

# PRAYERCONNECT

Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

## GOD SPEAKS

**Can You Hear Him?**



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TWO CANDLESTICKS AND **LAVISH GRACE**

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## Article Submissions

We are looking for general articles, ideas, and news stories on what God is doing as a result of prayer. As a start-up magazine, we are primarily looking for newly written pieces that have not appeared in other publications. Writer's guidelines are available by emailing Carol Madison at [editor@prayerconnect.net](mailto:editor@prayerconnect.net). For news stories, we recommend emailing first to see if we have an interest in reporting on the event or item you wish to write about. Send your submissions to:

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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

The combination of prayer with praise is a mighty and powerful force that touches heaven and transforms earth. Praise has a way of pushing back spiritual darkness, moving you into a place of joy and hope, and shifting your prayers to put Christ first. The May/June 2014 issue and other back issues can be ordered at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).



## Of Geese and Revival

I hate geese! I never used to, but now that I own property, where my house is on a large pond, I have learned something about geese. They are filthy, disgusting creatures that do nothing but eat and poop. They love to come up in our backyard and hang out—making a mess everywhere.



I have tried different ways to get rid of them, but nothing works. (I can't shoot them because they are protected.) For a time, early in the spring when they first appear on our pond and start coming into our backyard, I can simply stand on the back porch, clap my hands, and yell, "Get out of here." They will leave. But over time they realize this noisy person is simply staying in one spot and there's no need to move. So they don't.

Now, every morning when I get up and every afternoon when I come home from work (and multiple times through the evening), I come running out of my back door with a broom, yelling at them. It is fun to watch three or four families with little ones scurry here and there as they keep ahead of this idiot screaming at them. I can get rid of them for a while, but it takes a whole-hearted effort on my part.

### Only Clapping Our Hands

In some ways, I think this is a metaphor for what needs to happen with revival praying today. When our nation started morally deteriorating in the mid-1960s (prayer removed from schools) and early '70s (legalized abortion), our prayer efforts were similar to clapping my hands on the porch. We were content just electing officials who were opposed to abortion. But as things kept getting worse and worse, efforts increased only a little.

In the '80s and '90s we switched to chasing the geese with a broom. Prayer ministries launched with the sole purpose to pray for our nation. Dr. Bill Bright of Cru called for fasting and prayer as the only answer for our nation. These efforts seemed to increase awareness and motivate people to pray. But the impact lessened as we moved into the new century. (I guess we were getting weary of chasing the geese.)

In the last few years, however, more and more individuals are recognizing that the only hope for America is a revived Church. Prayer for revival is building again as people get more desperate over the worsening situation. As we realize we cannot do anything to fix the problem—anything, that is, but pray—we are seeing an ever-growing, unified effort.

In the Old Testament, when things got really dark spiritually, God always responded to a unified "crying out." And I believe He will today as well.

That's why I am hopeful and excited as I see unifying efforts like OneCry, Renewal of America, the Awakening America Alliance, and other groups uniting with a clarion call for revival prayer.

What about you? Are you praying for revival in the Church and a fresh outpouring of Christ's Spirit to bring a spiritual awakening again to the United States? I encourage you to check out some of these groups and get involved.

Crying out to God in a unified way will move the geese.

—Jonathan Graf



# Frustrated Prayer Leaders

Would you like to double the number of people  
in your congregation reporting  
a good prayer life in just four months?

Needed, two (possibly more) churches of approximately 125 to 250 attendees to test a set of tools that have already been proven, in two previous churches, to double the number of people in their congregation reporting a good prayer life, in just four months!

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tools that have allowed us to take two very different churches, launched within six weeks of each other, to having more than 50% of their congregation achieving good prayer lives. Four months prior to using this approach, they only had one quarter of their people reporting good prayer lives.

To apply for one of these two test opportunities email your contact information and questions to [mike@harvestprayer.com](mailto:mike@harvestprayer.com)

**Strategic Prayer Initiative** | [Strategicpi.org](http://Strategicpi.org)







## Intercessors Summoned to Hollywood

Prayer ministries from across the globe will gather in the media epicenter of Hollywood, CA, October 1–5, 2014, for The Summons—a solemn assembly of corporate and strategic intercession. The National Day of Prayer (NDP) Task Force is partnering with the Hollywood Prayer Network to call intercessors to pray at studios and with media executives, producers, and the creative community.

Participants will hear speakers that include prayer leaders and industry professionals. They will also spend time in corporate prayer sessions, then be commissioned to venture out on “prayer mission trips” to studio lots, Hollywood Boulevard, TV tapings, and walking tours.

Christians in the Hollywood film and TV industry are eager for the prayer support. “I just feel like that for too long

Christians have stood in judgment over Hollywood, instead of really having God's heart for it and seeing it more like Nineveh than Sodom and Gomorrah,” says actress Kirsten Roquemore.

Producer Karen Covell, founding director of the Hollywood Prayer network, adds that through prayer “God is invited in to change hearts, to change content, to change lives—and lives changed in Hollywood will change the world.”

The Summons in Hollywood is an extension of the vision of the executive committee of the NDP Task Force and the National Prayer Committee. They met for several days in August 2011 at the Jericho Center in Colorado Springs, CO. After many days of fasting and prayer, the Lord



revealed to the leadership the following Scripture passage: “The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun

to where it sets” (Ps. 50:1).

As a result, they hosted The Summons in Washington, D.C., in October 2012, with 300 intercessors praying at key sites throughout the nation's capital, as well as with the staff of every Congressional member.

Now The Summons moves to the West Coast (where the sun sets in the nation), with the call to intercede for this key sphere of cultural influence. Registration is limited to 300 people. For more information go to [hollywoodprayer.org](http://hollywoodprayer.org).

## Children's Prayer Movement Grows

During the weekend of April 13–14, 2014, a worldwide call went out for children, youth, and families to unite in prayer and worship. Global Prayer and Praise is a collaborative worldwide initiative comprised of various organizations such as The International Prayer Council, Children in Prayer, Youth With A Mission, International House of Prayer in Kansas City, 4/14 Window Movement, Global Day of Worship, Transform World, The Call, Arise International, and numerous others who believe this is a God movement. The goal is to raise up a generation of children and youth who will pray strategically for their nations.

In a recent gathering in China, 500 key leaders from 24 provinces met to

pray, worship, and commit to mobilizing children in prayer. One International Prayer Council leader writes that this movement of God is experiencing significant growth: “Thanks for praying. Our whole team just came back safely from mainland China. We had an extraordinary, powerful time. Breakthroughs after breakthroughs these few days, with quite a lot of both tears and laughter. . . . What the Father has been doing right now in China is really so far and deep beyond our expectations.”

In an historical gathering in Nepal on April 13, more than 2,200 children, youth, and parents gathered to worship and pray together. Leaders considered the open doors to be “miraculous.”

During the weekend of April 13–14,



a 12-hour broadcast from the International House of Prayer in Kansas City involved some 20 different prayer movements and 39 countries in the first attempt to run a globally linked, Internet-driven effort to mobilize children and youth in prayer.

More initiatives are planned, with the hope that thousands, and potentially millions, will partner with a unified focus to release children to become Jesus worshipers. For more information, go to [globalprayerandpraise.com](http://globalprayerandpraise.com).



## Prayer Needed for Liberation in North Korea

**A** Korean advocate for the people of North Korea writes to the leaders of the International Prayer Council with a desperate plea for continued prayers for the people of North Korea: “We do request the prayers of the International Prayer Council for the liberation and healing of North Korea’s prison camp population, for the innumerable homeless and starving North Korean orphans and children, and for all of the people of North Korea.”

Prayer needs include:

- The reform or overthrow of the evil, totalitarian regime of Kim Jong Un.
- The rescue of an estimated three-fourths of the population who do not get enough to eat, especially the children.
- The liberation of an estimated 200,000 prison camp inmates, many of them who are Christians or just suspected of being disloyal

to the government. They are normally worked to death or used for experiments.

- The protection and strengthening of the persecuted church in North Korea, as well as massive growth in spite of hardship. Thousands upon thousands of Christians have been martyred by the communist regime since it took over decades ago. Most have died without the world knowing or caring about them.

## Revival in a Once-Hostile Land

**A** Christian revival is touching the northernmost reaches of Africa. In a region once hostile to the gospel, tens of thousands of Muslims are now following Jesus. Muslims across Northern Africa are converting to faith in Jesus Christ in record numbers.

Quoted in a story by George Thomas for CBN News, Regent University graduate and filmmaker Tino Qahoush said, “What God is doing in North Africa . . . is unprecedented in the history of missions.” Qahoush has spent years traveling the region to document the transformation.

He adds, “I have the privilege of recording testimonies and listening to firsthand stories of men and women, of all ages, where they can be sitting in a room and see the appearance and the presence of God appear to them in reality, like a vision. Some of them gave me stories of how they carry on a conversation; it’s not just a light that appears.” He admits he sometimes feels jealous. “How come Jesus is visiting the Muslim world at this time and age and we don’t hear that happening in the traditional Christian community?”

Mission experts say there is a profound move of God in the predominantly Muslim nations of Mauritania, Western Sahara, Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia. The growth of Christianity, especially in the

last 20 years, has been unprecedented. And now that growth is also evident in the North African nation of Algeria.

Pastor Salah leads one of the largest churches in Algeria. Some 1,200 believers attend the church in a country where 99 percent of the population is Muslim. “In fact we never thought the Algerian church would grow so big,” Salah reports. Every new Christian in his church came from a Muslim background. Since the church opened, they have baptized an average of 150–160 believers per year.

Zino, a former Muslim, was invited by a friend to attend Pastor Salah’s church.

What he observed transformed him. “I saw Algerians worshiping God with all their hearts and it touched me.”

Others, like Farhat, who is also a former Muslim, speak of miraculous encounters. He says he was illiterate and couldn’t read the Bible. But when he accepted the Lord, God made a change. “Since then I’ve read the Bible and understood the Word of God. This is just an example of what God has done in my life and this is the case of many people here in Algeria.”

Even though Algeria is overwhelmingly Muslim, the government has given Protestant churches the freedom to register their congregations. The government may harass and intimidate Christians

from time to time, but the level of persecution is nothing like it was 20 years ago.

Algeria and the countries of North Africa weren’t always open to the gospel. A veteran missionary in the region says things were very different some years ago. Peter [name changed for security reasons] believes the arrival of satellite TV and the Internet have dramatically changed people’s perception of Christianity.

“Today in North Africa on TV you can hear native Arab Christians talking about their faith, who are mature Christians, answering questions, involved in debates. You can hear different points of view—the Christian point of view—in your own living room or in the privacy of your own bedroom,” he explains.

Emboldened by God’s power, Thomas writes, Algerian Christians are now on a mission to take the gospel to the four corners of the globe. “God has put in our hearts to be able to send 1,000 missionaries by the year 2025,” says Pastor Qurahmane. “I really believe that maybe one day America will end up with some Muslim convert missionaries coming to reach out to the Muslims there and in other parts as well.”

**JEREMY REYNALDS** is a senior correspondent for ASSIST News Service ([assistnews.net](http://assistnews.net)).





## Social Media and Prayer Emerge in Saudi Arabia

Saudis are some of the most active users of media in the Arab world. It is estimated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) currently has about five million Twitter users, more than any other region. Facebook has more than 7.8 million users in KSA alone.

Additionally, many Saudis download popular apps (via Apple IOS and Android IOS) on a daily basis. According to a popular Saudi blogger, Saudis' lives were at one time isolated. Before the advent of social media, most Saudis did not

know whether other like-minded people existed in the world.

Now social media has become a way to share the gospel and pray for a movement of God in this nation. Window International Network recently released the "Pray4Saudi" app as a free download for the first 10,000 users. By clicking on the "Amen" button on the app, believers can testify to their agreement to the daily prayer and share it with others during the "Pray4Ramadan" and "Pray4Hajj" international Twitter campaigns. The

strategic campaign began on June 28 and will continue for the duration of the Ramadan season until July 27.

Emerging social media opens doors for Christians to share the gospel and mobilize prayer for those who do not know Christ. Pray that Christian believers from Muslim backgrounds will have the courage to witness through social media by downloading the app and using Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms.

Taken from *International Prayer Connections* ([ipcprayer.org](http://ipcprayer.org)).

## In God We Trust "Shout-Out"

An effort to reaffirm America's national motto "In God We Trust" will be the focus of a social media "shout-out" campaign on July 30, 2014.

Lea Carawan, executive director of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, the organization behind a nationwide *In God We Trust. Put It Up!* campaign, describes the effort as "part of a proactive strategy spearheaded by national and state government leaders to protect God's enduring and rightful place in America."

The phrase, "In God We Trust," has been inscribed on the nation's currency since the 1800s and officially became the national motto when President Dwight Eisenhower signed it into law on July 30, 1956.

