *Well, God, David sure gave You a lot of excuses to change Your mind!* Something in the heart connection between David and God, however, released God’s extravagance. God gives *us* extravagant promises, too—individually, one-on-one. But let’s look first at the backdrop of everyone’s life story.

Everyone’s Story of Desperation

You know that feeling when everyone disappears except you and God? When it’s just you and Him and nobody else? My word for that is *desperation*.

It’s no coincidence that 70 percent of the Psalms address times of desperation in the lives of David, Asaph, and other psalmists. Sometimes the desperate circumstances loomed ahead. Sometimes the desperate times were past realities. Often, the desperate situations were present threats.

What happens when we face desperate situations? Or, better put, what do we *want* to happen?

1. We ask hard, difficult, desperate questions. “How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with

my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?” (Ps. 13:1–2).

We rarely feel so alone as we do when we face desperate situations. In the times we want and need God most, we often feel that He disappears. We know He has promised never to leave us or forsake us—at least, we believe that at first. Then the questions begin to swirl around us, disorienting and disturbing us. The same was true for David. In every psalm, however, he uses such doubts as springboards to earnest, focused prayer.

2. We pray urgent and desperate prayers. “Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, ‘I have overcome him,’ and my foes will rejoice when I fall” (Ps. 13:3–4).

If there is anything good about dire circumstances, they engage us emotionally on the deepest heart level and then super-energize our prayers. David often prayed (my paraphrase), “You’re my God. Now prove it by saving me! If you don’t, I’m going to die. Then the wrong people will celebrate for the wrong reasons.”

Of course, there are worse things than dying. We see that repeatedly in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. The Apostle Paul could say, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Still, if God fills you, you want to live to the full, not die haphazardly, recklessly, needlessly.

So, we pray! We pray with urgency and fervor, knowing God is the only One who can guarantee our life and safety. In even the worst of circumstances, the

Lord can give us His peace and assurance and courage and boldness.

3. We cling to God more desperately than ever. “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me” (Ps. 13:5–6).

In the midst of terrible turmoil, how could David worship God, especially with such confident and joy-filled words? The above verses from Psalm 13 are only a few examples of his consistent habit of acknowledging his terrible plight, asking life’s toughest questions (knowing God alone has the answers), and then remembering God hasn’t forsaken him.

David could do this even though God’s answers and presence didn’t automatically shield him from the traps, arrows, spears, and swords of his enemies. Sometimes wicked wounds and gruesome deaths surrounded him. Yet he always promised and fully expected to praise the Lord—if not here, certainly on the other side.

Most of us will never see an active war zone in this life. Yet life can still crash down around us, destroy us, and then take us out.

Desperation is when there’s no Plan B, when we’re beyond human help, when God has us exactly where He wants us to be.

Ed Bower’s Example

My friend Ed Bower was a master of understatement. He never made a big deal about anything. I guess he had decided

if something was important or funny, it didn't need a drum roll.

Ed had cancer, and I spent many hours with him in the last stages of his illness. We sat in his family room surrounded by medical equipment and hospice care. In those final weeks, Ed would bless every visitor in what seemed like an unfair exchange. Those who came to comfort, left comforted. Those who came to encourage, left inspired.

Shortly before Ed left us, another friend asked if he could come along on my weekly visit. Ed and his wife graciously agreed even though they didn't know my friend. But I was nervous. As I ushered my friend next to Ed's bedside, I didn't know what to expect. I decided to sit back and let things take their course.

Ed was remarkably lucid that day. After some small talk, we were faced with the stark reality of a dying man surrounded by his wife and seven children. Into the uneasy air of the room my friend asked a seemingly innocent question. He looked at Ed with genuine compassion and asked, "What days does your doctor come?"

In Ed's typical monotone he answered, "The doctor doesn't come anymore. It's just Jesus and me."

Ed's matter-of-fact response hit me like a stun grenade to the chest. I looked away. My head was spinning and I could barely breathe. I don't even remember how I said goodbye. I think my friend prayed. I just remember slumping against the garage wall outside as I waited for my friend to say his goodbyes.

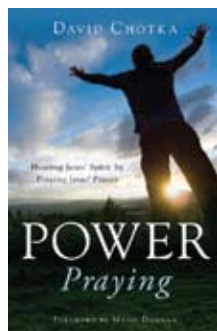
Trying to understand what had just happened, I began to pray, *God, what is going on?*

Immediately I heard His quiet voice of authority: *This isn't about Ed. It's about you. What is true for Ed is true for you. It is always just you and Me.*

Ed gave me insight into how to live life with little static. Very little stood between Ed and God. All the voices interrupting his need for God had been

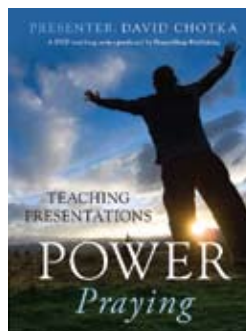
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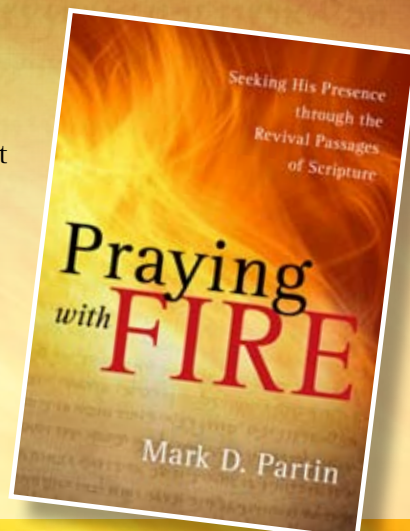
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Fasting

By Alvin VanderGriend

Enhances Prayer

I, Daniel, . . . turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed (Dan. 9:2–4).

The Bible does not command fasting, but it does bear witness to the fact that fasting was highly valued and regularly practiced by God’s people in both the Old and New Testaments. When men and women of the Bible added fasting to their prayers, God honored their efforts in some pretty amazing ways. Moses, David, Ezra, Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Anna were all people who fasted. In their fasting and prayers, they gained great things from God.

Following are several ways in which fasting can contribute to the spiritual health and well-being of individual Christians or groups of believers.

Biblical fasting *enhances prayer*. Very often fasting and prayer are linked together in Bible references. Daniel pleaded with God “in prayer and petition, in fasting.” Fasting is a God-given strategy for deepening and strengthening our prayer lives. Fasting enhances earnest prayer by allowing us to detach from the physical and attach to the spiritual.

Fasting can *fortify us in a crisis situation*. When Israel was threatened by a multinational army, King Jehoshaphat inquired of the Lord and “proclaimed a fast for all Judah.” In response to His proclamation, fasting Israelites humbly acknowledged their dependence on God and said, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chron. 20:3, 12). In response God gave them a great victory. Crisis situations have a way of driving us to the Lord. Fasting keeps us centered on Him. Don’t hesitate to add fasting to your urgent prayers when you face a troubling situation.

Biblical fasting *helps us discern God’s will*. The church leaders in Antioch understood this. While they were worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). Fasting will sharpen our spiritual hearing and make our hearts increasingly receptive to the Spirit’s promptings.

Biblical fasting is a *vehicle for self-examination*—a vehicle that often leads to repentance and confession. Fasting gives the Spirit opportunity to search our hearts and reveal our true spiritual condition. When Israel was confronted with a crisis brought on by their sin, God spoke through His prophet Joel and said, “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God. . . .” (Joel 2:12–13).

Biblical fasting is a *God-ordained form of self-denial*. Jesus said to His disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Self-denial often means self-sacrifice and suffering; not something that comes easily in our self-indulgent, pleasure-oriented world. Fasting works to counteract the self-indulgence characteristic of the flesh and reinforces the kinds of self-disciplines instilled by the Spirit.

Biblical fasting leads to a *closer walk with God*. It led to a deep spirituality for the prophetess Anna who, Luke tells us, “never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying” (Luke 2:37). Fasting led to intimacy with God for the disciples of John who often fasted and prayed for spiritual reasons (Luke 5:33). Fasting helps focus our attention on God and makes us more sensitive to Him and His working in our lives.

