

PRAYERCONNECT

Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

THE *PSALMS*

Giving Voice to Your Prayers



TAKE ONE *for the Team* | **AVOID** the Balaam Blunder
BEYOND “FRIEND OF A FRIEND” PRAYERS

Sunday, November 6, 2016 is . . .

Prayer Force One SUNDAY

The Sunday Before We Elect Our Next President

Save The
Date!



Then
Participate!

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

II Chronicles 7:14

"Prayer Force One Sunday is not an event, but a date. We are asking every individual Christian, every home, and every church, ministry and denomination to participate in their own way. To find out how you can become involved in your own community, please visit our website listed below."

Senator Ed Moore, (OK-Ret.)
President, Prayer Force One



www.PrayerForceOne.com

PRAYERCONNECT

July–September 2016 Vol. 6, No. 3



32

Features

28 **Put Me in the Game, Coach!**

Executing Your Prayer Assignment

By Pierre Eade

32 **Kingdom Balance**

Develop Purpose in Your Congregational Prayer Lists

By Jonathan Graf



THE PSALMS

Giving Voice to Your Prayers, p. 9

10 **Why the Psalms Matter**

The Go-to Prayer Book

By Ben Patterson

14 **When Words Fail**

The Blessed Practice of Praying the Psalms

By Tricia McCary Rhodes

Plus: Not All Psalms Are the Same

20 **How My Friends and I Pray the Psalms**

Prayer Leaders Share Their Best Practices

By John T. Maempa

Plus: Praying the Psalms Creatively as a Family

25 **Bible Study**

Giving Voice to Your Prayers

By Sandra Higley



20

Departments

5 **Publisher's Note**

Is Increased Prayer a Lot of Hoo-ha?

7 **News & Events**

- Cries for Revival in Reno, NV
- Media Reports Acknowledge Revival
- National Day of Prayer Largest Ever
- Hindus Turning to Christ
- Australia Calls World to Fast and Pray for U.S.
- Prayer Calendar

36 **Tips & Tools**

- The Challenge of Praying through the Bible
- Private Prayer in Public Worship
- Will You Pray with Us?

38 **Prayer Leader**

- Creative Intergenerational Prayer Gatherings

39 **Classics**

God's Great Need

14



Business and Shipping Address

PRAYERCONNECT
3525 S. 3rd Pl. | Terre Haute, IN 47802
812.238.5504 | prayerconnect.net

Article Submissions

We are looking for general articles, ideas, and news stories on what God is doing as a result of prayer. 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. 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:

Carol Madison
Prayer Connect Submissions
4300 West 98th St. | Bloomington, MN 55437
editor@prayerconnect.net

Subscriptions

Prayer Connect is published four times per year, available in Print (\$24.99 per year) or Digital (\$19.99 per year) formats, and through the Church Prayer Leaders Network (CPLN) Membership (\$30 per year). Both CPLN and Print subscriptions include access to the Digital version. To subscribe, go to prayerconnect.net. We also have multiple copy discounts available for individuals or churches who want to purchase copies for a prayer team or small groups:

prayerconnect.net
Joanne Telle
800.217.5200 or 812.238.5504

Permissions

Jonathan Graf
jong@harvestprayer.com | 812.238.5504

Reprint Permissions

If you are making copies for your small group or for church use, you have blanket permission to make up to 100 copies without asking for permission (as long as the copies are not sold or in a for-sale product). Please include the phrase: "Copied from *Prayer Connect* (Issue #). Used with permission." Contact us to gain permission for all other uses, including posting articles on the Internet. We do encourage you to put links on Facebook and Twitter to articles that are open to the public at prayerconnect.net.

Advertising

If you would like information about placing an ad in *Prayer Connect*, or if you have concerns or questions about our ads, please contact:
Prayer Connect, 3525 S. 3rd Pl. Terre Haute, IN 47802
advertising@prayerconnect.net | 812.238.5504

Start with a Complete Set

GET EVERY BACK ISSUE OF PRAYER CONNECT



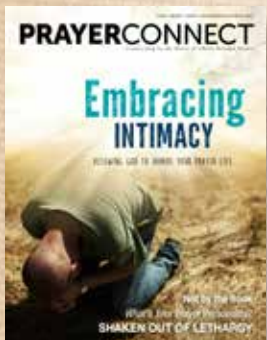
Issue 20
REDISCOVERING FASTING
A Kingdom Key to Breakthrough