In 2011 the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution (396 to 9) that reaffirmed the national motto and encouraged its public display. Congressman J. Randy Forbes (VA), a key proponent of the resolution, comments, "It is not just a reaffirmation of four words. It is a reaffirmation of the American spirit and a recommitment to the principles that define our nation."

Since then elected leaders and citizens

inspired by the landslide vote have taken action.

Some examples include:

- More than 100 members of Congress and 400 state legislators from both parties have agreed to hang in their offices a replica of the engraved motto found in the U.S. Capitol Visitor's Center.
- In Michigan, the winner of an art contest promoting "In God We Trust" and involving 600 high schools was honored at the state capitol.
- In California, hundreds of cities are displaying "In God We Trust" in their public buildings.
- In Pennsylvania, government leaders are passing legislation to encourage the display of "In God We Trust" in every school classroom.

On July 30, the anniversary of the day in 1956 when President Eisenhower signed into law the creation of the phrase as our national motto, citizens are invited to add their voices to a national social media "shout-out" that will reach millions of people on one day with the message "In God We Trust." Organizers



anticipate a "battle cry" will be raised up on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

This will be an opportunity to not only say, "In God We Trust," but also pray it and display it. The Congressional Prayer Caucus leaders invite prayer for state and national leaders to stand courageously and proudly display the national motto. To participate in the social networking shout-out, go to [InGodWeTrust.com](http://InGodWeTrust.com) and sign up.

### Prayer Calendar

30 Days of Prayer for Muslim World  
**June 28- July 27**  
[waymakers.org](http://waymakers.org)

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Cry Out America  
**Thursday, September 11**  
[awakeningamerica.us](http://awakeningamerica.us)

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See You at the Pole  
**Wednesday, September 24**  
[syatp.com](http://syatp.com)

*Dick Eastman and Every Home for Christ, the creators of "The World Prayer Map" (with over five million copies in circulation globally) present:*

# THE UNITED STATES PRAYER MAP



## MAP FEATURES:

A systematic calendar guide to pray for every state each month (including daily focuses for needs impacting our culture)

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# GOD SPEAKS

Several times in my life I've heard God's voice—not audibly—but as a prompting in my thoughts. Sometimes it's very simple:

*Pray for Geri.*

Why, Lord?

*Because she is grieving over her mom today.*

Later that morning I saw Geri in church and asked how she was doing. "It's been a hard day," she said. "I'm missing my mom."

I've also heard His voice as I've wrestled in prayer over an issue of speaking truth. One night as I tossed and turned in bed, praying about how to deal with a situation, I kept hearing over and over in my mind: "Truth matters." When I woke up the next morning and turned on the television, the first thing I saw was an advertisement that blazed these words across the screen: "Truth Matters." I randomly switched the station and landed on a Christian program. The host was quoting John 8:32: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Not only did I hear the Lord's voice, He provided unexpected confirmations. I knew what I needed to do.

Many times I've immersed myself in Scripture, asking the Lord to speak to me. Words have leapt off the page at me like a billboard. I've read verses that seemed written just for me at that moment in time—or at least I was assured the Lord delighted in directing me to that specific passage. I suspect He's used those same verses many times over for others who were seeking to hear His voice.

I recall one time when He spoke to me so clearly that it changed the direction of my prayer. I had been "contending" in prayer, fasting and crying out to Him over a seemingly impossible situation. Suddenly the words whispered through my mind, "It's over. Stop contending and start worshipping

## Can You Hear Him?

Me with praise and thanksgiving."

Stunned, I prayed again, asking if that was truly God speaking. The same words filled my mind and soul. Still not certain it was the Lord, I asked Him to confirm it in His Word. I "randomly" opened my Bible and my eyes fell immediately on this verse: "I will indeed do what you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and you are my friend" (Ex. 33:17, NLT). I started worshiping and praising Him with thanksgiving! An hour later I received a phone call, informing me that, indeed, my prayer had been profoundly answered.

### Pay Attention

The Lord has spoken to you, as well. Perhaps you've heard Him; perhaps you haven't noticed. Or maybe, uncertain that He wants to speak to you, you haven't thought to ask Him. Yet God is engaging with us in a variety of ways. He's longing for us to pay attention to His voice.

In this issue, you will read about different ways God speaks to people—through examples from today as well as from the Old and New Testaments. Some may seem obvious to you. Others may cause you to wonder, *Does God really speak that way today?* I found myself challenged by our authors to consider new ways God speaks to us. You will also read about best practices of hearing God from writers of different denominational backgrounds. Throughout all the articles there is a consistency: every author elevates the Word of God as the primary way God speaks today. Every whisper and every clear and bold word needs to align with Scripture.

This truth is certain: God still speaks to His people today. I hope you can stop and listen.

**CAROL MADISON** is editor of *Prayer Connect*.

# LISTEN UP

I was sitting with my friend drinking a cup of coffee when she announced, “God spoke to me.” She paused to see how I would respond. I put my cup down and asked, “What did He say?”

She felt the freedom to continue. “Surprisingly, He told me it is time for me to leave my job and stay home with my children. I just wish God would tell my husband, too,” she added.

She had my full attention. Fourteen years ago I left a lucrative job to go into full-time, unpaid ministry. I had also asked God to “tell” my husband—and thankfully, He did.

The tragic part of this story is that even though I was not the first person she told about

God speaking to her, I was the first person to *believe* her. She was very successful and happy at her job; leaving was the last thing on her mind. But God had other plans for her—and He spoke to her during her prayer time while she was sitting quietly, pondering a work project. She clearly remembers asking God to show her His path and to be glorified in her efforts. God responded in a way she did not expect and with authority He knew she would not reject.

## God Continues His Conversations

From the very first words of Scripture, “In the beginning,” we learn God speaks to set His plans in motion. God spoke to Adam and Eve; He spoke to Noah throughout Genesis 6–9. He spoke to—and through—Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, and many others throughout the Old

BY KATHY BRANZELL





**God Still Speaks Today**





Testament, so that His people would be instructed, inspired, disciplined, disciplined, and directed in the way they should go.

In the New Testament God's voice came down and spoke face-to-face with us: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This voice was Jesus: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling

among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14). Christ's disciples and apostles scattered to spread the message Jesus had given to them. Then God continued His conversation when He sent the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in us.

God is unchanging. The same God who spoke with Adam and Eve in the

garden desires to speak to you in your quiet time, in your crisis time, in times of change, challenge, and celebration. The key to hearing God's voice is taking the time to *listen* to Him.

You may be thinking, *I pray every day, even several times a day, and God has never "spoken" to me.* You may believe this, but more than likely He has spoken to you in one way or another. You may have dismissed it. Or you may not have equated common things with God's voice to you: the prompting to speak up, the push in the right direction, or the discernment in a decision. But I can assure you that God desires to speak to you as your sovereign Father, Author of your days, Counselor, Creator, King, and the One who loves you more than you could ever understand.

The question is not, "Will God speak to me?" The question is, "Are you taking the time to listen?"

## Get Ready to Listen

So how can you begin to hear God speak to you? First, begin your prayer time by confessing any sin you know stands between you and God. Ask His forgiveness and allow Him to silence the voice of guilt and shame that discourages you from seeking His presence.

Second, spend periods of your prayer time in complete silence, listening for God to respond to your praise, appreciation, questions, and pleas. I have always wondered why we call it our "quiet time" if we spend the whole time talking. As with any communication, we need to listen with an open mind and a closed mouth.

Third, listen with a discerning heart and an open Bible. God will not contradict Himself; He will not lead you down a path of unrighteousness or turn His head for the sake of your earthly "happiness." He will not give an approving nod to sin and He will not send you out on a journey

## God's Voice to Me

**I**t makes me laugh now, but I still remember the look on my wife's face years ago when I told her I was going to attempt to connect with a biblical author's experience. I wanted her to tie me to a pole in our dark and dirty cellar where bugs and various sounds were screaming for my attention.

Needless to say, it was a far cry from what Paul experienced. But it put me into a situation where I was very much aware of what was going on around me. I listened to every sound, attentive to every detail of sensory input.

For me, listening to God attentively and hearing Him clearly are always connected to *context*. Unfortunately, when things are going well, my spiritual senses become dull. However, when I don't know what to do or I'm wrestling with my convictions on a given issue—I am "all ears," spiritually speaking.

And while context is *important*, knowing what I am listening for is *essential*. If I cannot discern God's voice, I accomplish little.

Years ago, we became separated from our youngest son at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. You can imagine our fear. I began screaming at the top of my voice, frantically trying to find him. Darrick, hearing the distinctiveness of my voice among the clamor of the crowd, soon made his way through the people and ran toward me with his arms uplifted.

We fight a tremendous battle today in seeking to hear God's voice. Many things cry out for our attention. One way to ensure we are hearing His voice is to know His Word, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). God will never speak something into our lives that contradicts His Word.

We can take great comfort in knowing God is always present and willing to communicate with His children. "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10) is an invitation to simply sit in His presence and receive what He wants to give us.

**DR. SAM WARREN**, director of nurture for the Advent Christian Church, oversees the prayer emphasis there.

# DISCIPLE YOUR PEOPLE

alone. God's desire is to be with you every step of the way so that your Kingdom purpose is fulfilled. As He speaks, His Kingdom will come and His will be done.

God also speaks so that He receives glory in the story of how He made the impossible, possible—how He provided in your need and how the blessings that follow obedience to His ways always exceed anything the world has to offer. Even in our time of reading and studying His Word, we can get so caught up in the information and education that we do not pause, in stillness and quietness, to hear the inspiration and engaging conversation God really desires.

As you read Scripture, ask God to reveal His message to you. Show your respect and love for Him with praise and thanksgiving. Offer a pure heart ready to obey, no matter what He says. Sometimes we do not hear from the Lord because we have not settled the issue of obedience in our hearts. Instead we have tuned our ears to get our way, refusing to listen to any voice that does not agree with our desires.

## Lose the Distractions

Finally, get rid of anything that will distract you from listening intently and intentionally. This type of listening comes only with deliberate, deep, honest, times of prayer where God has *all* of your attention. One of the main reasons we may experience difficulty in hearing God's voice is because we are too wrapped up in listening to what everyone else has to say.

If you have your cell phone with you during your prayer time, let me encourage you to turn off the ringer and leave it in another room. Imagine that you are walking toward the throne of God and suddenly you stop and turn away because you get a call. Imagine interrupting God in mid-sentence because you get a text. Envision yourself breaking eye contact

## TO PRAY GOD'S WORD

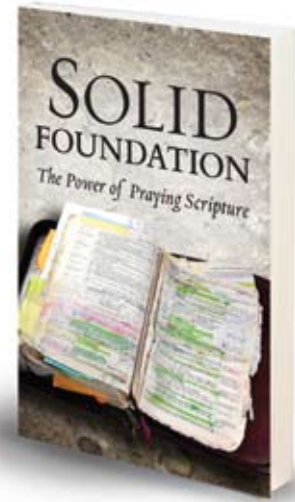
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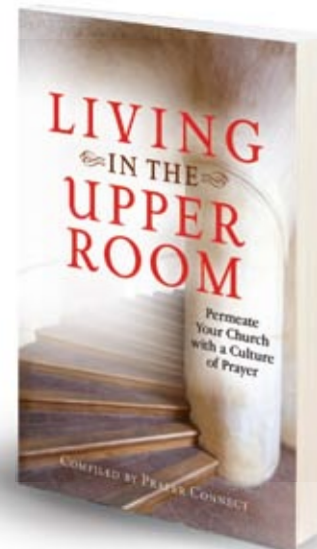
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with Jesus to lean over to check your email inbox. Sadly, we do this to our friends and family all the time. Even more tragic, many of us are guilty of putting God “on hold” to hear from someone else.

John 10:10 warns us that Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. For

those who choose to be “followers of Christ,” Satan delights to distract, discourage, and detain. He will do anything he can do to get you to tune out God’s voice. If He can get you to play instead of pray, or to work instead of embrace the Sabbath, he has just stolen the pleasure of God’s purposes from you.

Thankfully, in John 10:11 Jesus assures us that He is the good Shepherd. He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. Furthermore, His sheep know and follow His voice. Do not allow anything to distract you from hearing or recognizing Christ’s voice.

## God’s Voice to Me

“**M**y precious Lord Jesus, I give you this day. I am your ambassador, desiring to be Your heart, feet, and hands today! Please fill me with Your Spirit, and give me Your heart for each person I encounter. I want to love with Your love.”

Most days my prayers are a desperate cry to have more of Jesus—and less of me. That is the supernatural key to hearing His voice. I find that when I listen, He speaks—simply, yet clearly, with a gentle prompting of my heart!

What a joy it is to know that He wants to use us as His messengers, His representatives, and His ambassadors! “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cor. 5:14–15).

A beautiful day in Florida led me to a prayerwalk around a lake, praying and enjoying the beauty. The Spirit within me was drawn to all the people walking. Suddenly I noticed three teenage girls sitting on the dock, dangling their feet. I heard the familiar soft urging voice within, nudging me. “Nancy, why don’t you talk to them? They need Me.”