Finally, biblical fasting *provides a way to prepare for a mission*. Nehemiah prepared for his mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem by fasting and prayer (Neh. 1:4). When the time came for Jesus to begin His earthly ministry, He fasted 40 days and nights in the wilderness so that He might fully know the Father’s will (Matt. 4:1–2). By means of fasting we not only come to know God’s plan for our lives, but we are also moved to submit to His will.

Fasting can help you make spiritual gains in any one or all of these areas. God honors those who honor His ways.

Excerpted from *Praying God’s Heart: Prayers That Make a Difference* by Alvin VanderGriend. Available from prayershop.org.

silenced, and he reveled in God's presence around him.

God is still saying, "It's always just about you and Me." In His infinite math, He is one, and He deals with each of us as one. At the same time He wants *all* of you and *all* of me. He seeks out the most irreducible of relationships—the one-on-one journey—to demonstrate His vast and jealous faithfulness to our hearts. I call it God's unlimited fidelity.

God's Promises in Our Desperation

So what are God's extravagant promises for you and for me, individually, one-on-one? At the point of desperation, *God is always there.*

God is looking for the strength of desperation in every heart, and He will pursue you and respond to your desperation *for your good, always.*

God doesn't divide His love. He makes sure no one gets left out. He has one unit of measure: all. All of Him, always, *for you.*

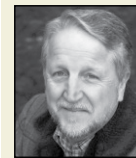
The Lord's answer to desperation is, and has always been, to *offer Himself*, and all His resources, to make you whole. The greatest possible demonstration of that in heaven or on earth, of course, is seen in Jesus Christ. God went first in showing love. He always goes first. And He always gives His all. He did so to prove His undying, unending, everlasting love for you and me.

The cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's unlimited fidelity. The exhortation to follow Jesus Christ to the cross, though, is never primarily a call to suffering. It is an invitation to enter into *the all of God's love.* That means the death of human calculations—of trying to figure out how to avoid all risks or trying to enter into life with God slowly,

carefully, guardedly, incrementally.

In your heart's journey, God promises to create a sustained place where you have an audience of One, where it's *always just you and Him.* We find that place through various desperate situations. Whether we face a slow death, as Ed Bower did, or some other crisis, God wants us to live in His audience-of-One reality.

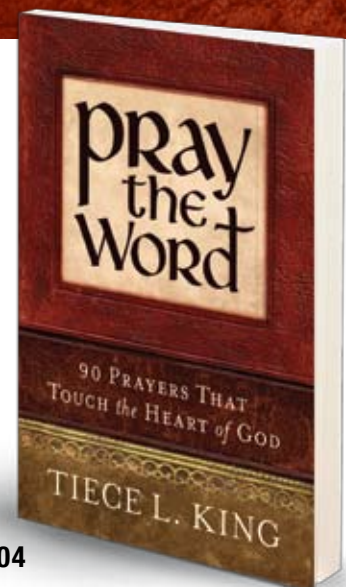
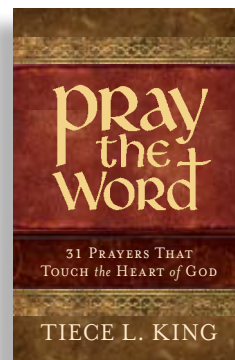
How is your heart? How does God see it? Are we willing to let Him use whatever it takes to draw our hearts closer to His? May we, like David, turn our questions into prayers, and find our prayers turning into a closeness with God unlike anything we've ever known before. **PC**



RICK D. PADGETT leads Westgate Ministries, an intercessory prayer fellowship in Portland, OR. He is the author of *Get Prayer and Get It All*, which is available in trade paperback or as a free digital book at rickdpadgett.com.

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By Jim Jarman

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

The incessant alarm jolts me awake from a great dream I already can't remember. My wife stirs and rolls over as I slip from our bed and make my way to the kitchen to put the teakettle on the stove.

It's a new day, another morning.

The gray sky begins to lighten as I sit at our table and patiently wait for the water to boil. As a matter of habit, I flip open my MacBook and in seconds, I'm connected and online. I'm already wondering how many "likes" I've accumulated from last night's Facebook posts. How many people thought what I said was funny? How many liked my photos? How many friends responded "Amen" to the Scriptures and quotes I shared?

I know that if I see a lot of "likes," the day will start off well. I also realize that my mood won't be the same if no one clicked on my post. My heart leaps awake as the spiritual danger I am in dawns on me. My self-worth is becoming dependent on someone else's tap on a touchpad. I am "praying" to

down

Outsourcing Our Desperation for Connectedness?

Why is it that normal times create complacency?

others in hopes they will respond. I am defaulting to encouragement and empathy from others rather than from God. The teakettle begins to whistle an alarm.

When we lose our *connectedness* to the Source of all life, we try in vain for substitutes that fail to fulfill. And desperation intrudes into our lives any way it can. At times it is blatantly obvious and crushes our spirits in despair. Other

times we are oblivious to it, and its subtlety is the most dangerous of all.

How can our prayer lives achieve the results we desire when we stop cultivating the intimacy with God that encourages two-way communication? Why is it that desperate times foster fervency in prayer while normal times create complacency?

I sense a need to reboot my priorities.

The Deepest Desire

Deep in the heart of every individual,

there is a longing to somehow, in some way, connect with the Creator of Life. This desire goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve walked with God in the “cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8). Once sin clouded the decisions of the soul, humanity tried in vain to hide its shame from God while at the same time sought to reach the heavens through their own efforts.

Solomon writes that God has “set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (Eccl. 3:11). This wise perception still describes the condition of lives today. We have a deep innate longing to be intimate with the One who made us, but we cannot make the connection due to our own sin.

Even after the judgment of the great flood revealed God’s displeasure at humanity’s condition, the peoples of the earth still sought a heavenly connection with the man-made tower of Babel. This structure only served to reveal self-centered pride. Regarding their efforts, the Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Gen. 11:6). And so God “confused” the languages of mankind.

It would take Christ—and the Cross—to rectify the problem of our alienation.

The Trends of Today

Life today has striking similarities. We are still seeking a universal connection. At the 2013 Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, the International

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Telecommunications Union announced that the number of active mobile phones globally would exceed the worldwide population by the end of 2014—a staggering 7.3 billion devices (does not include tablets or laptops). Their analysis showed that there would be more than 100 countries where active cell phone units would exceed the country's population (*digitaltrends.com*).

The implications of social media and electronic connectedness are staggering for the presentation of the gospel. Evangelism and discipleship are taking on new forms in our age. According to Digital Marketing Ramblings (*expandramblings.com*), here is a sampling of how many people are using a few select social media sites, apps, and electronic services as of September 2013.

Facebook: 1.15 billion (that's with a "b")

Flipboard: 87 million
Instagram: 130 million
iTunes: 500 million
LinkedIn: 238 million
Ortsbo: 212 million
Pinterest: 70 million
Pandora: 200 million
Twitter: 500 million

Clearly, we need to rethink methodologies in spreading the timeless truths of the gospel. At the same time, we should constantly reevaluate the hold these trends have on our own souls. How often do our electronic links replace the connectedness God designed us to have with Him? Are we rebuilding Babel, thinking that nothing shall be impossible for us? Are we substituting technology for spirituality—and, in so doing, losing the intimacy that a deep prayer life requires for effectiveness?

The Need to Reboot

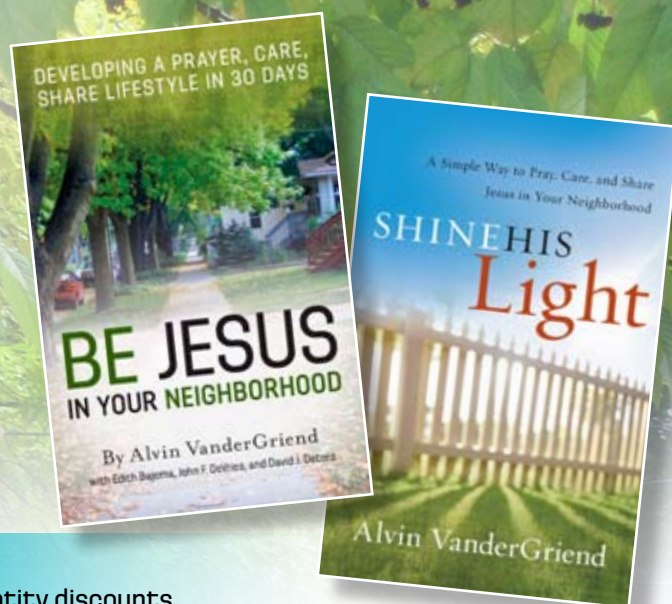
When times are desperate, we often have an invigorated season of prayer. We are needy and God is gracious. But in seasons of normalcy, we often neglect our prayer life, and our connection with God suffers. How often have I turned the car around because I forgot my cell phone? After all, someone may try to reach me. Would I do the same if I forgot my Bible? Why this disparity in our thinking?