Issue 21
BEYOND THE OBVIOUS
Moving from Fix-it to Kingdom Prayers



Issue 22
TRANSFORMING PRAYER
Inviting God's Presence to Your Community



Issue 23
EMBRACING INTIMACY
Allowing God to Invade Your Prayer Life



Issue 24
LEADERS WHO PRAY
The Foundation to Building a Praying Church



Issue 25
THERE'S STILL HOPE
A Call for United Prayer for Our Elections

- Issue 1** Can Prayer Save America?
- Issue 2** Fresh Fire
- Issue 4** As the Waters Cover the Sea
- Issue 5** The Place Was Shaken
- Issue 6** Stand Firm & Strong
- Issue 7** Open Hearts, Open Doors
- Issue 8** The Lord is Near
- Issue 9** Releasing Children to Pray

- Issue 10** Living in the Upper Room
- Issue 12** Hope Undaunted
- Issue 13** Ask for the Nations
- Issue 14** Help!
- Issue 15** The Power of Praise
- Issue 16** God Speaks
- Issue 17** Roadblock Ahead
- Issue 18** Faith and Prayer
- Issue 19** Awakening on Campuses



COVER PRICE: \$6.00 | PRAYERSHOP PRICE: \$5.00

www.prayershop.org | Click on "Prayer Connect Magazine"
"Back Issues" | 812-238-5504

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.

Jonathan Graf | jong@harvestprayer.com
Carol Madison | editor@prayerconnect.net
harvestprayer.com | prayerleader.com

Sponsored by

America's National Prayer Committee
Denominational Prayer Leaders Network
International Prayer Council

Published by

Church Prayer Leaders Network
Harvest Prayer Ministries
PrayerShop Publishing

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.

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Jonathan Graf
jong@harvestprayer.com

Editor

Carol Madison
editor@prayerconnect.net

Art Director

J. Bridget Rennie

Editorial Assistants

Joyce Ellis
Joan Sherman

Contributing Writer

Kim Butts

Subscriptions/Orders

Joanne Telle

Previously in
Prayer Connect

Our nation faces the election of key political leaders who will determine future direction for our country. It is critical for believers to be

fully engaged through prayer, as well as exercise their right to vote. The April–June 2016 issue reminds us that “There’s Still Hope” by calling for united prayer for the elections. Order this issue and other back issues at

prayershop.org.



Is Increased Prayer a Lot of Hoo-ha?

When I wrote this column I had recently returned from Washington, D.C., where I participated in events surrounding the United States’ National Day of Prayer. It was an exciting time.



We heard about all the events across the country on that day—more than 47,000, according to the National Day of Prayer Task Force. If that number is even close to accurate (and assuming an average of 50 people per event—some in the thousands), that means more than two million people were praying for the nation on May 5!

We also heard about a number of other significant prayer initiatives and events that have taken place or will soon: Pray As One, Appeal to Heaven, Prayer Force One Sunday, Azusa Now, United Cry DC16, Together 2016, and many others.

As the publisher of *Prayer Connect*, I am seeing much more information and interest surrounding prayer for our nation. Within the past year, three national leaders have released books on praying for the nation: Dutch Sheets, *An Appeal to Heaven*; Dave Butts, *With One Cry*, and Anne Graham Lotz, *The Daniel Prayer*. Clearly we are on an upswing regarding the numbers of people who feel compelled to pray.

This excites me for two reasons.

First, historically, many significant revivals have come during times of intense desperation within a nation. Things were very bad in the U.S. just before the First and Second Great Awakenings and before the prayer revival of the late 1850s through the 1860s. When His people get desperate, God responds to a united crying out in prayer. Believers in the United States are feeling the growing desperation and are seeking God. This gives me great hope that a move of God’s Spirit is on the way.

Second, I know the truth of this statement (attributed to different individuals): “When God sets His people to praying, you know He is up to something.”

Many believe we are under the judgment of God in America. I do not doubt that. I believe we are. But, historically, as people have cried out to God, He has responded with mercy and blessing. If we were under a judgment that can never be removed, why would God be drawing His people to pray? Why wouldn’t He say to us, like He said to Jeremiah regarding Israel at one point, “Do not pray for this people or offer any plea or petition for them, because I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their distress” (Jer. 11:14)?