“Oh Lord, I can tell them a story. Which one?”

He whispered, “The story of the sinful woman” (Luke 7:36–50).

“Hi, girls!” I launched into the conversation. “What are you up to?” I began some small talk, and then, “May I tell you a story?”

“Sure,” they replied.

I shared this tender story that reveals the heart of Jesus. They smiled—and we discussed it. They loved it, and had not known this kind of love before. The one with a ring in her nose said she went to church but never met Jesus personally. The other two girls live in a broken home.

Before I left, Jesus had encountered them. They all prayed with me to open their hearts to God and to His love. After leaving them with hugs, my book, and a Bible, I promised to call them to meet the next week.

This is the joy of hearing and obeying the voice of God!

**NANCY WILSON** is a speaker, author, and global ambassador with StoryRunners, a mission of Cru to unreached people groups ([nancywilson.org](http://nancywilson.org)).

## Practice and Learn

God still speaks directly to His people, just as He did in biblical times. Take some time to study the different ways God communicated in the Bible. Then practice being in His presence, as if face-to-face, giving Him your whole heart, mind, and undivided attention. Demonstrate your trusting faith. When you immerse yourself in Scripture, you will see and hear God’s words straight off the pages before you.

Trust the Holy Spirit to convict and prompt, guide and guard, instruct and inspire your heart—just as He did with Paul in Acts 20:22–23: “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.”

And remember that God still speaks to some of His people in dreams and visions, as He did to Joseph (Gen. 37), Daniel (Dan. 7), Ananias (Acts 9:10–16), Peter (Acts 11:4–9), and John (Rev. 1)—to name a few. Once in a while, He actually speaks in an audible voice: Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–7), God confirmed Jesus as His Son when John was baptizing Him (Matt. 3:17), and the Lord called to a young Samuel in the night (1 Sam. 3).

Be open to however God might choose to reveal His voice to you. God is speaking, so lean in and learn to listen. **PC**



**KATHY BRANZELL** is founder, president, and CEO of Fellowship And Christian Encouragement (FACE) for Educators. She is also a member of America’s National Prayer Committee.



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# MY SHEEP

**I** tossed and turned in bed, unable to fall asleep. Though only 15, I kept thinking, *What if I died tonight? I'm not ready to go to heaven.* Because I could not shake the thought, I got up, went downstairs, and waited for my parents to come home from their meeting. When they did, I announced I wanted to be saved. They immediately took me to our pastor's home. He explained the plan of salvation, and I accepted Christ.

It was God's voice speaking to me that night, calling me into His Kingdom. His voice came as a spontaneous thought inside my head. However, I didn't define this as a primary way to hear God's voice until I had

completed a desperate ten-year search to hear Him clearly.

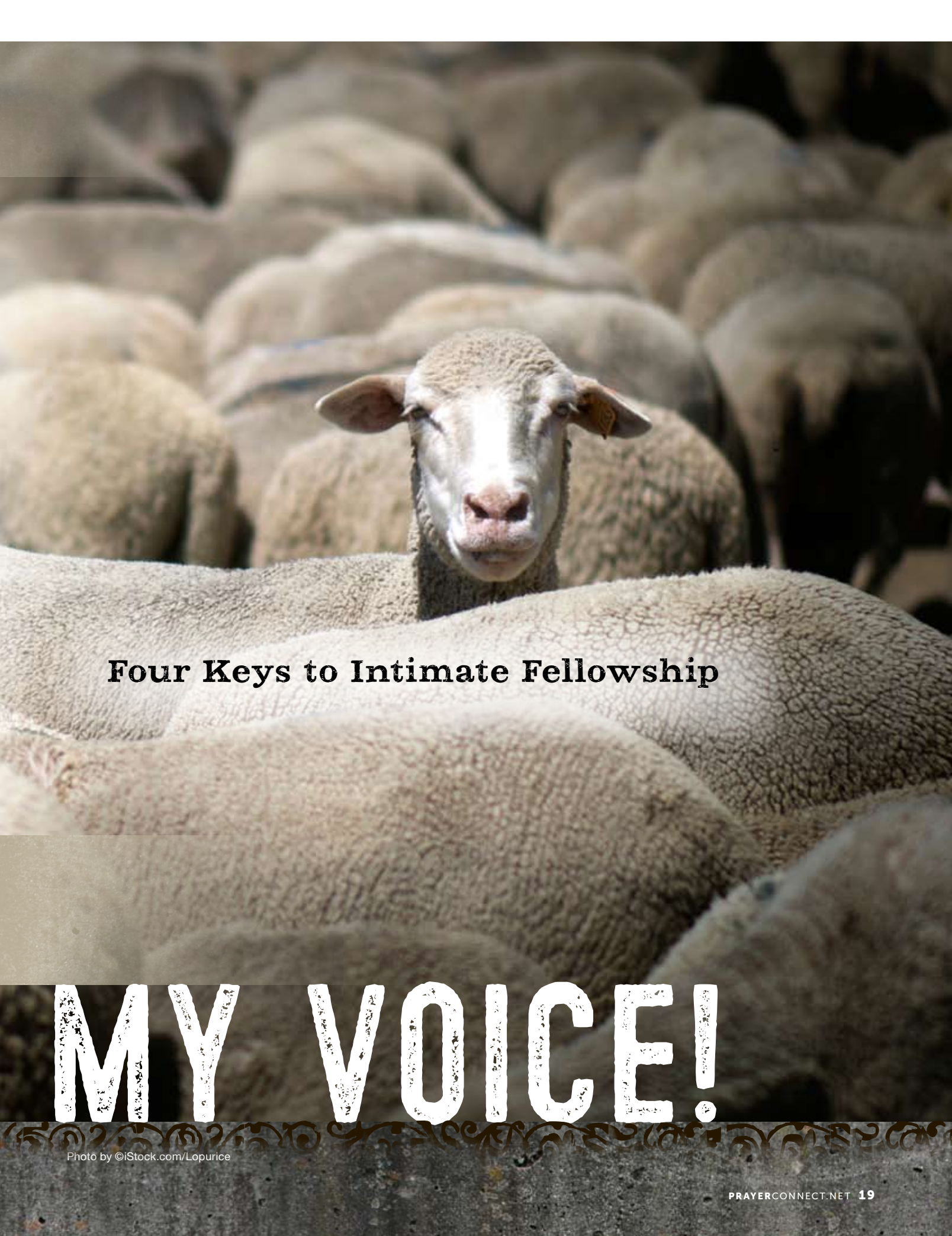
Christianity is unique among religions, for it alone offers a *personal relationship* with the Creator, beginning here and now and lasting throughout eternity. Jesus declared, "This is eternal life: that they *know* you, the only true *God*, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3, emphasis added). Unfortunately, many of us in the Church miss the great blessing of fellowship with our Lord because we have lost the ability to recognize His voice. Though Jesus promises us that "My sheep hear My voice" (John 10:27, NASB), too many believers are starved for that intimate relationship that alone can satisfy the desire of their hearts.

# REALLY DO

BY MARK VIRKLER

# HEAR





## Four Keys to Intimate Fellowship

# MY VOICE!

Photo by ©iStock.com/Lopurice



# God's Voice to Me

**I** find God consistently speaks to me through what I call “the recipe”:  
4 cups of Bible  
3 tablespoons of prayer  
2 teaspoons of wise counsel  
a pinch of direct divine guidance

I call this *the recipe* because *proportions* are vital. Too often, it seems, we elevate the personal experience of directly hearing from God above the special revelation of Scripture. On the other hand, I can't find my way to the camp that says God never speaks to His children aside from the Bible. Hence, the recipe:

**Four cups of Bible:** The Bible speaks to Christians every day, without fail, as long as we read His Word carefully and interpret it wisely. This is the main ingredient. The Bible is fully sufficient to guide us in the lifelong journey of faith and godliness. Too often we struggle with choices simply because we have neglected the clear teaching of Scripture on a matter. Most of life's questions—99 percent or more of them—can be answered by taking God's Word to heart and living in the obedience of faith.

**Three tablespoons of prayer:** I don't differentiate much between the Bible and prayer. The two are inseparable. We pray truth when we pray God's Word, and we are wise to pray God's truth back to Him. Jesus taught us, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7). So it is foolish, when seeking God's direction, to be prayerless.

**Two teaspoons of wise counsel:** Proverbs 27:9 says, “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel” (ESV). However, it's crucial to remember this: although the Bible is infallible in its counsel, human counselors are not. Choose wisely. A godly, thoughtful, wise counselor is invaluable.

**A pinch of direct divine guidance:** When pursuing truth in a situation, whether it is counseling a troubled soul or seeking to make a decision in a matter, sometimes a thought comes to us that is so compelling, so *right on*, that it seems to have come directly from the Holy Spirit. It is always a thought that confirms the truth of Scripture. Sometimes it's an insight that opens a new, surprising, unexpected avenue of pursuit. But there it is, and it seems the only Source can be God Himself.

For me, keeping this recipe in mind has proven a wonderful practice in hearing God's voice.

**DANA OLSON** is pastor of Faith Baptist Fellowship, Sioux Falls, SD, and a member of the Prayer First team of Converge Worldwide.

I was one of those sheep who could not identify the voice of my Shepherd. I hungered for deeper spiritual intimacy with God but could not find it. After 11 years as a Christian, I had the spontaneous thought that for one year of my life I should focus on learning to hear God's voice. Unbeknown to me, it was the Lord calling me to invest that time.

That year the Lord revealed four simple keys from Habakkuk 2:1–2, which unlocked the treasure of His voice. Using the four keys together has allowed me to easily hear God's voice on a daily basis.

**KEY 1: God's voice in our hearts often sounds like a flow of spontaneous thoughts.**

Habakkuk knew the sound of God speaking to him (Hab. 2:2). Elijah described it as a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:12, κτν). I had always listened for an inner audible voice, and God does speak that way at times. However, I have found that God's voice usually comes as spontaneous or flowing thoughts.

For example, have you ever been driving down the road and a thought came to you to pray for a certain person? Didn't you believe it was God telling you to pray? What did God's voice sound like? Was it an audible voice, or was it a spontaneous thought that lit upon your mind?

Experience indicates that we perceive Spirit-led communication as spontaneous thoughts, impressions, and visions—and Scripture confirms this in many ways. For example, one definition of *paga*, a Hebrew word for intercession, is “a chance encounter or an accidental intersecting.” When God lays people on our hearts, He does it through *paga*, a chance-encounter thought “accidentally” intersecting with our minds.

But Satan's thoughts also come to us as spontaneous thoughts. That's why God commands us to “take captive every thought” (2 Cor. 10:5). Evil thoughts

come to all of us, attacking our minds even in the middle of our prayer and worship times. The following criteria can help us discern where our thoughts originate:

- **God's thoughts** line up with Scripture and with His various names: Comforter, Counselor, Teacher, Giver of Life, Healer, and Deliverer. His thoughts edify, exhort, and comfort.
- **Satan's thoughts** line up with his various names: accuser, adversary, thief who comes to kill, steal, and destroy. His thoughts condemn and bring despair, rejection, fear, doubt, unbelief, and misery.

**KEY 2: "Becoming still" enables us to sense God's flow of thoughts.**

Habakkuk said, "I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guardpost" (Hab. 2:1, NLT). Habakkuk knew that to hear God's quiet, inner, spontaneous thoughts, he had to first go to a quiet place and still his own thoughts and emotions. Psalm 62:5 encourages us to let our souls find rest before God. A deep inner knowing (spontaneous flow) in our spirits happens when we quiet our flesh and our minds. If we are not still, we will sense only our own thoughts.

Loving God through a quiet worship song is one effective way to become still. (Note 2 Kings 3:15.) If thoughts of things I have forgotten to do come to me, I write them down so I can take care of them later. If thoughts of guilt or unworthiness come, I repent thoroughly and receive the washing of the blood of the Lamb, putting on His robe of righteousness and seeing myself spotless before God (Isa. 61:10; Col. 1:22).

If I fix my eyes upon Jesus, I can receive the pure word of God. But if I fix my gaze upon some desire of my heart, that desire affects the intuitive flow.

**KEY 3: Fixing our eyes upon Jesus helps us see in the Spirit.**

To have a pure flow of the Spirit we need to become still and carefully fix our eyes upon Jesus (Heb. 12:2). Habakkuk said, "I will look to see what he will say to

me" (Hab. 2:1-2). This prophet was actually *looking for* a vision as he prayed.