A fireman doesn't start his firefighting training when the siren wails and the engines are rolling. If there's an in-flight emergency, I'm relieved the pilot 30 rows ahead of my economy seat isn't flying his first cross-country route. In order for my prayer life to be effective in desperate times, it needs to be honed in the intimacy I experience with God on a normal day. And anything that intrudes on that

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Developed by prayer evangelism expert, Dr. Alvin VanderGriend, these two products have quantity discounts.

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Power

By Alvin VanderGriend

of Persistent Prayer

The New Testament places a great emphasis on persistent prayer. Jesus thought it was so important that He pressed the lesson of persistence home in two separate parables: the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1–8) and the parable of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5–8). In the friend-at-midnight story, Jesus encourages His followers to approach heaven’s door like a shameless neighbor who, despite an initial refusal, continues to knock on his neighbor’s door until he gets the bread he needs for his friend. Because of the man’s “shameless audacity,” says Jesus, “he will surely get up and give [him] as much as [he] needs.”

In His friend-at-midnight story, Jesus was not just urging prayer. He was urging bold, persistent prayer. Jesus wants us to understand there is a difference between casual prayer and bold prayer. Casual prayer is weak and ineffective, lacking earnestness and perseverance. Bold prayer is shamelessly urgent and unrelenting in its concern to obtain God’s provision for a needy person. It is unwilling to take no for an answer. It stands ready to push through all obstacles.

The Apostle Paul also understood the value of persistent prayer. He commends his coworker Epaphras to his Colossian readers as one who “is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured” (Col. 4:12). The word Paul uses for “wrestling” has the meaning of striving, fighting, laboring earnestly, or persevering in the face of opposition. It was used in Paul’s day to describe combatants who strained every nerve to win a victory. Our English word “agony” comes from the same root. The Colossians must have been awe-struck to think that they were being prayed for with such strain and pain.

Why Be Persistent?

There are at least three important reasons for persistent prayer. The most important reason is *to see God’s will accomplished on earth*. Through persistent prayer we partner with God in working out His eternal plan. Christ is

responsible for implementing God’s redemptive plan and defeating Satan, but He chooses to do so in response to our prayers. John Calvin taught that prayer was a means by which the power of Satan could be broken and God’s Kingdom extended.

A second important reason for persistent prayer is that *it moves the pray-er toward God*. Persistent prayer is waiting on God. When we wait on God, we get to be *with* God and we come to know Him better and better. We come to know that He is a gracious Heavenly Father who is pleased to give good things to those who ask (Matt. 7:11). He is “for us” and will “graciously give us all things” (Rom. 8:31–32). We become so absorbed in *His* world that His will becomes our will; His priorities become our priorities; His focus becomes our focus. Persistent prayer changes us.

A third important reason for persistent prayer is *to bring us face to face with our own weaknesses and frailties*. As we wait on God to do what we cannot do, we realize anew that we are helpless creatures, doomed to fail without His help. We humbly admit that our best human efforts are inadequate. Coming to grips with our own impotence, we hold on to His omnipotence. Our faith muscles grow stronger, our spiritual stamina increases, and our prayers get refined. Through persistent prayer God humbles us, teaches us, trains us, and matures us.

Persistent prayer is very important, but it is not easy. Wesley Duewel reminds us: “Prevailing, wrestling prayer . . . can be the most difficult work you can do. It demands total sincerity, intense desire, full concentration, and whole-souled determination.”¹ When we determine to pray with persistence, the world, the flesh, and the devil come against us. But God is greater than this nasty trinity of opponents. With His help we can overcome these deadly hindrances and become bold, persistent intercessors.

¹ Wesley Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 210.

Excerpted from *Praying God’s Heart: Prayers That Make a Difference* by Alvin VanderGriend. Available from prayershop.org.

closeness with the Lord is a dangerous substitute.

Scripture closely associates our intimacy with God with our authority as believers and our effectiveness in prayer. James, the brother of Jesus, reminds us that “the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). This type of righteousness is not just a positional standing resulting from our salvation, but a practiced one, birthed in faith and the unrelenting belief that God responds to the cries of His children.

In the midst of all his kingly duties, with armies advancing and a nation to rule, David still sang to the Lord:

“One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD, and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe in his dwelling” (Ps. 27:4–5).

David realized his intimate connection with God needed to *precede* his times of desperation.

The *Global Post* reports that the Japanese Minister of Education has asked his government to finance special “Internet fasting” camps for Japan’s teenagers. He maintains that the youth of his country are “losing the ability to interact with the real world.”

Perhaps this is a good idea for us, spiritually. Why not fast from technology for one day a week and spend that day seeking the heart of God instead of looking for comments and advice of those who have “friended” us? Do we depend on the blogs and online devotionals to learn what *others* say about God, or are we hearing the voice of God’s Spirit for ourselves?

What does God say about His own desire for that type of connectedness with us? Here’s what He told one prophet:

- “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

- “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness” (Jer. 31:3).
- “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jer. 33:3).

What if each morning, I waited to open my laptop or smart phone and instead began the day “checking my messages” from God? What if God really became the first priority in my life—above everything else? How would that closeness change me? How would it change you?

There is desperation in our souls for this type of intimacy with God. It’s the intimacy Enoch had with God when he was transported directly into heaven. It’s the kind Paul and Silas knew when they were singing in prison. John experienced this intimacy in his relationship with

Christ because he called himself the disciple Jesus loved. This intimacy was what Moses longed for when he pleaded with God to see His face.

Intimate. Deep. Loyal. Close. Loving. To know the God who knows us. This is the cry of our hearts. This is the longing God built into us from the beginning. Let’s stop outsourcing our desperation and reconnect to the only Source who can fulfill that need.

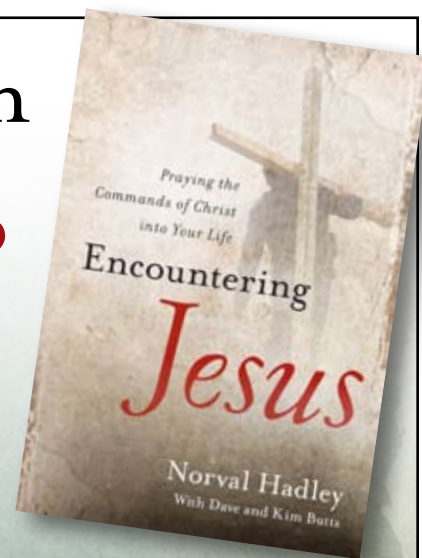
“And when all the people saw it [the presence of the Lord], they shouted for joy and fell facedown” (Lev. 9:24). **PC**



JIM JARMAN and his wife Lynn are international intercultural church planters to Sweden with Converge Worldwide and New Life Church, Stockholm. Their hearts’ desire is to see God ignite a flame of revival among Swedes, and they invite you to pray with them. If you’d like prayer updates, contact them at jim@newlife.nu.