The fact that He is calling believers all across the nation to pray—millions of them—gives me great hope as well. He is not done with this nation!

I do not know what a move of God might look like. I don’t know how it might impact the cultures of both the Church and society. But I do believe—with great hope—that a move of His Spirit will be poured out on this nation in the coming days.

—Jonathan Graf

America is in a downward spiral spiritually and morally.
A weakened Church seems to make little impact on society.

IS THERE STILL HOPE FOR AMERICA?

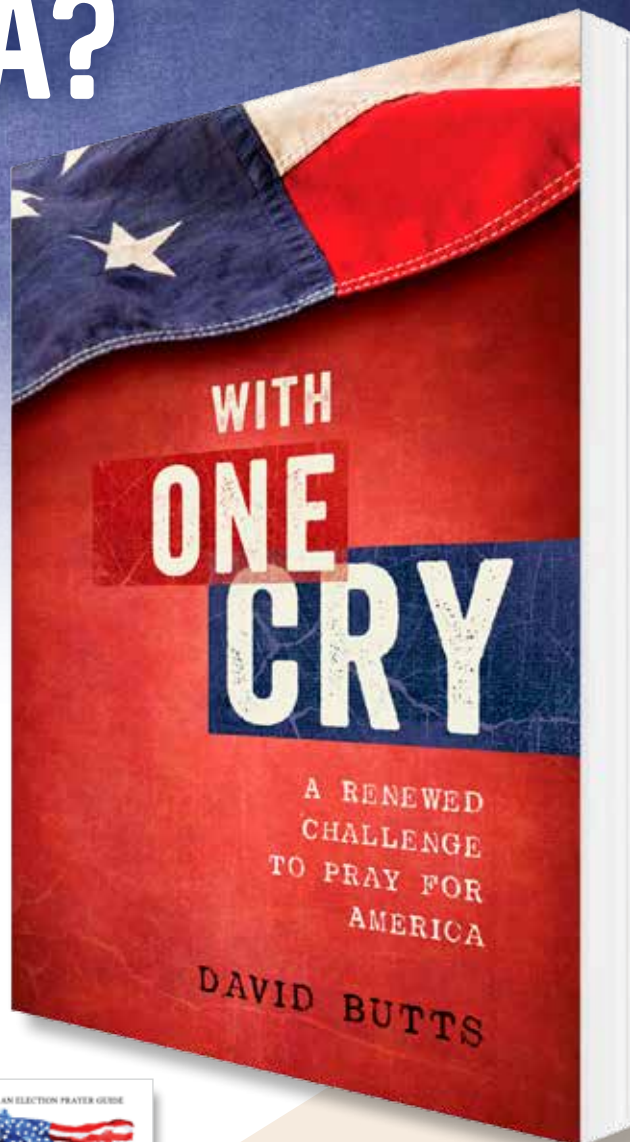
National Day of Prayer Task Force Chairman of the Board
Dave Butts says “Yes!” . . .
If believers will pray!



Dave’s new book, *With One Cry*, will inspire, challenge, and equip believers to pray more effectively and with more passion for our nation in this critical time.

“In this critical hour in America, Dave Butts is providing us a very helpful and practical book about how to pray for America. From a proven leader that has a burden for our nation, we are inspired to have hope in our generation. Now is the time for us to pray for America.”

—Dr. Ronnie Floyd, President, Southern Baptist Convention, Senior Pastor, Cross Church



\$11.99

Order from prayershop.org or through your local Christian bookstore.
All e-book formats are available at your usual e-book source.



812-238-5504 | prayershop.org



Also available from Dave:
16-page, 4" x 6" booklet
Individual Copies: .99 each
Pack of 10: \$7.99
Pack of 100: \$59.99



Cries for Revival in Reno, NV

In 2013, Brent Brooks, pastor of Reno Christian Fellowship, invited the leadership of OneCry (onecry.com) to come alongside him and other pastors to host a prayer gathering in Reno, NV.

“God has been doing something very intriguing in Reno,” says Brooks. “We’ve seen God crossing boundaries and bringing people together in ways He hasn’t before.” In that prayer gathering, 375 leaders from 60 different ministries were unified in asking God for revival in Reno.