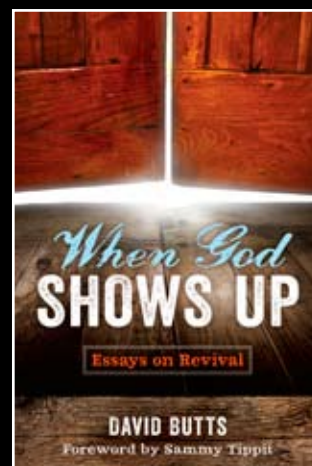
From Genesis to Revelation God gave dreams and visions. He specifically said that in the last days He would pour out His Spirit, and we would see dreams and visions (Acts 2:1-4, 17).



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# The torn veil gives us access to the immediate presence of God, and He calls us to draw near.

But we need to look if we want to see! Daniel saw a vision in his mind and said, “I was looking . . . I kept looking . . . I kept looking” (Dan. 7:2, 9, 13, NASB).

As I pray, I look for Jesus. I watch and listen as He speaks to me, doing and saying the things that are on His heart. Many Christians will find that if they will only look, they will see flowing

pictures in the same way they receive spontaneous thoughts.

Jesus demonstrated the ability of living in constant contact with God. He declared that He did nothing on His own initiative but only what He *saw the Father doing and heard the Father saying* (John 5:19–20). What an incredible way to live!

Is it possible for you and me to do

this? Yes! It is called “abiding in Christ” (John 15). The torn veil gives us access to the immediate presence of God, and He calls us to draw near (Luke 23:45, Heb. 10:19–22). Paul prayed that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened (Eph. 1:18) in order to know the hope that is before us.

## KEY 4: Journaling brings great freedom in hearing God’s voice.

God told Habakkuk to “record the vision” (Hab. 2:2, NASB). This was not an isolated command. The Scriptures record many examples of individuals’ prayers and God’s replies (e.g. the Psalms, many of the prophets, Revelation).

I call the process “two-way journaling,” and I have found it to be a fabulous catalyst for clearly discerning God’s inner, spontaneous flow. As I journal I am able to *write in faith* for long periods of time, simply believing God is speaking. I know that what I believe I’ve received from God must be tested. However, I do not test until I am finished journaling. When the flow has ended I can test and examine it carefully, making sure it lines up with Scripture (1 Thess. 5:21).

You may find this process helpful as well: Take out your pen and paper (or computer or iPad). Sit back comfortably, smile, and turn your attention toward the Lord in praise and worship, seeking His face. Write this: “Good morning, Lord! I love You. What do You want to say to me?” Then become still, fixing your gaze on Jesus. You will suddenly have a very good thought. Don’t doubt it; simply write it down and test it later. As you read over your journaling, you will be blessed to discover that the content

## God’s Voice to Me

**G**od is a talker. Because He speaks, I need to listen. Here’s what works for me when I try to hear God.

First, I ask God to help me hear Him speak. Asking for His help to hear is like turning on your mobile device. It’s the action step that makes it happen. It’s like saying: “God, I can’t do it without Your help, so please take the first step and turn on my hearing ear!”

Second, I ask God questions such as, “What do you have to say to me right now, God?” “What are Your thoughts about me?” Then I wait quietly for Him to impress His thoughts on my mind. I am often amazed at the accuracy of His responses. He always seems to know my heart and knows what I most need to hear. And He is not afraid to say it.

Third, I sometimes recite God-to-me one-liners from the Bible that I know to be true—one-liners such as, “I love you, Alvin!” “My grace is sufficient for you” “Be holy, because I am holy.” In the course of these recitals God brings to mind some one-liners that I *really need* to hear. Or He stops me on a one-liner and takes me deeper into the implications of its meaning for me.

Fourth, when I need His guidance for a decision affecting the future, I simply lodge the matter with Him and invite His input. When I think I have the answer, I ask Him to confirm it in some definite way. He is always willing to do that and He always knows what’s best.

God wants us to hear Him. But, above all, He wants us to “hear” His heartbeat, a heart that beats with love. If you listen, it’s hard to miss.

**ALVIN VANDERGIEND** is the prayer evangelism associate for Harvest Prayer Ministries.



is *amazing* and that you are indeed dialoguing with God!

## Sure Foundations

Knowing God through the Bible is a vital foundation for hearing His voice in your heart. So develop a solid commitment to knowing and obeying God's written Word. He commands His servants to meditate on Scriptures (Josh. 1:8). As we pray over Scripture, verses seem to leap off the page. This is another powerful way God speaks to us. He not only commands regular scriptural meditation, He demonstrates, through the lives of His saints, how essential it is to an effective Christian life.

Staying connected to solid spiritual counselors is also very important for our growth and safety. So seek confirmation from your counselors for all major directional moves before you act upon them. The Bible says every fact must be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses (2 Cor. 13:1, NASB). Also, in the multitude of counselors, there is safety (Prov. 15:22). So walk in meekness and seek out and receive input from your spiritual advisors. We dare not skip this step!

The Apostle John used the same four keys Habakkuk did. In Revelation 1:9–11 we find he was in the spirit (stillness), and he heard a voice behind him (tuned to spontaneity) saying, "Write in a book [journaling] what you see [vision]." So in both Old and New Testaments we find the same four keys to hearing and receiving God's voice.

May you experience the fullness of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. May communion with God be deepened in your life, and may His healing and creative rays fill you through and through. **PC**



**MARK VIRKLER** and his wife Vicki are founders of Communion with God Ministries ([cwgministries.org](http://cwgministries.org)) and have co-authored more than 50 books.

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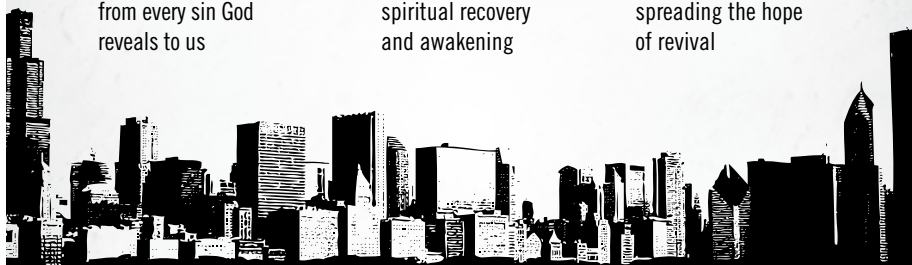
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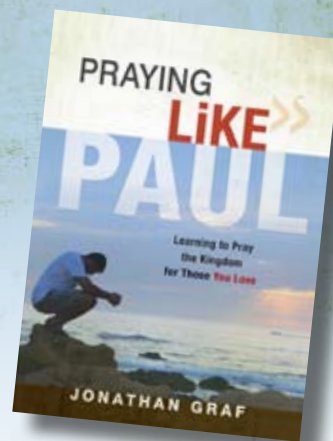
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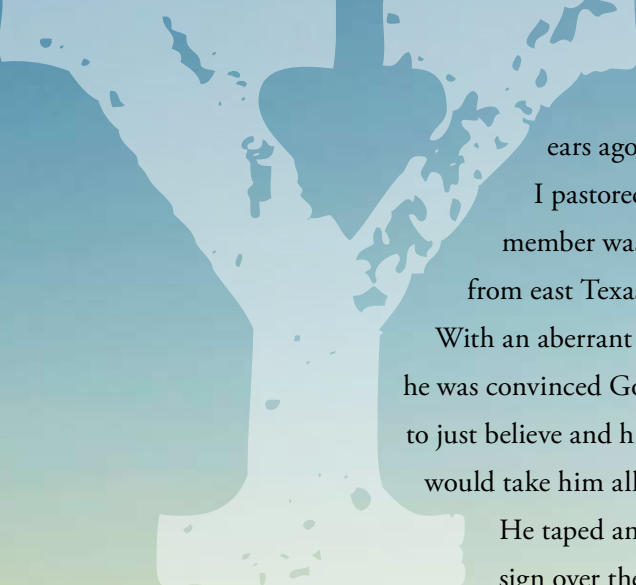
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# “GOD TOLD



years ago, in a church I pastored, the son of a member was driving home from east Texas to California.

With an aberrant view of faith, he was convinced God told him to just believe and his tank of gas would take him all the way home.

He taped an “I believe” sign over the gas gauge and ran out of fuel and faith in the sparsely populated west Texas prairie. “God told me” can be a shield of stubbornness.

Glib use of “God told me” language can also indicate immaturity, insecurity, and pride. Insecurity, in particular, seeks high ground, beyond the reach of probing questions.

Yet God does speak. Have you ever noticed that in the first encounters between God and man, God did all the talking?

## **A Voice with Purpose**

The power of God’s blessing comes in the pronouncement—the speaking and hearing. Through hearing God’s voice, Adam received God’s gift of dominion, empowerment, and



**BY P. DOUGLAS SMALL**



ME...”

## Discerning Whether You Really Heard God

## God's Voice to Me

**T**he invitation was issued at the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network meeting to respond to the question, “How do you hear God speak?”

Within a week, I was surprised by a quick and unmistakable experience of hearing from God. During our meetings I had picked up a book, *Go to the Rock*, co-authored by our friend Ruthie Jacobson. A few days later I started reading it, was interrupted, and laid the book face down on a table—intending to finish it later.

The next morning, my husband and I read our regular reading from *explorefaith.org*. The gospel reading portion of it was shorter than usual: “On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them’” (John 7:37–38).

My husband, a pastor, left the house a few minutes later to prepare for the Sunday worship service. I went to get dressed. On the way out of our bedroom, I picked up the book and carefully noted the page where I had stopped reading the night before.

Once settled in my comfortable chair, I opened the book to finish the chapter. “What’s up with all this water?” co-author Dwight K. Nelson asked. “Why, it’s the very promise of Jesus Himself echoed in His familiar but stunning words.” He then quoted the very words from John 7 that I’d read from my laptop less than an hour before!

He wrapped up the chapter by inviting the reader to pray:

O God, please do a “new thing” in our midst. And start with me. Right now. Raise up a new generation of students and parents and churches and pastors and leaders who will come, thirsty every day, and say, “Here I am, Lord. I’m ready to have You do Your work in me and I’m ready to go wherever You ask and do whatever You say.”

“It is time, high time, that you and I listen to that Voice, isn’t it?” Nelson concluded.

“Yes!” I responded.

God spoke to me in an unexpected way in my comfortable chair that cold January morning. It’s often that way. We just need to be aware of His desire to speak—and then listen carefully and respond.

**REBECCA GATES** and her husband Gary are prayer leaders with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ USA.

purpose. But Adam also received life boundaries: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:16–17). God tells Adam to *grow* the garden, for it has uncultivated potential. But He also tells Adam to *guard* it, for it faces some unthinkable peril.

Prayer dances with these two—potential and peril. If Adam hears God and embraces the discipline of the boundary, he and the earth will be blessed. If Adam violates the boundary, he and the earth lose the blessing. Hearing God engages opportunity and obedience, dignity and discipline. Experiencing the blessing necessitates a bounded, spirit-controlled life.

God longs to speak a blessing over *each* of His children, but our busyness prevents a quality relationship with Him, so we cannot hear Him clearly. Only prepared hearts can hear our talking, relational God.

Intimate encounters are sacred and not to be bantered about. Paul refers to his life-altering moment in the third heaven as an unutterable, sacred thing (2 Cor. 12:2–4). When God speaks so forcefully, He usually does so for the sake of our clarity and confidence. The appropriate response is humility and deep dependence on the Spirit to steward the disclosure toward radical obedience.

Peter’s profound rooftop encounter separated him from traditions that prevented the church from embracing Gentiles (Acts 10:9–16). God used a forthright approach to jar Peter from his limited perspective. Still, Peter was not exempt from rigorous inquiry by his peers. When the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul,” the church didn’t immediately respond with, “Great idea. Let’s do it now!” Rather, they prayed and tested the word (Acts 13:2–3).



## Corporate Discernment and Confirmation

In a culture prone to hyperindividualism, we privatize “words” from the Lord. But we need to learn to hear the voice of God *together*. How do we corporately discern God’s voice, “test” the Lord’s leading, and create relational accountability? We desperately need to cultivate the capacity to hear God and to reflect with trusted friends what they are hearing. In a multitude of counselors emerges the confirmation and correction necessary for spiritual health and protection (Prov. 15:22).

The New Testament connects private moments with God and corporate discernment. “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20).

History records a long list of humans who “heard from God,” and with exalted revelation they started movements with devastating consequences.

Who can forget Jim Jones? Or David Koresh? Such leaders set themselves apart from the larger Christian community by claiming exalted truth. They increasingly represented the sound of their own voice as God’s voice. And cult followers surrender their capacity to hear God for themselves. This tragedy has caused some Christian leaders to reject altogether the idea of God speaking today.

What we desperately need is balance because we face a greater problem in ignoring God’s voice.

## Don’t Ignore or Quench

The Book of Hebrews pleads, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion” (Heb. 3:15). Disobedience ultimately causes spiritual deafness. But the more we listen and obey, the more God lovingly speaks into our lives and the Scriptures come alive.