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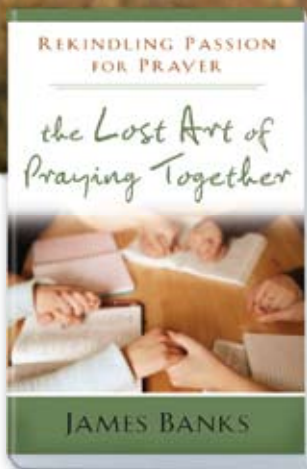
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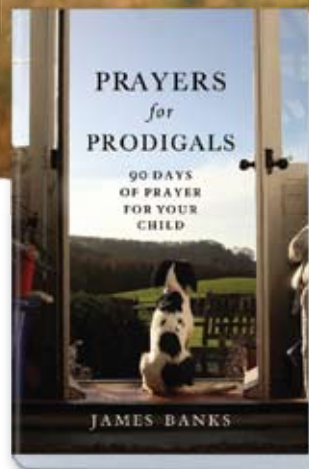
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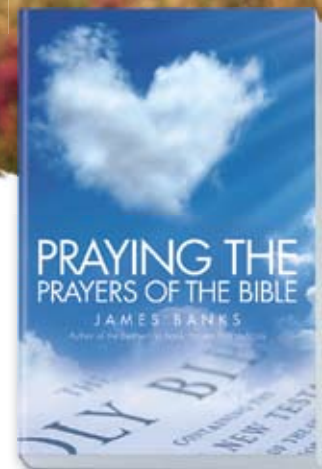
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The Heart Cry of Desperate Prayer

A Bible Study | By Sandra Higley

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.*

M

y pastor and I met to pray before visiting a woman from our church who was dealing with intense spiritual warfare issues.

This wasn't

our first time to meet with her, and we felt as if we were scrambling blindfolded through a long maze of tunnels to discern what information from her background might hold a key to her deliverance. My pastor, in particular, was battling self-doubt. He wondered if he could help the woman in her dark and seemingly hopeless situation.

As we prayed together, he cried out to God in desperation, admitting his feelings of inadequacy and asking for the Lord's guidance. Suddenly, he stopped praying, opened his eyes, and said, "Kite string."

"Kite string?" I asked. "What about kite string?"

"The Lord just gave me a mental picture of a ball of wadded-up kite string—and that He isn't going to show us all at once how to unravel the problem. But as we untie one knot, it will lead us to the next, and then the next. Kite string!"

A sense of peace settled over us as we knocked on the woman's door about 30 minutes later. She welcomed us, showed us to her dining room table, and told us to grab a seat and make ourselves comfortable. My pastor pulled out the chair closest to him. There, in the middle of his chair, was a big, wadded-up ball of kite string!

Our hostess was dismayed that her grandchild had neglected to put away this unsightly ball of string, leaving it behind for her guest to find. Then she became confused when tears began streaming down my pastor's face and we both sat there, beaming, repeating over and over, "Kite string!"

My pastor's desperate prayer for help elicited God's signal that He heard and was on the job!

Discussion Questions

Think of times you have been desperate in prayer. Name situations, emotions, or desires that led to that desperation:

Maybe desperate prayer is not something you are comfortable with. Cynthia Bezek recalls a time when she thought her prayers were supposed to be "nice, polite, and controlled." Then God showed her some of the raw desperation of David's prayers. "Apparently God wasn't offended by David's desperate honesty," she comments. What words would best describe your own prayer experiences? Does it vary? Do you tend to be bold in your desperation prayers? Or are you inclined to pray in a more reserved, polite approach?

If the mannerly, controlled approach is more your “style,” why do you think you hold back from “being real” when you talk to God?

Read the following passages. Discuss what situations led to the prayer(s) in each and what emotions were experienced or are implied during the prayer:

Jacob (Gen. 32:9–12, 22–32)

Moses (Ex. 33:15–16)

Hannah (1 Sam. 1)

Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1–6)

Job (Job 10:1–7, 18–22)

David (Ps. 13:1–2, 22:1–2, 31:10)

Jesus (Matt. 26:36–44; Heb. 5:7, NLT)

Read the following Scriptures. Identify anything that makes you think God was not offended by the raw desperation He heard from these people as they prayed: Gen. 32:29; Ex. 33:11; 1 Sam. 1:19–20; Job 42:8–10; Isa. 38:4–6; Acts 13:22; James 5:11.

“When everyone disappears except you and God . . . when it’s just you and Him and nobody else . . . my word for that is *desperation*,” Rick Padgett reminds us. His poignant story about his friend Ed, who was dying of cancer, provides an example. Someone asked Ed when his doctor was coming, and Ed replied, “The doctor doesn’t come any more. It’s just Jesus and me.” Share your thoughts about that kind of desperation. Have you experienced it before? Can you see benefits to it?

Jim Jarman indicates that all of us are desperate at one time or another, but in this high-tech era we tend to outsource our desperation to others rather than God. “How often have I turned the car around because I forgot my cell phone? After all, someone may try to reach me. Would I do the same if I forgot my Bible? Why this disparity in our thinking?” Reflect on a time in your life when you felt desperate. To whom did you turn first? Why?

When desperate prayers are called for, what things and/or people in your life might be taking God’s rightful place?

What changes might you make in that area? Could desperate prayer be one of them?

Action Steps

Cynthia Bezek encourages us to check the motivation behind our desperate prayers. She reminds us that if we find we seek God’s gifts more than we seek Him, then it’s time to confess that and ask Him to change our hearts.

Take a moment to reflect on each of her questions and ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond with any actions or changes you may need to make:

- What is behind my desperate prayers?

- Why do I want what I want so badly?

- If God were to answer my most desperate prayers, would I cherish the answers more than I cherish Him? **PC**

SANDRA HIGLEY is an intercessor, author, and editor. She currently works as an editor for David C Cook Ministries in Colorado Springs, CO.



Revival and the Power of Praying Together

Although it is true that many revivals started in the heart of one believer who was taken to a deeper level of surrender, there is usually an increase of people praying together before the revival comes. It seems our willingness to cry out together for revival pleases the heart of God. Three revivals in the past two centuries come to mind as proof of this principle.

The prayer meeting revival that began in New York in 1857, first started in the heart of Jeremiah Lanphier. But he quickly engaged other like-hearted businessmen to join him in crying out for revival.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century in South Africa, revival hit the Dutch Reformed Church under the leadership of Andrew Murray. The desire for revival had started in the heart of his father, a Dutch Reformed pastor, more than 30 years earlier. He rallied some like-minded people to pray with him. This group was still crying out for revival when Murray took over the group for his father.

The 1949 revival in the Hebrides Islands resulted from the longing of two elderly sisters who prayed for revival—and then got their pastor and other church leaders to pray with them.

The Lesson for Us

There is a lesson here for us. Many people believe revival is the only hope for the Western Church. We pray for it and long for it. We read about revival and study it, hoping we will find an additional key we may have missed. But how many of us have found like-hearted people to pray with?

Don't stop praying by yourself. But if you search out others to pray with you, that unity in prayer may be the catalyst God uses. Here are some suggestions:

Within Your Church. One of the best ways to stimulate hearts for revival is to do a prayer initiative within your church. For a period of time (21–40 days) encourage everyone to pray on the same theme. Here are some great revival-emphasis prayer guides you can use:

- *Asleep in the Land of Nod* is a 30-day, simple prayer guide focused on revival in the church. For decades author Dave Butts has rallied prayer for revival. This prayer guide will keep you focused on God's desire for His Church. Available at prayershop.org.
- *Desperate for Change* is a prayer guide that goes beyond the Church and focuses more on revival and spiritual awakening for America. It is anticipated that this guide will be used by tens of thousands of people 40 days prior to the 2014 elections. Available at prayershop.org.
- *Praying for a Christ Awakening* is a 21-day guide focused on the ten indicators of revival in the Church and ten indicators of spiritual awakening in society. These indicators were identified by the Awakening America Alliance. To order this booklet, go to relationshippress.com, look under Bestsellers on the right side of the website, and click on "Prayer Guide Booklet."

Use one of these guides in an all-church prayer initiative or within your small groups. Watch for people who seem especially appreciative or engaged in the guide. These are the people who might continue to pray with you.

Within Your Community. If you have praying friends outside your church, or if you have influence and reach into

your community, you can be used as a catalyst to establish a prayer group focused on community transformation.

Finding a Group

If you find it difficult to discover like-minded people to pray with in your own church or community, you can join any of several national prayer meetings via conference call.

- **OneCry.** This movement brings together like-hearted individuals to pray and work toward revival. Each Tuesday night at 8 p.m. (EST) OneCry hosts a prayer conference call. To participate, call 712-432-0232 and enter passcode 958551# when prompted. Find out more at onecry.com.
- **National Day of Prayer.** The National Day of Prayer Task Force sponsors a revival prayer call on the first Thursday of each month. It focuses more on revival for America than revival in the Church. Call 712-432-0075 at 10 p.m. EST. Use passcode 4961322# to enter the call.
- **Intercessors for America.** IFA has been trumpeting the National Prayer Accord for decades through its First Friday emphasis. You can join a noon-time prayer call on the first Friday of each month to pray for revival with others. Call 712-432-0075 at 12:15 p.m. EST. Use passcode 1412452#. IFA also has a First Friday newsletter with great prayer points and encouragement. Go to getamericapraying.com for information and to sign up.

As you continue to pray for revival, look for every opportunity to pray with others. We believe you will be filled with hope and faith for the coming revival. **PC**

WRESTLE

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in a firm grip. The hand on the left is wearing a light-colored, textured sleeve. The background is a bright, cloudy sky with a soft gradient from blue to white.

for a

By James Banks



ING

Blessing

Can I Really Say That to God?

“I will not let you go unless you bless me”
(Gen. 32:26).

In one of the boldest prayers in the Bible, Jacob cries out during a wrestling match with God. His words hardly sound

like something anyone should say to God. But the context indicates he *is* talking with God here: “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared” (Gen. 32:30, NLT).

Throughout the Bible we find “wrestling prayers”—prayers made in those challenging moments when we don’t know what God is doing and may even disagree. These are prayers from the ragged edge, when we’re walking by faith but struggling with the next step:

- David prayed, “How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Psalm 13:1).

- Isaiah inquired of the Lord, “Where is the passion and the might you used to show on our behalf? Where are your mercy and compassion now?” (Isa. 63:15, NLT).
- Elijah, afraid that Jezebel would kill him after God had shown His power against the prophets of Baal, fled into the wilderness and prayed, “I have had enough, LORD. . . . Take my life” (1 Kings 19:4).
- When Jonah was angry with God for His mercy on the repenting citizens of Nineveh, the prophet responded with an *I told you so!* He complained to the Lord: “Didn’t I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish!” (Jonah 4:2, NLT).
- Even Jeremiah “grappled with God.” Although he obeyed God and warned His people that Jerusalem would be invaded if they didn’t repent,

he then lamented that instead of being blessed for his obedience, his only reward was rejection: “O LORD, you misled me, and I allowed myself to be misled. You are stronger than I am, and you overpowered me. Now I am mocked every day; everyone laughs at me” (Jer. 20:7, NLT).

All of these prayers are raw and rough, giving vent to the deepest emotions of the human heart. They combine belief and unrelenting candor, pushing the limits in a struggle to understand what God is doing. These are prayers that make us uncomfortable, pressing us with the question, “Can I really say that to God?”

God Can Take It

There’s more faith in these prayers than first meets the eye. Underlying these prayers is the firm conviction that God is strong enough to take it. He has allowed these prayers to be included in His Word for a reason. “Wrestling prayers” teach us that we can be absolutely honest with God and hold nothing back.

This is one of the most painful and rewarding lessons we learn as we grapple with what it means to have a personal relationship with a Heavenly Father who is sovereign over even the most intimate details of our lives. *Painful* because these are prayers wrested from the grip of life’s difficult circumstances, and *rewarding* because somehow, through it all, God has a way of showing Himself faithful. The result is the strengthening of our faith.

I prayed my first “wrestling prayer” before my final year as a philosophy major in college. I had resisted God’s call into ministry for years. Then, as soon as I became obedient, the circumstances of my life became more difficult. A financial crisis, a personality conflict with a professor, and a broken relationship with a girl I loved—all within a few months—left my emotions ragged and my head reeling.

One afternoon, angry and frustrated with God, I sat in my old Dodge behind my apartment building and wondered where the money was going to come from to finish my senior year. I prayed, “Father, I did what You called me to—and look what happened! Now I hardly know what to believe. If You’re really there and You want me to go into the ministry, do something! Do something so that I know it’s unmistakably the power of the living Lord Jesus Christ.”

I resolved to wait, thinking that if God really wanted me in the pastoral ministry, He would make it clear. And if an answer didn’t come I would be free to go in another direction.

Two days later I received a phone call from the college. The public relations department had just received word about a new scholarship offered locally. “All you have to do,” they told me, “is go to the First Baptist Church and sit down and have a talk with the pastor.” The next afternoon I was sitting in his office.

“This scholarship was given by a family who was nationally successful in the restaurant business,” he explained. “They were saved through the ministry of our church. But you need to know that it is given for one reason only: to show the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

One week later, a check arrived at the college in my name, covering all the remaining funds needed for my senior year. God had grappled with me, and He had a new hold on me, pinning me in a way I would never forget. My calling was set, and in the following years God provided for every need until my education was complete.

Not a Neat Package

As I’ve told that story over the years, some have responded: “You shouldn’t have prayed like that. It was almost like you were giving God an ultimatum.”

But wrestling prayers don’t always fit into neat theological packages. Gideon put his fleece out not once but twice



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MINISTRIES

(Judges 6:36–40). Hezekiah asked for the shadow on the sundial to go *backward* ten steps (2 Kings 20:8–11). Few theologians would argue these prayers are models for anyone’s daily practice, but they point to the rough beauty of wrestling prayer. God loves us. And, in His mercy, He meets us where we are—even with our limited vision, self-focus, and struggling hearts. Why? Because “he knows how weak we are” (Ps. 103:14, NLT).

Our Heavenly Father accepts our brutally honest prayers. He uses them to deepen our relationship with Him and give us new confidence in His wisdom, goodness, and strength.

Jesus once encountered a man who cried out to the Lord, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” The Master responded, not by rebuking the man for his lack of faith, but by healing his demon-possessed son (Mark 9:24).

We know God “looks on the heart”

(1 Sam. 16:7, ESV) and discerns even our “secret motives” (Jer. 17:10, NLT). He sees when we’re sincerely seeking Him. He understands that we may struggle to understand what He’s doing at any given moment. But the fact that we’re struggling doesn’t mean we are doubting Him or being “double-minded” (see James 1:5–8). We’re just being human.

A Limp and a Blessing

God uses our wrestling prayers to interact with us in ways that touch our hearts and lives more deeply. We are never the same. Jacob’s encounter with God left him with a limp but also a blessing. He wasn’t just *Jacob* anymore (he who grasps the heel—Gen. 25:26). He was *Israel*—one who has “struggled with God” and “overcome” (Gen. 32:28).

But what kind of a name is that? How can anyone “overcome” God? The

only way Jacob could have won was if God let him. And that’s just like a loving Father, isn’t it? Sometimes (not always), we let our kids win because it’s *good* for them, helping them gain new strength through the struggle.

We can wrestle in prayer because God *allows* us to—and because God loves it when we give ourselves passionately to Him with every fiber of our being: “So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most” (Heb. 4:16, NLT).

When we let ourselves be real with God, He makes Himself real to us. **PC**



JAMES BANKS is a pastor, speaker, and author on the topic of prayer (jamesbanks.org). His books *Prayers for Prodigals* and *The Lost Art of Praying* are available at prayershop.org.

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A close-up photograph of a stethoscope with a black frame and a silver chest piece, resting on a white heart-shaped cutout. The background is a vibrant red. The stethoscope's tubing extends from the chest piece towards the bottom right corner of the frame.

**IT MIGHT BE
TIME FOR A
HEART CHECK**



LET LOVE RULE

Whenever a particular colleague would call me on the phone, I would immediately freeze up. Our ministry was suffering from his seemingly self-serving decision-making and destructive actions. When confronted, he refused to repent or resign.

Somehow I survived that situation. But when he called, more than a decade after he finally moved on, I hesitated to pick up the phone.

But I'm glad I did. This time he was calling to confess that he was taking responsibility for the failure of our ministry relationship. And he recognized that I had sought reconciliation. That surprising call led to a few more calls, a few emails and, eventually, an invitation from him to lead his members in a prayer weekend.

I was ready to respond positively to him because, from the beginning of that troubled time, I had done my best to resist the urge for revenge and the feelings of resentment. I had resolved to love him in my heart by the power of the Holy Spirit.

BY PHIL MIGLIORATTI

LOVELESS PRAYERS PRODUCE PRECISELY NOTHING.

Every day multitudes of Christians are praying for revival by petitioning the Lord to change hearts, forgive sins, cleanse lives, and fill churches. God calls us to pray this way. But perhaps we have failed to anticipate that when the Lord answers those prayers, He also expects something else to change—the heart of how and why the Church prays.