Paul anticipated a spirit-energized

people to whom God spoke—privately and corporately. To Thessalonica, where some had abused prophetic words, he nevertheless urged, “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:19–21). Paul conceded that not every spontaneous utterance is a good word. So the church needed to test and prove any “words from the Lord.” If the essence was good (*kalos*)—worthy, honorable in character, noble, sound—Paul said to seize it. This implies a high level of corporate discernment.

Peter offers us “a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19, KJV). The International Standard Version says it is “confirmed beyond doubt.” It is “like a lamp shining in a dark place.” Peter exhorts us

to pay attention to the sure and certain word of Scripture.

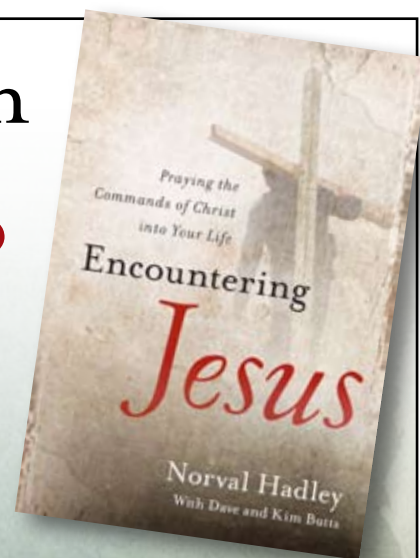
There should be no war between advocates of contemporary disclosures of the Spirit and those locked in Scripture. They are the same! God speaks consistently and congruently. He does not contradict Himself. He does not speak in isolation. He confirms His intentions in the mouths of multiple witnesses. The Spirit who speaks today is the same Spirit who sealed the revelation into the holy record, and the only One who can unwrap its import for any present hour.

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message with some forgotten truth needing recovery. Notice Peter's alignment with Scripture: "Recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Peter 3:2). He cites three markers for testing truth: the prophets, the Lord, and the apostles. The word given by the apostles found a reference point in the Word, Christ. And Christ is the fulfillment of the prophets of old.

Godly words exalt Christ and are consistent with His ministry. They never diminish the finished work of Christ on the cross, His death and burial, or His resurrection, ascension, and present enthronement.

A fresh word will be received because others also hear the voice of God. He does not speak in a vacuum. A fresh word will increase faith. It will prepare for some opportunity or challenge. It may direct, but always in ways consistent with Scripture. It will humble those who hear it. It will unify and edify.

But at the heart of an aberrant, errant word is pride and division, because a *false* prophet is never a humble, unifying servant.

### Simple Steps to Hearing

God still speaks today. We don't need to fear the errant word if we apply practical listening methods.

1. Don't *try* to hear from God! Read the Scriptures. Park an open Bible on your lap. Tell God you want Him in your life. Wait. Listen.
2. If you hear "a word" from God, let it season. Find its connection points in Scripture. Let it grow in clarity and in conviction.
3. Test it. Ask God to confirm it. Share it with a small group. Be open, not defensive. Watch it expand as you discover that others have pieces and perspective you do not have.
4. Obey. Do so with witnesses. Do so humbly. Do so in faith.

5. Leave the results with God.

Twenty-six years ago my wife Barbara and I left pastoral ministry and launched a conference ministry—not as a result of a stark word from God but from a growing sense of awareness. The idea had seasoned for years. We shared with a small group that we sensed it was time, and confirmation came quickly with financial support.

Seven years later, in the middle of a phone call from a friend telling me about one of the earliest pastors prayer summits, God spoke to my heart: "You will do this!" I had no clue what that meant. With the direction of the late Terry Dirks, I began gathering pastors for an area-wide prayer summit.

Simultaneously, I stepped into an intense season of spiritual warfare. God proved faithful. Then suddenly, doors opened to represent the pastoral prayer movement. I trekked through 100 cities and saw almost 5,000 pastors in the Southeast spend days praying together for their communities in dozens of cities.

I backed into the prayer movement, hearing God and stumbling! I obeyed, sometimes boldly, sometimes reluctantly with breakthroughs and setbacks. Clear, crisp directions came with seasons of silence. We saw God's provision, yet persistence also demanded austere faith and resolve.

We learned that the most important thing in prayer is not what we say to God, but preparing our hearts to hear from Him. He wants to talk to us more than we want to talk with Him. And He is not nearly as disappointed *with* us when we fail to pray, as He is disappointed *for* us!

From Genesis to Revelation we see the story of our Creator and Redeemer speaking and blessing. And He speaks His blessing over you and me. ☞



**P. DOUG SMALL** is president and founder of Alive Ministries: Project Pray. He also serves as the international liaison for prayer ministries with the Church of God, Cleveland, TN.



# CAN YOU HEAR HIM?

## A Bible Study

BY SANDRA HIGLEY

*Note: This Bible study is formatted for small group 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.*

Thinking about my own discovery two decades ago—that God actually dialogues with us—brought me to tears. Thirty-eight years as a believer, and no one had ever told me that we could actually hear God’s voice and carry on a two-way conversation. On the contrary, hearing God’s voice was held in disrepute—or as suspect at best. The common understanding was that when the canon of Scripture was completed, the door closed, and God stopped talking.

But oh, when that door was opened to me! The *personal* part of my relationship with Jesus—only words on paper before that—became an actual reality. It’s what addicted me to prayer.

Sure, being able to talk to God and share our deepest concerns any time we want is truly amazing. But when the light bulb goes on that He actually *talks back*—now that’s intensely intimate. What adventures He has taken me on, what joys we’ve shared, what truths revealed!

Although hearing God’s voice may sound intimidating, it is actually very natural. Your Father longs to communicate. The God who defines Himself as “the Word” can’t help Himself. Conversation is not something we have to coax Him into. It is His idea, and He thrives on it.

### Discussion Questions

Read the following passages and discuss why these verses indicate

that *not* hearing God is the exception rather than the norm (Gen. 3:8–9; 1 Sam. 3:1; Amos 8:11–13; John 10:2–4, 27; Heb. 3:15):

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Kathy Branzell reminds us that “the same God who spoke with Adam and Eve in the garden desires to speak to [us in our] crisis time, in times of change, challenge, and celebration. The key to hearing God’s voice is taking the time to *listen* to Him.” She says that the question is not, “Will God speak to me?” The question is, “Are you taking the time to listen?” Describe your communication with God. Is it a monologue or dialogue? How much time do you spend listening versus talking?

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Branzell describes ways that God may speak to us: through prompting, a push in the right direction, or discernment. Think about conversations you have with your closest friends and in relationships. What makes those special? How do you communicate with your loved ones? Is it always with specific words, or can you understand what is being communicated through a glance, body language, and/or voice inflections?

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How is that different from or the same as your communication with God?

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Look up the following Scriptures and identify some of the many ways God speaks to us (Gen. 21:14-19; Gen. 24:1-4 and 12-27; Gen. 37:5-11; Dan. 7; Ps. 16:7, 23:1-3, 43:3; Isa. 30:21; Acts 9:10-16, 11:4-9):

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Read 1 Kings 19:11-13. Do you think these verses mean that the Lord never speaks through cataclysmic events, or that in this instance He chose to whisper? Explain your answer.

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Mark Virkler writes about how God communicates with us through a flow of spontaneous thoughts. He reminds us that the enemy imposes his thoughts on us as well. Discernment regarding whose voice we are hearing is crucial. Virkler gives us a litmus test for any communication we receive: God's thoughts always line up with Scripture and with His various names and nature. Satan's thoughts line up with his various names and nature. Look up the following passages, and compare and contrast God's names and nature versus Satan's names and nature in the following areas:

Conviction versus condemnation (John 3:17, 8:9-11; 1 Tim. 3:6; Rev. 12:10)

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Clarity versus confusion (1 Cor. 13:11-12, 14:33, KJV; James 3:15)

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Fear versus love (1 John 4:18; 2 Tim. 1:7)

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Life-giving versus destructive (John 10:10)

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Confirmation versus contradiction (Gen. 3:1-5; Mark 16:20; John 8:44; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; 2 Thess. 2:9)

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P. Douglas Small speaks about the importance of confirmation from trusted counsel when we hear words from the Lord that we believe should be shared corporately. "When God speaks so forcefully, He usually does so for the sake of our clarity and confidence. The appropriate response is humility and deep dependence on the Spirit to steward the disclosure toward radical obedience," Small says. How do the following Scriptures affirm the need for corporate words to be confirmed with trusted counsel? (Prov. 15:22; Acts 13:2-3; 1 Thess. 5:19-21; 2 Peter 1:19-20, ESV)

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Scripture also describes times when God spoke to individuals and they chose to listen to others' voices rather than to God's voice. Divide into smaller groups and assign each group one of the following passages. Invite participants to look up their assigned passage and answer the following questions. After an appropriate amount of time, reassemble and discuss their findings.

Group 1: Numbers 13:1-3, 17-20, 27-28, 30-33; 14:20-23, 30  
Group 2: 1 Kings 13:7-26  
Group 3: 1 Kings 22:4-38  
Group 4: Acts 21:4, 8-14; 23:11

Questions:

- What did God say?
- Did the person God spoke to receive confirmation?
- What did they do about the word they received?
- What was the outcome?

Sharing corporate words is a serious undertaking. Read the following passages and discuss as a group how to discern when a word should or shouldn't be shared (Ezek. 3, 12:28-13:1-12).

## Action Steps

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 33:3 and Psalm 27:8 (NLT).

1. Ask the Lord to show you times when you could separate yourself from all that is going on and truly listen for His voice. Make an appointment on your calendar or calendar app to follow through. Make it a priority!
2. Do you have a quiet spot to get alone with God? Begin to think of a place you could claim for your own, a place where you can get away from distractions. **PC**

**SANDRA HIGLEY** lives in Colorado Springs, CO, and is the editor of *Real Life Downloaded*, a Sunday school supplement for youth published by David C Cook Ministries.





## Could It Be? | By Jonathan Graf

Any person who truly longs for and prays for revival comes to understand that at its theological core, revival is a sovereign act of God. That said, there are scriptural things we can do and historical patterns we can study that open the door for a fresh move of His Spirit.

Historically we know God often begins such a move among younger generations—young adults, college-aged and even younger. The Welsh revival was birthed through young adults in their 20s. The Haystack Prayer Meeting and missions movement was birthed through college-aged young people.

Sometimes God launched revivals through humble preachers to whom He gave a powerful anointing during a special season: Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, and George Whitefield, for example.

Many revivals also began during economic and social desperation. Probably because people started getting more and more desperate during the painful circumstances chipping away at the comfort of their lives, they started to cry out to God for relief.

One of the revivals with a very curious beginning was the prayer meeting revival that swept across the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Different from other revivals, this one started among businessmen. Due to the pre-Civil War economic woes in the Northern States, New Yorker Jeremiah Lanphier called for a prayer meeting at the Old Dutch Church in lower Manhattan, New York City. In the economic heart of the city—Wall Street—people gathered to cry out to God for His blessing to fall again.

Six people gathered at the first meeting in 1857. The following week, 20 came

to pray, then 40—and within six months 10,000 or more were gathering weekly in New York City. The revival swept across the nation. At its high tide it was reported that 50,000 people a week were coming to faith in Christ across the country. The awful yoke of slavery was broken during the wave of this revival!

### A New Excitement

The businessmen's prayer revival seriously intrigues me because I see two major things happening today that are very similar to 1857.

First, our nation is in turmoil, both economically and socially. A sluggish economy has put many out of work. The national debt and government spending are propelling us perilously close to a total economic collapse. While we do not have the issues of slavery and states' rights tearing the nation apart, as America did in the 1850s and 1860s, several social situations currently divide our nation. People with opposing views cannot accept each other anymore or rise above disagreements and work together for the greater good. Our government is rapidly becoming totalitarian, rejecting the beliefs and freedoms established in the early days of our nation. And the moral decline of our nation is both taking us on a course to destruction and shaking believers to the core. The times are very dark!

The other similar element is that people in the business world are again launching a wave of prayer, asking God to pour out His Spirit in revival and spiritual awakening. Started in the hearts of a few businesspeople like Bill Williamson and Os Hillman, a movement called Renewal of America is seeking to raise up 100 million believers who will pray for the total transformation of America—

spiritually, socially, and economically.

They are also challenging businesspeople to use their money to help transform communities through such avenues as feeding the poor and renewing economically troubled neighborhoods.

A few days before this issue was released, I had the privilege of being at a first-of-its-kind gathering between business leaders and prayer leaders. We came together to pray and talk about ways we might raise up 100 million believers to pray effectively for our nation.

Why does this excite me so much? Because I sense the Holy Spirit converging several elements—desperation among believers that will draw them to finally cry out to God, and the financial means to get the word out, to provide encouragement, and to help pray effectively.

“But wait,” you say. “I thought revival is a sovereign act of God. Isn't that an example of people laboring to make something happen?”