In his epistle, Jude wrote, “Dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life” (1:20–21).

Every renewed relationship requires a change of communication patterns. Jude makes it clear that for Christ followers to keep their revived relationship with the Lord, prayer is an essential component. “Praying in the Holy Spirit” enables us to stay “right at the center of God’s love” (Jude 1:20–21, MSG).

Our call to pray is a call to experience and express God’s love. He wants His love to reign—to be central at the core of our praying—now and always.

LOVE MOTIVATES A REVIVED CHURCH TO PRAY

If it is true (and it is!) that without love, we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:1–3), then it may also be true that loveless prayers produce precisely nothing.

Few of us would admit to “loveless” praying, but our need for sweeping revival in the Church is an indication we have “abandoned the love [we] had at first” (Rev. 2:4, ESV). If praying is a sign of staying in love with God, then abandoned prayer meetings reveal a Church that has grown cold, content with the status quo.

If a sign of love is caring more about the one you love than yourself, then our “heal me, help me” prayer lists reveal a self-centered Church. Is our longing for revival actually a response to our Lord wooing us, warning us that the love we had at first is gone?

Action Step:

Ensure that love is the motivating factor in every spoken or silent prayer. Instruct those you lead in prayer to include phrases such as these:

- Because of Your great love . . .
- With gratitude for Your love to us through Christ . . .
- Grant us the Father’s heart of love as we pray . . .
- Break our hearts over the people and problems that break your heart, Lord. . . .

LOVE SHAPES THE WAY A REVIVED CHURCH PRAYS

Loving our Savior—easy. Loving a changing and crumbling culture—not so easy. In fact, many of us are becoming alienated from and fearful of our postmodern, increasingly anti-Christian, society. What was once an “in God we trust” nation seems to have become antagonistic toward Christianity. Sometimes society feels like our enemy.

For some, this takes away the motivation to pray with love. Others interpret it as permission to pray with anger and judgment. But we know our Lord’s command: “I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Love and prayer are inextricably linked—even in difficult situations. *Especially* in difficult situations.

God gave us His love as the ultimate weapon of warfare. So when He calls us by His Spirit into prayer, He calls us to extol His love in praise and to declare His love as the ultimate purpose of our petitions. Being transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2) is more than a cerebral absorption of Bible information. It is a transformation of all we are and all we do, including how and why we pray.

The Apostle Paul’s prayer becomes our model: “That your love may abound more and more” (Phil. 1:9). And as our love for God abounds, our love will also abound for what God longs for: “For the earth [to] be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover

LOVE HELP CENTER

Here are some resources to help you pray with love as your heart motivation:

- An email reminder to pray for lost persons: praycareshare.com
- A website stocked with stories and resources devoted to the prayer-care-share lifestyle: LOVE2020.com
- Video clips to help you cast vision and train Christ followers in loving their neighbors and their communities *for* and *with* and *to* Christ: youtube.com/LoveGodOthers
 - Scriptures and links to articles: [#LOVE2020](https://twitter.com/LOVE2020)
 - Podcasts and commentary: [facebook.com/makeloveyouraim](https://www.facebook.com/makeloveyouraim)

the sea” (Hab. 2:14). Now that’s love!

Action Steps:

- Encourage others to join you in praying that your praises and petitions will become saturated with love—authentic love for Almighty God.
- Pray you will grow in love for others in the Body of Christ, as well as in redeeming love for the hard to love.
- Pray with love for those who are lost (that they will not perish), those with the least (the poor and the powerless), and those who lead others (often easily deceived by the enemy or deluded by the evil dark enticements of greed or power).

LOVE PORTRAYS THE MESSAGE OF A REVIVED CHURCH

If we pray for the spreading of God’s love to all the nations but outwardly express a lack of love for individuals or a lack of compassion on relevant issues, we are only making noise (1 Cor. 13:1). In fact, worse than noise, our culture perceives us as hypocritical and judgmental, like twenty-first century Pharisees.

The Church has not so much become *irrelevant* as we have been exposed as *irreverent*, unable to practice what we preach—and thereby disproving the gospel in the minds of those who need Christ. Great-Commission praying requires a Great-Commandment lifestyle of love.

For instance, in many areas our children’s schools have become off limits to the gospel, and Christians are often considered *persona non grata*. But that did not deter a pastors prayer group in Southern California. Having heard that the nearby high school had a serious dropout problem, they began praying together for the school and the students.

Their concern became a burden, which led them to pray on site, knowing that the best insight comes only from seeing and feeling the burden of the situation firsthand. They were careful to stay

on public property and did not behave in an offensive manner (preaching or waving Bibles). They simply prayed silently or quietly as they walked the campus. Soon, students who attended their congregations began to engage them in conversation, asking “Why are you here? What are you doing?”

This gave the pastors opportunities to

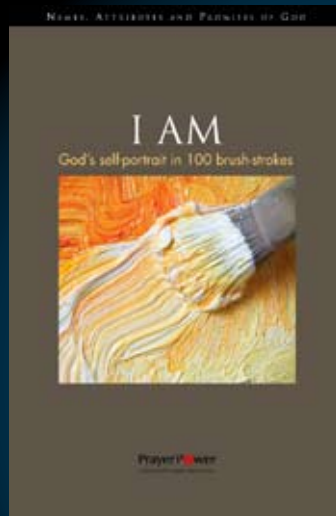
explain their purpose (to ask God to help the students succeed at their studies) and their motive (because they truly cared about all the children at the school). Coinciding with the time frame of their on-site prayers, the dropout rate drastically declined. And the school district, to the pastors’ surprise, asked them to pray at other troubled schools in their district.

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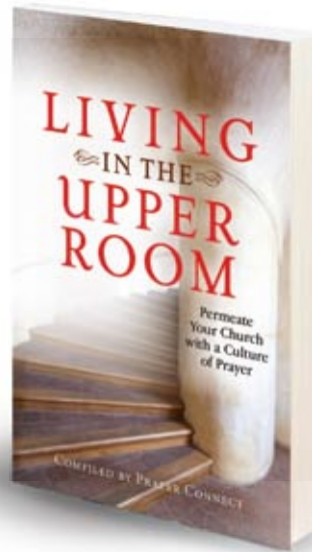
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Living in the Upper Room is a 48-page, 4 x 6 booklet that includes the theme articles of *Prayer Connect* issue 10. It offers both a picture of how dynamic a praying church can be and practical steps on how to get there. This content can inspire your leadership team to desire becoming a praying church right out of the Book of Acts.

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100 or more copies: .59



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“Make love your aim” (1 Cor. 14:1, rsv) refers not only to God-focused praying but also to outward-focused living. Christ’s love compels us to love one another in the Body of Christ (1 Thess. 4:9) and to love our neighbors (Matt. 22:39) who are not yet part of God’s family.

Jesus prayed that we, His Church, would be proof to the world that God loves them (John 17:23). Actually, loving them—through our love-motivated prayers—is the only way to accomplish that.

Action Steps:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to identify the individuals He wants to reveal His truth to through your words and deeds of love.
- Create a list at praycareshare.com to receive an automatic weekly reminder to pray.
- Ask the Lord to show you how to demonstrate your love in ways each person will best appreciate—an act of mercy or hospitality, or problem-solving resources.
- As Paul instructs us, “Pray also . . . that whenever [you] speak, words may be given [you] so that [you] will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which [you are] an ambassador” (Eph. 6:19–20).

Everyone is created in God’s image and desperately needs at least one saved-by-grace, filled-with-the-Spirit person to pray for them, show them love, and tell them the gospel truth. And that means picking up the phone when you dread talking to the person on the other end! God loves the world through those who love Christ. You and I are those ambassadors of God’s love. ☞



PHIL MIGLIORATTI is COO of Mission America and national coordinator of Loving Your Communities to Christ. His passion is to network pastors, prayer, and city transformation movements. He blogs at Philsblog.net.

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Praying God's Purposes for His Church

God's purposes for His people are clearly outlined in Scripture. When we pray according to those purposes, we are praying the very desires on God's heart for His Church. Use one or more of these 36 scriptural principles to pray for your church:

1. That we pursue lost people as Jesus did (Luke 19:10).
2. That we evangelize our circles of influence (Acts 1:8).
3. That we worship God in Spirit and truth (John 4:22–24).
4. That we love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength (Deut. 6:5; Luke 10:27).
5. That we all become more like Jesus (1 Peter 2:21).
6. That we all become radical followers of Jesus (Luke 9:23–26, 57–62).
7. That we grow strong in faith, believing God for great things (Rom. 4:20–21; John 14:2).
8. That we become disciplers of others, teaching all the things that Jesus taught (Matt. 28:19–20).
9. That we learn to pray fervently and effectively (Heb. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:1–2).
10. That we preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2).
11. That we encourage one another daily (Heb. 10:25).
12. That we surrender our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1–2).
13. That we quit being children and grow up in our faith (Heb. 5:12–14).
14. That we no longer live for ourselves but for Jesus (2 Cor. 5:15).
15. That we quit loving the world (1 John 2:15–17).
16. That we become a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27).
17. That we be holy (Matt. 5:48; 1 Thess. 4:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:16).
18. That we be sexually pure (1 Cor. 6:19–20).
19. That we share, break bread, and fellowship together (Acts 2:42–46).
20. That we challenge, train, equip, send, and support missionaries (Acts 13:2–4, 16:5–10).
21. That we be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
22. That we raise our children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).
23. That we not forsake meeting together (Heb. 10:25).
24. That we aggressively minister to “little ones” (Matt. 19:14).
25. That we identify and exercise our gifts (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4).
26. That we sing to the Lord (Col. 3:16).
27. That we remember to give thanks in everything, good or bad (1 Thess. 5:18).
28. That we give cheerfully and liberally (2 Cor. 9:6–10).
29. That we trust God to heal our bodies (James 5:14–16).
30. That we confess to one another our faults, failures, and weaknesses (James 5:16).
31. That we are prepared to give a reasoned answer about our faith (1 Peter 3:15).
32. That we resist the devil so that he flees (1 Peter 5:8–10; Eph. 6:10–18).
33. That we forgive one another and make restitution (Matt. 6:14–15; Eph. 4:29–32).
34. That we partake of the Lord's table in a worthy manner (1 Cor. 11:26–30).
35. That we follow the Lord in baptism (Matt. 3:14–17).
36. That we love one another so intensely that the world sees and believes (John 13:35).

—Adapted from a list developed by Rev. Richard LaFountain. For more prayer guides developed by Richard, go to prayertoday.org.



Lord, Do It Again!

Do you have a powerful story of answered prayer that you believe can encourage others? Do you know of someone who has experienced healing, or perhaps the return of a prodigal, or the reviving of a church? We are looking for stories that will remind people of God's faithfulness and His power to work in seemingly impossible situations.

We plan to publish stories in our November/December 2014 issue that will inspire people to pray with greater faith and hope. Articles should be 500 to 1,200 words, submitted to editor@prayerconnect.net by June 1. You need to have firsthand interaction with the person and his/her story—and we need to verify it through your pastor or another ministry leader.

We know God has worked powerfully throughout Scripture and in history, but we are looking for current stories that will stir people's hearts to pray, "Lord, do it again!"

Will You Pray with Us?

Prayer Connect magazine is devoted to encouraging the growth of the prayer movement. We're hoping you will lift us up in prayer in the following areas:

- Wisdom for Jon Graf, publisher of *Prayer Connect*, as he makes decisions about marketing, advertising, and circulation.
- Financial blessing for Harvest Prayer Ministries, the parent organization of *Prayer Connect*. Ask for the Lord's direction for Dave and Kim Butts as they travel, speak, and encourage the prayer movement around the country. Pray also for Dave as he serves as chairperson of America's National Prayer Committee.
- Increased financial stability for *Prayer Connect* through the sale of subscriptions and bulk copies.
- Additional gifted writers who are led by the Spirit to write articles for *Prayer Connect*.
- Creativity and attention to detail for editor Carol Madison and designer Bridget Rennie as they manage the content and graphic design of each issue.

Send us an email and let us know that you are praying—and if you are hearing or sensing anything from the Lord regarding the magazine: editor@prayerconnect.net. Thank you for keeping us in your prayers!

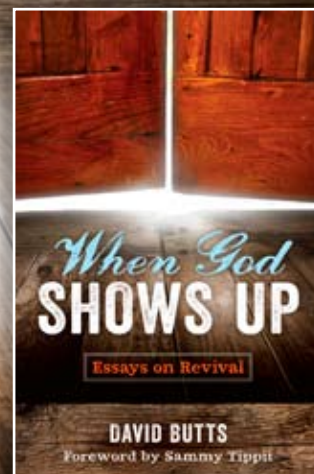
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"Revival is not strange or mystical," writes Dave Butts in his new book *When God Shows Up*. **"It is simply the church waking up to the presence of Christ in her midst."**

In this series of essays, Butts shows us what true revival is, how the church needs it, and how to effectively pray for revival. If you hunger for more of God's presence in your church, read *When God Shows Up*.



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Praying for the Nations in Our Midst

“A hundred years ago we sent the missionaries to the nations to look for the cities,” writes Dr. Ray Bakke. “Today, you go to the cities and you find the nations.”

When thinking about the “nations,” often our thoughts go immediately to those who live across the ocean. Ethnic Embrace USA is bringing greater awareness to the Church about the importance of blessing the nations among us. As a result of poverty, war, famine, natural disasters, and persecution, hurting people have scattered all over the earth. Many come to the United States for better opportunities or to escape difficult circumstances in their homelands.

Scattered populations with common origins are a phenomenon called *diaspora*, which occurs when a group is displaced or has migrated from their original homeland. How can the Church mobilize to reach into the lives of “the nations” and make a Kingdom difference? Ethnic Embrace USA’s mission is united, strategic prayer, and its vision is to see collaborative action in cities across the United States.

The Ethnic Embrace USA initiative launched in Denver in 2012. Brian Considine has spearheaded this movement in conjunction with his role at Perspectives and in partnership with the Mission America Coalition and Ethnic America Network. Considine believes passionately that this movement must be based firmly upon a foundation of prayer: “We must pray so they might know!”

Resources developed by Ethnic Embrace USA help the Church pray more effectively for the nations in our midst. This ministry is continually adding more city-specific prayer materials as well. The website (ethnicembraceusa.net) is easy to

navigate. A variety of prayer experiences and resources can be found on the home page and the Pray dropdown menu. Here are a few to consider:

40 Days of Prayer Ebook

A free, powerful e-book titled *Ethnic Embrace USA – Blessing the Nations Among Us* is available to download, copy, and share freely. Because prayer should always lead to action, a simple five-step process toward missional engagement is included. An accompanying interactive 40 Days website is also planned, providing an interactive experience for entire families to explore. In each of the 40 days they can learn about a different featured people group. Information can be accessed from QR codes using a smart phone app such as Red Laser.

USA People Group Prayer Project

The USA People Group Prayer Project provides a daily social media post via Twitter or Facebook to raise awareness about prayer for the diaspora peoples in our nation. Each day features a people group to pray for. Most are unreached by the gospel. Share and re-tweet these posts, and encourage others to pray with you! Ethnic Embrace USA’s Facebook page address is: [facebook.com/groups/EthnicEmbraceUSA/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/EthnicEmbraceUSA/).

30 Days of Prayer for Our Muslim Neighbors


Each year during Ramadan, you have an opportunity to spend 30 consecutive days praying for one of the Muslim people groups living in the USA. It is estimated that 6–8 million Muslims are our neighbors, co-workers, service providers, and friends. In 2014 Ramadan will begin on June 29 and end on July 28.

10/40 Window Peoples of the USA Initiative

The world’s most unreached and unengaged people groups live in what’s called the 10/40 Window. More than a billion people in this area of the world have never heard of Jesus Christ. Many people originally from these least-reached people groups now make their homes in the USA. The 10/40 Window Peoples of the USA initiative seeks local churches of prayer and action to embrace each group in each city where they are living. You can serve as a diaspora champion to embrace the 10/40 Window Peoples of the USA.

Embracing the Christian Diaspora

Ethnic Embrace USA encourages us to recognize that many people who come to our nation are already Christians, and they are fleeing persecution and hardship in their homelands. It is vital that Christian communities welcome these people, care for them, and love them.