I believe God is sovereignly bringing the pieces together. Christians in the business world are leading the charge. This is key. They do not have the “baggage” or limitations in communities that individual ministries, pastors, and churches have. Many pastors and churches are still trying to protect their turf and keep their people “theologically pure.” They often do not encourage gathering with those of other Christian streams. But businesspeople are just happy to find someone in the workplace who is for Christ. Now that has real potential to be a launching pad God can use for revival and awakening!

I encourage you to watch this movement—and join in as you see opportunity. 📺

**JONATHAN GRAF** is publisher of *Prayer Connect*.





By Tiece L. King

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO I joined with throngs of moviegoers to see *Les Misérables*. Ever since, I have been captured by the extravagant act of grace depicted by the lowly priest toward Jean Valjean, the convict who could not escape his criminal past. When Valjean steals silverware from the priest and is caught by police, this gracious priest spares Valjean, claiming the silverware was a gift to Valjean. Then the priest even encourages Valjean to take two silver candlesticks (to add to his collection of stolen property).

Instead of turning Valjean in to the authorities who were waiting to take him away, the humble priest offered grace and saved the thief's life.

Valjean was shocked—beyond belief—to receive this blessing instead of a curse, life instead of death.

When  
“I’m  
Sorry”  
Is Not Enough

*Learning the Vocabulary of a Repentant Heart*



# Our words are key in helping us enter into the flow of this lavish grace.

Throughout the rest of the movie Valjean wrestles with this lavish grace. He finally finds his heart and becomes a man of grace himself. But it began with two candlesticks.

This story reminds me of Jesus' words to the adulterous woman who, according to the law, deserved the stoning execution the crowd intended to carry out at any moment. Yet Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you . . . Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11).

## Heart Words

As followers of Jesus, our forgiven lives reflect the stories of Valjean and the adulterous woman. We receive the same extravagant grace of Christ. Confession and repentance—agreeing with God about our sin—open the channel of grace in our lives. Our words are key in helping us enter into the flow of this lavish grace.

When God said through the prophet Isaiah, "Come now, and let

us reason together . . . though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18, NKJV), He spoke of the confession of our mouths aligning with the truth about the condition of our hearts.

In our Western world, it is easy for our independence and freedom to gradually morph into prodigal defiance. Whether intentional or passive, the result is the same—soul atrophy. Only a disciplined engagement of our hearts and agreement with what God says about our sin will produce the lasting life and peace we all long for. This is the fruit of repentance and the flow of God's grace.

Much has been written and spoken about our times, the swift current of our culture, and these effects on the Church. We have moved into an era in which words mean less—and conversations have been reduced to texted abbreviations and "hashtags." In times past there

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was a contemplative art to the expression of one's heart and matters of the soul. Yet in our techno-excessive world, in spite of many words, we are losing touch with our core and the ability for self-examination. This crucial ability to look at our hearts leads to greater godliness and leads us to Christ. We desperately need tools for repentance.

## Liturgy: A Repentance Tool

Much of the Church today has stepped away from the use of written liturgy in our corporate worship gatherings. In doing so, we have lost a vital prayer/discipleship repentance tool. Liturgy offers us the language of repentance. Yet in turning away from liturgy's "scriptedness," we have failed to replace this discipline with an alternate tool. We are left to our own best efforts to adequately express repentance.

In general, we as the people of God have forsaken our ability to bring our hearts into agreement with God's Word regarding our sin and the need for confession and repentance. We know how to feel badly about our sin and to say we're sorry, but we do not know how to engage in the dialogue of grace called repentance.

King David gives us examples in the Psalms. And the early Church fathers followed these examples, seeing that their hearts needed to be jump-started to recognize the "sin that so easily entangles" (Heb. 12:1). Written confessional prayers (like those found in the Scriptures) have always helped open spiritual eyes to spiritual cobwebs.

Agreeing with the Word of God, personalizing it, and saying, "This is me; I have done this," opens new doors in our hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit. We might read 1 John 2:15-17, for instance ("Do not love the world or anything in the world"), and respond, "That's right—I should not do this." But then we do little about it.

But if we respond that way, we can

miss the opportunity for transformation available by embracing the grace of God and admitting, "This is what I do." If we stop and pray the passage, personalizing it, and allowing the Holy Spirit to write it on our hearts, it might sound like this:

Father, Your Word says that I am not to love the world or anything

in it. This is the desire of my heart, Lord. But I confess that my longing for my Starbucks cup of coffee this morning was greater than my longing for You! O God, forgive me. Teach me by Your Spirit what it means, what it looks like, to be in the world but not of it. Give me a thankful heart that can enjoy every

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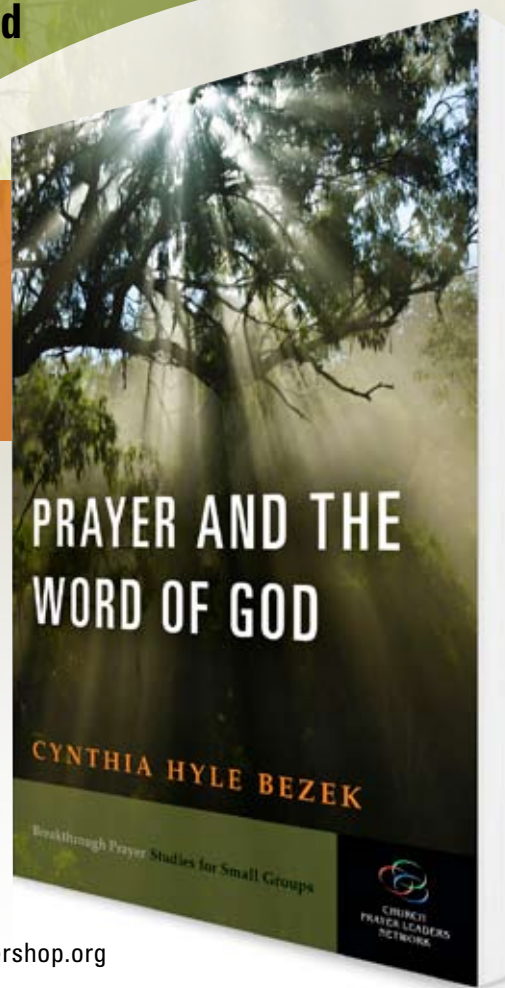
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blessing You give me without allowing my heart to be anchored to those blessings in any way.

Breath by breath, we can learn honesty about our heart condition as we increasingly incorporate repentance and confession into our faith walk. When we *don't* recognize sin's encroachment on

God's work in our lives (embracing His grace and forgiveness), our living becomes shame-based, without salt and light.

## A Lifestyle of Repentance

In Western culture, any honest self-examination is a hard sell. Sin and

repentance are increasingly considered “four-letter words,” often unspoken and unaddressed. But only as we learn to walk in a lifestyle of confession and repentance will we find true joy and fulfillment. This is where we learn to fully embrace grace. Learning this way of agreeing with God will grow humility in our lives, and we will become “grace-dispensers” to others as never before.

In our conversations with God (and one another), instead of blaming others or explaining away our behavior and attitudes, we will find greater freedom in pushing through shame and falling into the loving embrace of our heavenly Father.

Returning to this *spiritual art* of laying our hearts open before the One who knows everything—even what we try to ignore and hide—will become a *soul discipline* that deepens our relationship with the Father. It will move us past shame to find our real selves.

Our early Church fathers understood something we need to again embrace—that our hearts are prone to wander. That's why I use and recommend written prayers as a stimulus to one's prayer life. They can prime our hearts in our spiritual pilgrimage, pointing us toward greater Christlikeness. They reframe our living in light of God's Word and teach us the vocabulary of a repentant heart.

Surely in our world of shrinking meaning, it is more important than ever to expand our “heart vocabulary.” Bringing our hearts with us, we lay all at the feet of Him who died to open the way of grace for us—immeasurably more than what began for Jean Valjean with two silver candlesticks. The rewards are endless, the joy unimaginable. We shall be forever changed. ☐



**TIECE L. KING** is the prayer leader at The Evangelical Church of Bangkok, where her husband David serves as lead pastor. She is the author of *Pray the Word*, a line of resources designed to teach people to pray Scripture, available from [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).

# Reveal the Hidden Things

**T**hank You, Lord Jesus, for bearing my sin in Your body on the cross so that I might die to sin and live for righteousness. Thank You for the provision of healing found in Your great sacrifice. Forgive me, I pray, for the times I treat casually the freedom I have in You, do not live for righteousness, and allow myself to become enslaved again in the yoke of sin. Have mercy on me, Lord, and heal me, for I know I have sinned against You.

By Your Spirit, teach me what it means to “live for righteousness,” and to “seek righteousness,” that You, Jesus, may be seen in me more and more, and that lasting spiritual fruit may be born out of my life. Keep me from outwardly drawing near to You with words and actions and yet keeping my heart closed off to You.

I ask, Lord Jesus, that You open every closed chamber of my heart—places I am even unaware of—and expose them by the light of Your Spirit. Remove every cobweb. You alone can heal the broken and wounded places of my heart. Where I am blind to my own sin, restore my sight, I pray. Where the enemy is oppressing me and holding me back from deeper relationship with You, release me, Lord! I ask that You, my Healer, grant me complete freedom in areas of my life that have not yet been captured by Your great love. (*Pause and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the hidden things of your heart to you.*) Only You can bring healing to the hidden places of my heart, and I invite You, Holy Spirit, to change me until I am conformed to the image of Christ.

Destroy pride in me and everything that holds me back from sharing my pilgrimage with my brothers and sisters in Christ, from confessing my sins and finding healing. I praise You, Lord, for You are the One who heals me! And I trust in You for healing of my body, mind, and soul. These things I pray with confidence, Lord Jesus, because of Your finished work on the cross. Amen.

(1 Peter 2:24; Gal. 5:1; Ps. 41:4, John 15:16; Isaiah 29:13; Ps. 147:3; Zeph. 2:3; Rom. 8:29; James 5:16; Ex. 15:26)

Reprinted from a new book of written prayers, *Pray the Word: 31 Prayers That Touch the Heart of God*, by Tiece L. King. Available from [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).

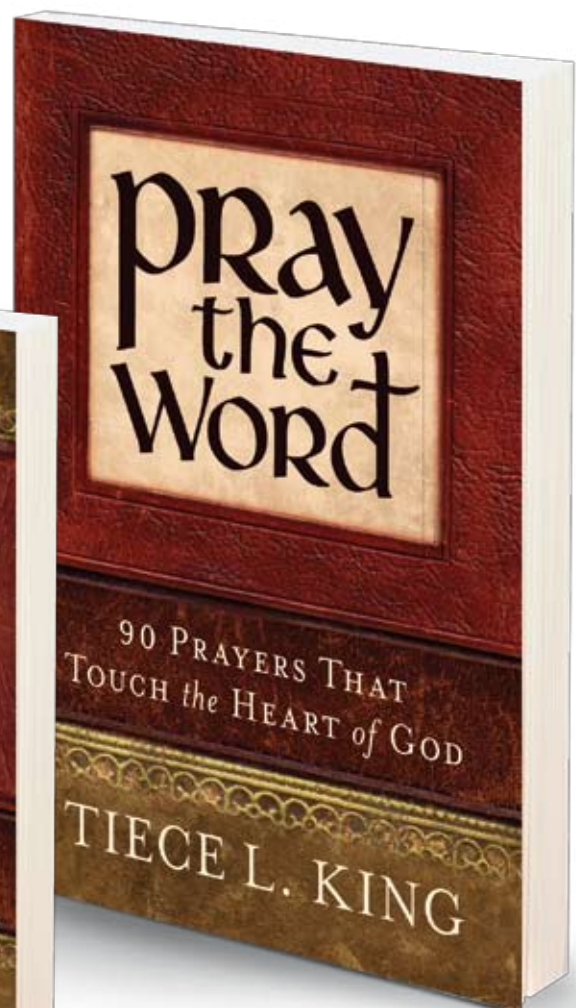
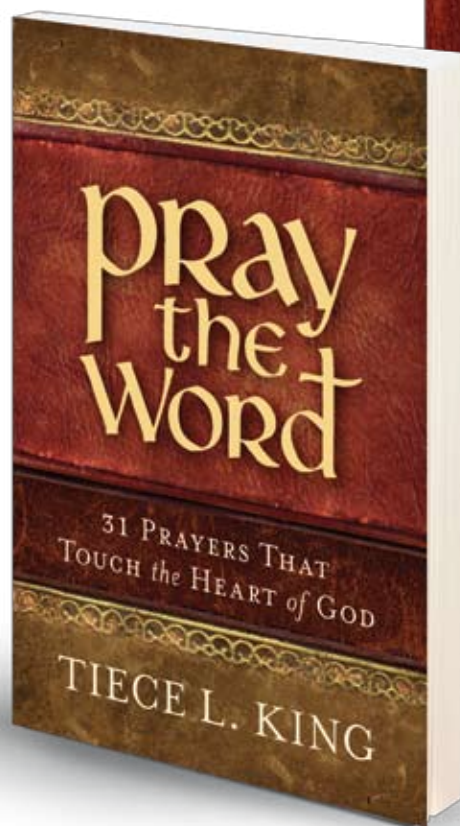


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*Anticipating that Special Gift in Revival*



BY BRAD BUSH

Join in the

JOY

of JESUS

When the English hymn writer Isaac Watts penned the immortal words to the song “Joy to the World,” he was *not* thinking of Christmas! He was thinking of the consummation of Christ’s Kingdom on earth: “He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness.”

Revivals—these extraordinary movements of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ Himself—are a foretaste of that final consummation of His coming Kingdom of righteousness, and peace and *joy in the Holy Spirit*.



# One of the hallmarks of God’s Kingdom is “joy” in the Holy Spirit.

## The Gift of Joy

Do you know the feeling you get when you give someone a gift you know he or she truly needs or desires? You’re feeling *the joy of giving*. Have you ever *anticipated* the joy you would have by giving that special gift? In a similar way, when you become the recipient of that kind of gift

giving, you’re experiencing *the joy of receiving*.

Praying for revival is asking for the gift that brings joy to Jesus. There is joy in giving God our hearts through prayer, and there is joy in receiving the gift of His Spirit in revival. But praying for revival also requires understanding the joy that motivated Jesus to endure the cross, motivated His despising the shame, and motivated His taking His rightful place at the right hand of God the Father.

Our journey into the joy of Jesus and prayer for revival begins by realizing that joy is a big deal in the Bible. The words

*joy, joyful, joyfully* and *joyously* are referenced more than 240 times in Scripture. These words carry the connotation of gladness, delight, pleasure, happiness, and rejoicing. We might think of joy as a deep, settled, satisfying sense of being really glad inside our souls. For believers, this deep, settled joy is an evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence and work in our lives (Gal. 5:22-23).

Joy also characterizes the work of the Holy Spirit in revival. When the Holy Spirit profusely pours Himself out upon God’s people, as He was upon Philip in Samaria in Acts 8, what is the result? “There was great joy in that city” (v. 8).

Can you imagine the angelic joy over Samaria! Jesus said, “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7).

Jonathan Edwards’ description of the effect of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring upon Edwards’ town of Northampton, Massachusetts, concludes with this description: “In the spring of 1735 the town seemed full of the presence of God, it never was so full of love, nor of *joy* and yet so full of distress, as it was then.”

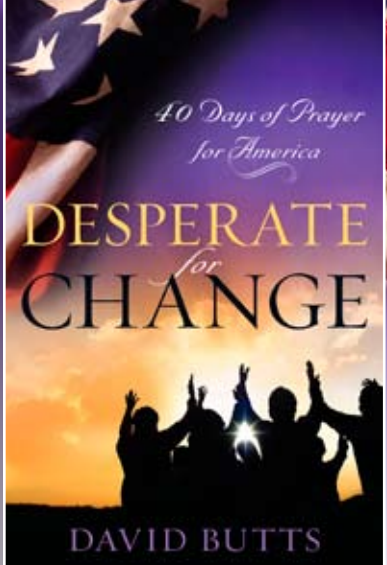
The Welsh preacher William Williams in 1762 records a testimony regarding the Spirit being poured out upon a listener during a revival: “While you preach the Word of Life, I do my utmost to restrain myself . . . and often cannot stop my tongue from crying out, ‘God is good!’ . . . While Christ’s love burns within me, and I give vent to my spiritual emotions, it is inevitable that I shout the Lord’s praises; I bless and magnify God, I leap and *shout for joy* in so great a salvation.”

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## Hallmark of Joy

When the Holy Spirit is poured out, the Kingdom of God rapidly advances—through the empowered proclamation of the gospel and through the Spirit-filled lives of His saints. One of the hallmarks of God’s Kingdom is—you guessed it—“joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Stories of revivals and spiritual awakenings delight us today. In a similar way, when Paul and Barnabas stopped by the churches on their way to Jerusalem, their reports of the Holy Spirit’s activity “brought great joy to all the brothers” (Acts 15:3, *ESV*). Earlier, even Jesus was, in essence, jumping for joy when He heard the reports of what His disciples did as the Spirit empowered them (Luke 10:21). The text suggests He actually “twirled around” as He was “full of joy through the Holy Spirit”! But what *was* the joy set before Jesus that motivated Him so that He “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2, *ESV*)? What did He anticipate would happen when He took His rightful place beside His Father? And what does this have to do with prayer for revival?

One explicit statement in Scripture answers these questions: Peter proclaimed, “Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

This was the joy set before Him! As His first official act as the sovereign Lord, who was made “head over everything for the church” (Eph. 1:22), Jesus received from His Father His divine right to pour out the Holy Spirit on His Church!

This was the moment the Church was literally waiting for! The race He ran resulted in the first revival under the New Covenant. Pentecost would give the pattern and the proof of the promise of the Spirit for all generations of believers. Can you imagine *His joy* to see His people move forward with the message and ministry of the gospel in power as He did—and now even more so! “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me

will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, *because I am going to the Father*” (John 14:12, *emphasis added*). Can you imagine *His joy* at seeing multitudes now receiving Him as their Lord and Savior through a Spirit-empowered Church? Can you imagine His sheer delight at seeing the love and unity among His

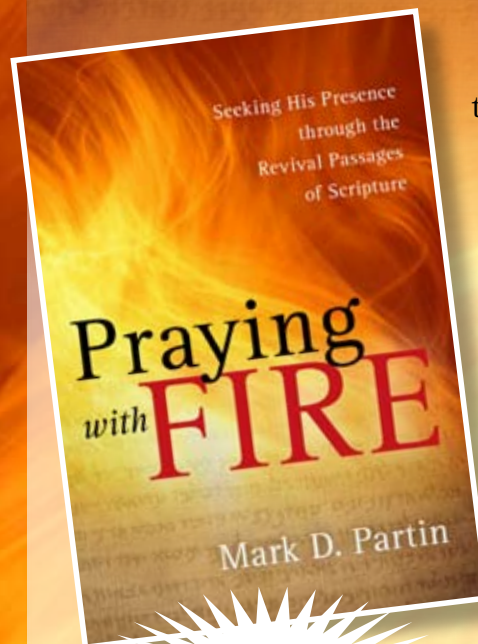
people as they worship and serve Him through a Spirit-filled community?

Imagine Jesus crossing the finish line of His earthly race. Imagine the victory laurel placed on His royal brow and the scepter of His dominion placed in His omnipotent hand. I can imagine a conversation between the Son and the Father at that moment:

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“Father, *now* grant me the privilege of pouring out the Spirit upon My people” (based on Luke 3:16; Acts 14:5).

“Father, *now* may I have the joy of pouring out the Gift of the Spirit upon those who believe in Me that they may know Your ‘incomparably great power?’” (based on Eph. 1:19).

“Father, I taught them to ask, seek, and knock for this gift of the Spirit. There is no longer delay. The last days have begun. Their faith in Your promise must not be disappointed” (based on Luke 11:9-13; Acts 2:17-20).

And the Father, with utter loyalty and infinite loving honor for His beloved Son, responds, “Yes, My blessed, true and only Son; You have been my faithful Servant (based on Matt. 12:18). Enter now into *Your joy*. Do now what You

have been longing to do, what You have earned the right to do. Receive from Me the promise and pour out the Holy Spirit upon Your inheritance. Do it now and continue to do so until the day of Your return” (based on Acts 2:16-21).

## Joy-filled Expectation

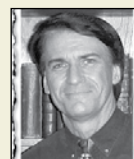
Will you join in the joy of Jesus and begin to pray for the outpouring of His Spirit? Oswald Chambers wrote, “The joy that Jesus gives is the result of our disposition being at one with his own disposition.” We can have this same mind that was in Christ Jesus, and pray for the Gift that gave Jesus such *joy to give!*

Enter into the joy of Jesus and pray for the Spirit to be poured out, that the Church may experience the *joy of receiving* the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit. Share in what satisfies the Savior’s heart, and pray for such a revival

that towns will be “full of the presence of God” as Edwards wrote about. Pray with joy-filled expectation for a revival that raises a “shout for joy in so great a salvation” over our cities as Williams witnessed!

In revival we can sing, “Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!” In revival we can shout, “Let heaven and nature sing.” In revival we can proclaim about the Holy Spirit, “He comes to make His blessings flow.” In the blessings of revival we get a foretaste of that future glory.

Enter into the joy that motivated Jesus. Pray for revival. And every time He sends the Spirit in reviving power, we’ll “repeat the sounding joy”! **PC**



**BRAD BUSH** is pastor of Maple Ridge Community Church in West Lafayette, IN, and director of the International Revival Institute ([international-revival.org](http://international-revival.org)).

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Requests can be made directly to your website, with the option for requests to be monitored and approved by an administrator. As intercessors pray for the posted requests, they can send a

"PrayerGram" through the system by an integrated email, letting the person who posted the request know that people are praying. There is also an option to send a postcard. Requests that are not yet prayed for will rise to the top of the list so that all requests are cycled through the intercessors.

You can set privacy settings for certain requests, or create special prayer groups (such as small groups) that want to manage the privacy of their own requests. Any emergency requests can be flagged and

sent out to emergency intercessors.

The iPrayerCenter can be branded as your own by uploading your church's logo and including other elements to create a unique look. The iPrayerCenter service can handle an unlimited number of users and requests. The cost to your church to set up and maintain the site is \$75 per month. This tool can help mobilize your congregation to pray for each other in an organized way that doesn't overwhelm your staff or prayer team. To learn more, go to [iprayercenter.com](http://iprayercenter.com).

## Answer the Call: the Challenge of *If 7:14*

"When you go through all the verses in Scripture, 2 Chronicles 7:14 is one of the most descriptive verses there is," says Bob Vander Plaats, president and CEO of The Family Leader. "God just lays out [that] revival is not complicated."

After his ministry hosted a Leadership Summit in 2012, it was clear the speakers were rallying around a common theme: the only hope in turning things around spiritually, fiscally, morally, locally, internationally, and personally is revival. This unplanned, but well-orchestrated, message from all the spiritual leaders convinced Vander Plaats to take God's Word seriously and issue a call to action.

He then authored the book *If 7:14* and launched a prayer initiative based on the simplicity of God's prescription, coupled with the required obedience of 2 Chronicles 7:14. The call to action is the commitment to be prompted twice a day to pray for revival—at 7:14 a.m. and 7:14 p.m. It is as simple as setting the alarm on your cell phone or watch to remind you to stop and pray at that moment.

On their website ([if714.org](http://if714.org)), you can sign up to commit to praying twice a day.

You can also "like" the *If 7:14* Facebook page to receive regular posts of revival inspiration. And you can text message If714 to (515) 393-2782 to receive a text prayer reminder twice a day.

The book *If 7:14* is divided into 11 chapters that unpack the Scripture passage, and can be used as a small



group study. It begins with the need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (personal revival), then explores the ripple effect for widespread revival.

### Will You Pray with Us?

*Prayer Connect* magazine needs you! We are grateful for readers who will come alongside us and uphold us in prayer:

- Praise God that He continues to sustain *Prayer Connect*. We are grateful for more subscribers and advertisers. Pray for a surge in subscriptions and advertising revenue leading up to the fall.
- Pray for a refreshing of the editorial and design staffs, as they go from deadline to deadline. Spirit-led creativity and editorial skills are essential. Pray also for those proofing the magazine to catch any mistakes. We want *Prayer Connect* to always be of the highest quality.
- Pray for God's protection over the staff and their health, along with the well being of their families.
- Pray that the editorial staff will be sensitive to God's leading in determining future themes and qualified authors.

Thank you for keeping us in your prayers. Send us an email to let us know how you are praying—and if the Lord is speaking anything to you that we need to hear ([editor@prayerconnect.net](mailto:editor@prayerconnect.net)).



## Summer's Here: Walk and Pray with Your Kids

Teaching children to pray doesn't always work best sitting down at the kitchen table or kneeling by the child's bed. This summer is a great opportunity to teach your children to pray in a more active way by going outside on family prayerwalks through your neighborhood. The following tips can help you guide your children through a summer full of prayer experiences.

- Be clear about your goal. This is a time to teach your children how to pray in an engaging way. Secondary benefits such as family conversation or exercise may result, however the goal of family prayerwalking is to pray and to teach your children to pray.
- Have realistic expectations of your children, taking into account their

ages, attention span, and willingness to pray out loud.

Allow the wonders of God's creation to lead you to praise and thank Him. As you prayerwalk together:

- Ask your children, "What sounds do you hear?" If they hear birds singing, praise God for the beauty of birds and their ability to sing.
- If your child notices a pretty flower, say, "Let's thank God for making flowers."
- As you see different trees, thank God for making trees that give shade from the summer heat or provide us with fruit to eat.

Pay attention to the people you see and offer simple prayers for neighbors as

you walk past their homes.