God cares about the “foreigner,” the scattered people—diaspora—whether Christian or non-Christian. So must we. Informed intercession is vital to reaching and loving those whom God has placed in our midst. 

What’s Not to Like?



Here are some prayer pages on Facebook we encourage you to “Like.” (Add www.facebook.com before the / on each address.)

Prayer Connect

[/prayerconnect](https://www.facebook.com/prayerconnect)

Harvest Prayer Ministries

[/harvestprayer](https://www.facebook.com/harvestprayer)

Pray the Word

[/praytheword](https://www.facebook.com/praytheword)

A Simple Way to Teach Prayer in Small Groups | By Carol Madison

Dave and Marilyn Hansen like *Prayer Connect* magazine so much that they figured there must be a way to introduce it to their small group members. So they looked through past themes of the magazine and selected topics they believed most related to the interests of their group. They then prepared to launch into several months of using *Prayer Connect* as the study/discussion time during their meetings.

Taking a New Approach

The Hansens lead a small group comprised of members from both Calvary Community Church in Westlake, CA, and its church plant—Living Oaks Church in Newbury Park, CA. After their group finished a study of the Holy Spirit, they prayed specifically about what they should study next. Dave says it was a like a “bam” moment when the Holy Spirit confirmed to both of them that *Prayer Connect* was the next step.

They chose four issues of the magazine and ordered enough copies for each member of the group to have his/her own copy. The Hansens’ instructions were simple: Look through the magazines and pick an article you identify with—and then be prepared to facilitate a discussion. “We thought it was important for everyone to get a chance to lead,” says Dave.

The group immediately discovered they could discuss only one article per meeting because the topics prompt so much interaction.

“We especially like using *Prayer Connect* instead of a book study. It seems less daunting to have a magazine rather than a whole book on prayer because you have different writers with more of a worldview,” explains Marilyn. Dave adds,

“We’re not just studying one person’s perspective on prayer. I got excited about all the different authors from different parts of the country and the Body of Christ.”

Group members come prepared with the designated article studied and highlighted, with questions marked. Then the facilitator guides the discussion by drawing attention to key points. “We do a quick overview of the article first,” explains Dave, “and then we go right into discussion. But we don’t ask what people think of the whole article. We highlight key paragraphs and Scripture passages.”

Using the Bible Study

Each issue also has a Bible study prepared by Sandra Higley, featuring additional Scripture passages and questions that complement the theme articles. To save time looking up all the Scripture passages, someone in the group volunteers to print out all the passages for the group. (*Biblegateway.com* is an online Bible that can help with this task.)

“There are so many Scriptures,” says Dave, “that we thought it was crucial for people to read through each one.” That way everyone is involved by taking turns reading the passages.

“When we were doing the *Prayer Connect* study on spiritual warfare, the group was excited to see how many verses in both the Old and New Testaments related to warfare and struggle,” adds Marilyn. “They [could] see God at work . . . throughout Scripture.”

Praying in Fresh Ways

The Hansens anticipate they may spend two years using just those four issues of *Prayer Connect*. They have found that the prayer times in their small group have also changed, as now the prayer flows more

out of what they have just learned—as opposed to praying according to requests. The focus of their prayer is now on applying the biblical principles learned through the articles and their discussion.

Dave believes the timing is just right, as God is setting the foundation for changes and increased warfare coming soon to the Church. “God is bringing the Body of Christ together in prayer—and the magazine demonstrates that.”

Dave and Marilyn also find the magazine to be up to date with what is happening around the world and in the prayer movement. “The articles are always relevant, fresh, and new,” says Marilyn. “Yet the truth doesn’t change.”

Ordering for Your Group

There are two inexpensive ways to get issues of *Prayer Connect* for your small group. First, you can order copies for all your group members at 15 percent off the normal rate. Simply use the code that appears in the PrayerShop ad on page 4 of each issue.

As a second option, we now offer an ongoing multiple-copy automatic shipment product. You can sign up to receive ten copies (shipped to one address) of each issue of *Prayer Connect*. This is set up as a “recurring billing” product, which means your credit card will be automatically charged every two months. The price, including shipping in the U.S., is \$24.99—a \$99.96 savings over ten individual subscriptions. You can stop the service at any time.

Each issue also features an ad that describes the past issues, giving your group members an overview of the topics they might like to study. 📄

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.



Prevailing Prayer: Sob with God | By G. Campbell Morgan

The only light that we can ever shed upon the darkness of the world must be light beaming from the face lifted toward God's tomorrow. In the matter of prayer, this is of supreme importance. To pray with prevailing prayer there must be the vision of the morning breaking in the Eastern sky. It is the man who sees the coming glory who knows what it is to put blood and sacrifice into the business of establishing that Kingdom here.

In order to pray prevailingly, I must live in the power of the hope that maketh not ashamed, having my face ever lifted towards the light while I yet look at the sorrow around me, and serve diligently the will of my King.

The indwelling Spirit knows the will of God and interprets it to the soul in whom He abides. This He does by unveiling Christ, who is the revelation of the will of God to me. As He was the Word incarnate, He was the will of God incarnate. I come to Him that I may see what is God's will for myself and for all men; that I may understand what is God's purpose concerning the whole world.

The Spirit's Groaning

As we look out upon the movements of the hour and upon all the facets of life, the indwelling Spirit sets them in relation to the will of God, and a keen consciousness is born within us of the failure in the midst of which we live. Thus the Spirit makes intercession in us with groaning which cannot be uttered as He gives us this new consciousness of the limitation and paralysis of all life without God. As the Spirit interprets to us the will of God, He shows the disaster of being out of harmony with that will.

As the Spirit interprets the will of God, therefore, He makes the soul profoundly discontented with everything that is contrary thereto, and this because

of the soul's supreme content with the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. That is what the apostle meant when he wrote, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves" [Rom. 8:22-23, KJV].

The Spirit's work is to interpret the sob and the sigh.

The heavenly people are, therefore, those who most acutely feel earth's sorrows and are able to enter into fellowship with God in prayer for the winning of the victories of His love. Following consciousness of discontent is that of desire for the coming of the Kingdom, for the setting up of the will of God, which means the healing of wounds and the breaking of chains.

A Ready Response

To that work of the indwelling Spirit there must be a ready response. "Quench not the Spirit." When the Spirit interprets the will of God for life, for home, for city, for nation, we must listen to no other philosophy, be seduced by no other ideal. As the glories of that Kingdom

flame and flash before us, we must never be turned aside by the glamour of the things of the world, the flesh and the devil. Answer the Spirit. Let Him teach. Let Him show the vision. Believe the Spirit. "Quench not the Spirit."

But more, infinitely more. When the Spirit revealing the will of God for the world creates in the heart a great pain and a great discontent, do not let us check it. That is what Christian men and women, alas, are too constantly doing. When the story of sin and sorrow of humanity is told, they close their ears and are not willing to share in the pain. That is to grieve the Spirit indeed. We ought to hear. We ought to know.

We ought to be ready to bring the new sensitiveness of our Christian life into close touch with the world's agony until we feel its pain as our very own. The Spirit desires that we should know its sorrow. His work is to interpret to us the meaning of the sob and sigh and the agony of the world. When we feel that, there will spring out of our life a new desire which will drive us to prayer that God's Kingdom may come, and to self-sacrificing service without which such prayer is blasphemy.

Thus we shall begin to sob with God and to God, in our sense of the world's sorrow. Out of such prayer the toil and travail come which bring the Kingdom in. Thank God, we can, if we will, respond to this revelation, meditation and inspiration so as to pray with prevailing power. **PC**

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN (1863-1945) was a British evangelist, preacher, and leading Bible scholar. He preached his first sermon at age 13 after being profoundly affected by the ministry of D.L. Moody. His reputation as a preacher and Bible expositor grew throughout Britain and spread to the United States. He was pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years. Excerpted from *The Practice of Prayer*.



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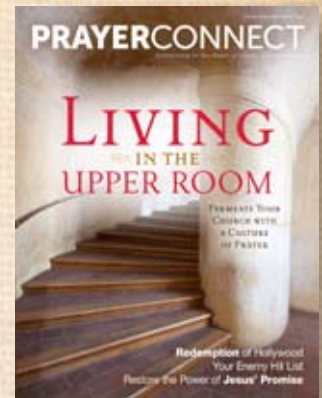
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