- Jointly ask God to bring your child's neighborhood friend to know Jesus.
- Invite your children to pray specifically and by name: "Please heal Mrs. Brown from cancer."
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show your family how to pray for a neighbor—then do it in faith!

When you prayerwalk together, your children will learn to pray by hearing *you* pray. Encourage them to repeat one of your prayers after you or pray in their own words. Keep it fun and praise God for any growth you witness!

**JEFF MENDOZA** is the prayer coordinator for Global Teams International.

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## Prayers to Change the World

**O**peration World (the book and the website) is “the definitive prayer guide to every nation,” says Pete Grieg of the 24/7 prayer movement. “If you believe that we are here to change the world, not be shaped by it, then *Operation World* is a manual for revolution.”

Operation World ([operationworld.org](http://operationworld.org)) has been mentioned on different occasions in *Prayer Connect* during the past two years. However, we would like to reintroduce our readers to its powerful, Kingdom-engaging website in a more comprehensive way. The website is a great enhancement to the book, which can be purchased from the website or from [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).

Multiple easy-to-navigate features, with an extensive menu of prayer options, allow intercessors—from youngest to oldest—to cover the nations in prayer. Each day a new banner announces that day’s featured nation.

### Have You Heard of Djibouti?

As this article was being written, Djibouti, located in the Horn of Africa, was the featured nation. The banner contains the national flag and the number of people groups (11), with the percentage of its population considered unreached (55%). The banner also offers two options to click for more information: Country Profile and Prayer Information.

The Country Profile tab takes you to more comprehensive facts about the nation, including a profile of the geography (with enlargeable maps) and a breakdown of the various languages, peoples, and religions. Although Djibouti is 1.75 percent Christian, only .1 percent is evangelical. When you click on “All Peoples,” you will be taken to *joshua-*

*project.net*, which gives more extensive information about the people groups in Djibouti. If you click on “Unreached Peoples Prayer Card” you will find a resource to help you pray specifically for several of the people groups.

The Prayer Information tab guides you deep into targeted intercession. In the case of Djibouti, here are just a few of the prayer points included:

- The few Somali and Afar believers are often isolated and suffer many pressures from relatives. Their families may ostracize, beat, or even kill them for deserting Islam. Pray that they might stand firm in their commitment to follow Jesus. There are many disruptive forces such as tribalism and jealousy that create division among the believers and make them reluctant to meet together. Pray for a new bond of unity.
- The Afars’ main territories are in Ethiopia and Eritrea, where there is little witness at present. There is no known church among them.
- The Somalis are a small branch of the larger populations in Somalia and Ethiopia. They are key for the evangelization of their kinsmen across the border.

Also note the significant and helpful menu choices located at the top of the Operation World home page: Prayer Movement, Prayer Resources, and Country Lists.

When you click on Prayer Movement, you will be taken to a page inviting you to participate in a 60-day Prayer Experience. You will receive daily email prayer reminders with a link to specific prayer content for the nation of the day. You will also receive e-prayer cards from

Joshua Project for the unreached people groups in that nation, as well as a prayer video (Prayercast) to watch and join in prayer. Following the 60 days, you will receive reminders to pray daily according to the Operation World prayer calendar.

Also under the Prayer Movement dropdown is an excellent section titled “Ideas for Community Prayer Events” that every prayer leader and pastor should access. It can be used as a guide for days of prayer, prayer journeys, and other prayer gatherings.

The Prayer Resource dropdown offers many free resources to enhance prayer for the nations, including an impressive list of “White Papers” (articles). From this place you can also access 60 Prayercast videos.

Under Country Lists, you will find the monthly prayer calendar. The first part of January focuses on the world, and the nations are listed alphabetically. Another feature lists the nations by region, including specific ways to pray for each region.

This website will help you feel well equipped to pray that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab.2:14). **PC**

### What’s Not to Like?



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

**Prayer Connect**

*/prayerconnect*

**Harvest Prayer Ministries**

*/harvestprayer*

**Pray the Word**

*/praytheword*

## Integrating Worship with Prayer | By Daniel Henderson

All my life, worship services have seemed basically the same. Of course, some stylistic elements have changed. Hymnbooks have been replaced with modern song lyrics projected on a screen. Keyboards and guitars have taken center stage. ProPresenter software images and video clips frequently appear. Pews have disappeared in favor of theater seating. Large wood pulpits have given way to smaller stands—or nothing at all.

In spite of these changes, few elements have changed in the vast majority of worship services. The essential components usually occur in the same order: singing, then preaching, interspersed with occasional prayer and announcements. The service divides neatly into two segments—worship in music and worship in the Word. Prayer is typically a seasoning lightly sprinkled on the gathering.

### Why So Segmented?

Who says it has to be this way? Here is a radical proposal that might change how we worship on Sundays. Instead of 20 minutes of music followed by 40 minutes of preaching, zipped up neatly with an opening and closing prayer, imagine the service looking more like this:

- Worship in song—8 minutes
- First preaching segment—12 minutes
- Praying together about what we have just heard—5 minutes
- Short worship song—3 minutes
- Second teaching segment—15 minutes
- Praying together about what we have just heard—5 minutes
- Short worship song—3 minutes
- Third teaching segment—10 minutes
- Praying together about what we have just heard—5 minutes
- Worship and response—7 minutes

- Worship through giving and ministry announcements—5 minutes
- Final worship—3 minutes

Some may immediately object, arguing that shorter teaching segments compromise the Word in some way. Of course, Scripture is clear that we must accurately teach and passionately preach God's inspired Word. However, if you time how long it takes to read some of the New Testament sermons, you will find they are shorter and more effective than most sermons in our churches today. (See Acts 2:4–41, 4:8–12; 7:2–53.)

### Benefits of Integration

I see several benefits to an approach such as the one I suggested:

**1. Attention.** Like it or not, the attention span of Americans is getting shorter. Research shows that with all the technological multitasking we practice via smartphones, iPads, and email, our brains are actually being remapped, making activities that require extended focus more difficult.

Shorter components in our church services, punctuated with prayerful application and worship, might encourage better focus and engagement. I remember attending a church where the sermons typically lasted 55–65 minutes. I suspect that after 50 minutes few people could even remember what was said at the beginning of the sermon.

**2. Interaction.** We have become a spectator culture when it comes to worship. Even when we sing, we give our attention to the performers on the platform. We passively listen to extended messages with very little crowd participation.

Taking time to pray and worship in connection with shorter segments of

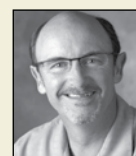
teaching and response helps our minds and hearts engage via the power of God's Word. Contextually appropriate expressions of prayer give worshipers the opportunity to connect with one another at a meaningful level. This could include private prayer, small group prayer, prayer led from the front, and other formats.

**3. Application.** Recently, I heard a senior pastor say, "I've become convinced that the most powerful way to apply God's Word is to pray it."

I agree. Within a worshiping community even the opportunity to sing songs related to the theme of a teaching segment can inspire us to engage with the truth.

- The goal of teaching is to engage the mind and heart in order to affect the will, which, in turn, leads to deeper application and obedience.
- The goal of singing is to use our whole being to extol the character of God with a keen awareness of His presence.
- Substantive prayer, woven into the service, enhances all of these goals.

A more interactive experience will likely threaten some who are satisfied with the status quo. However, the boldness to try a different, more engaging approach might produce a different result. A different result might shape a different kind of disciple, leading to different kind of impact on the world that so desperately needs to encounter passionate, pure, and powerful believers walking in the light of Jesus Christ. ☞



**DANIEL HENDERSON**, president of Strategic Renewal, is also prayer pastor at Mission Hills Church, Littleton, CO.





## The Hidden Life of Prayer | By David McIntyre

“**B**ut thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray” (Matt. 6:6, ASV). The equipment for the inner life of prayer is simple, if not always easily secured. It consists particularly of a *quiet place*, a *quiet hour*, and a *quiet heart*.

### Quiet Place

With regard to many of us the first of these, a *quiet place*, is well within our reach. But there are tens of thousands of our fellow-believers who find it generally impossible to withdraw into the desired seclusion of the secret place. Many may not always be able to command quiet and solitude. But, “your Father knoweth.” In the carpenter’s cottage in Nazareth there were, it appears, no fewer than nine persons who lived under one roof. When our Lord had entered on his public ministry, there were occasions when he found it difficult to secure the privilege of solitude. When his spirit hungered for communion with his Father, he was fain to bend his steps toward the rough uplands.

Any place may become an oratory, provided that one is able to find in it seclusion. Isaiah went into the fields to meditate. Elijah withdrew to the lonely crest of Carmel. Daniel spent three weeks in an ecstasy of intercession on the banks of Hiddekel.

And if not a better place presents itself, the soul which turns to God may clothe itself in quietness even in the crowded concourse or in the hurrying streets. A poor woman in a great city, never able to free herself from the insistent clamour of her little ones, made for herself a sanctuary in the simplest way: “I threw my apron over my head,” she said, “and *there* is my closet.”

### Quiet Hour

For most of us, it may be harder to find a *quiet hour*. I do not mean an “hour” of exactly 60 minutes, but a portion of time withdrawn from the engagement of the day, fenced round from the encroachment of business or pleasure, and dedicated to God.

Certainly, if we are to have a quiet hour set down in the middle of a hurry of duties, and kept inviolate, we must exercise both forethought and self-denial. We must be prepared to forego many things that are pleasant, and some things that are profitable. We shall have to redeem time, it may be from recreation, or from study, or from works of beneficence, if we are to find leisure daily to enter into our closet, and *having shut the door*, to pray to our Father who is in secret.

One sometimes hears it said, “I confess that I do not spend much time in the secret chamber, but I try to cultivate the habit of continual prayer.” And it is implied that this is more and better than that. The two things ought not to be set in opposition. Each is necessary to a well-ordered Christian life; and each was perfectly maintained in the practice of our Lord. He was always enfolded in divine love, his communion with the Father was unbroken. But St. Luke tells us it was his habit to withdraw himself into the wilderness and pray (Luke 5:16).

And this one who sought retirement with so much solicitude was the Son of God, having no sin to confess, no shortcomings to deplore, no unbelief to subdue, no languor of love to overcome. Nor are we to imagine that his prayers were merely peaceful meditations, or rapturous acts of communion. They were strenuous and warlike, that awful agony

in which his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood. His prayers were sacrifices, *offered up with strong crying and tears*.

We know, of course, that prayer cannot be measured by divisions of time. But the advantages derived from secret prayer are not to be obtained unless we enter on it with deliberation. We must “shut the door,” enclosing and securing a sufficient portion of time for the fitting discharge of the engagement before us.

### Quiet Heart

For most of us, it is still harder to secure the *quiet heart*. When we enter the inner chamber we should present ourselves before God in meekness and affiance, and open our hearts to the incoming and infilling of the Holy Spirit.

So shall we receive from the praying Spirit, and commit to the praying Christ, those petitions which are of divine birth, and express themselves, through our finite hearts and sin-stained lips, in “groanings which cannot be uttered.” Without the support of the Holy Spirit, prayer becomes a matter of incredible difficulty.

Many times I am forced in my prayers, first to beg of God that he would take mine heart, and set it on himself in Christ, and when it is there, that he would keep it there.

It will greatly help to calm the mind if we open the sacred volume and read it as in the presence of God, until there it shall come to us out from the printed page a word from the eternal. Let us be silent to God that he may fashion us. **PC**

**DAVID MCINTYRE** (1859–1938) became principal of the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1913 and authored several books. This excerpt is from *The Hidden Life of Prayer: The Life-blood of the Christian*.



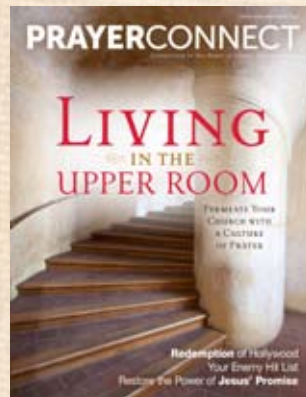
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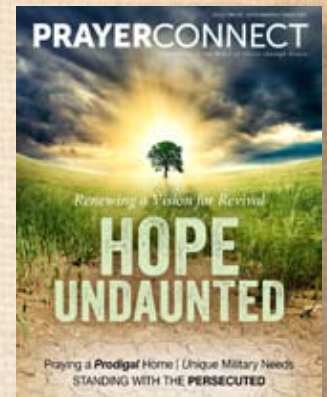
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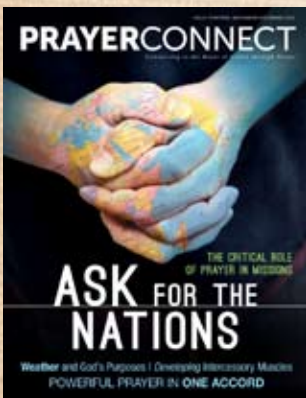
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