Three years later, during April 2016,

nine churches in Reno held four-day THIRST conferences, led by teams from Life Action Ministries (lifeaction.org). The teams traveled from church to church (from various denominations) throughout the city. The meetings included worship, prayer, and messages from “revivalist” speakers. The messages of repentance and humility encouraged attendees to allow the Spirit to work in their lives.

OneCry Reno culminated in a three-night citywide worship gathering at the



Lawlor Events Center, April 24–26, focusing on prayer for Reno’s spiritual rebirth. Three thousand people gathered, representing 100 churches, in a city where only two percent of the population attends church.

Media Reports Acknowledge Revival

Where West Virginia and Kentucky meld together, pastors and churches are experiencing the stirrings of revival. In fact, the revival is so strong that secular news sources determined it was front-page news.

“The message of hope is a message that resounds with everyone,” Pastor Wayne R. Crozier, of Abundant Life Ministries in Charleston, WV, told the *Charleston State Journal*. “People want hope, and that is what the church offers.”

In Kentucky, the desperate cries of prayer are rising from one of the poorest areas in the country, where men and women are experiencing miracles and the fresh presence of the Lord.

“People are running to the altar and there’s a groan of revival,” Ryan LeStrange says. LeStrange is co-founder of *awakeningt看.com* and senior leader of New Breed Revival Network. “Repentance and weeping are breaking out. . . . There’s a real intense kind of intercession for the state.”

But to understand where Kentucky is going, one must first understand its history, says Rick Curry. Curry is the senior

pastor of King’s Way Church in Pensacola, FL, and chairman of the board of The Sentinel Group, which documents transforming revival in the nations. Many of these areas of Kentucky where the Lord is moving are old coal-mining towns that have been nearly destroyed by economic downturns.

“I think there is really a great measure of desperation particularly in Eastern Kentucky, in the mountains, an increased desperation in those areas by and large because of loss of jobs in coal mines,” Curry says. “This desperation is drawing hearts of people to return to the Lord, and it’s reflected in the revivals that are happening.”

As for West Virginia, “It’s incredible what is happening here,” Mitchell Bias, pastor of the Regional Church of God, Delbarton, WV, says. “The kids are not only getting saved, but they are finding purpose and destiny—that’s what it’s all about.”

More than 3,000 young people reportedly came to Christ in just three weeks in the area, and in one town,

1,500 people gathered—a crowd larger than the size of the town.

The cries for revival are going beyond Kentucky and West Virginia. On April 9 in Los Angeles, “Azusa Now” sparked a renewed passion for Jesus among at least 70,000 people who prayed for 15 hours in the Los Angeles Coliseum. On the same day, on the East Coast in Washington, D.C., UnitedCry DC16 drew hundreds of pastors to the Lincoln Memorial to repent and ask for a national spiritual awakening.

David’s Tent, a 24/7 worship and prayer movement (davidstentdc.org) in D.C., has been going continuously since September 11, starting out in a tent near the Washington Monument and then moving to other key places near the National Mall. This day and night worship will continue until the elections. On July 16, one million are anticipated on the Mall for Together 2016 (reset2016.com) to exalt the name of Jesus over America.

Adapted with permission from *Charisma News*. Copyright Charisma Media, USA. All rights reserved (charismanews.com).



National Day of Prayer Largest Ever

The 65th annual National Day of Prayer (NDP) on May 5 was observed in a variety of ways across the nation. In Washington, D.C., the NDP Task Force facilitated several events on Capitol Hill.

Shirley Dobson was honored for 25 years of service as the chair of the NDP Task Force. After assuming the leadership role from Vonette Bright in 1991, the movement has grown to include thousands

of observances across the nation.

Dobson then announced Anne Graham Lotz as her successor as the new chair of the NDP Task Force. Lotz is an author, speaker, and founder and president of AnGeL Ministries.

“For the past several years, God has burdened my heart with His message to call His people to repentance, revival, and a recommitment to serious prayer,” says Lotz. “Now I’m on tiptoe in my spirit,

filled with expectancy to see what God will do.”

More than 47,000 NDP gatherings took place from coast to coast. President Barack Obama and all 50 state governors unanimously called on Americans to pray. In addition, an estimated 90 nations participated. It was the largest day of prayer observance in modern era. Next year’s National Day of Prayer will be on May 4 (*nationaldayofprayer.org*).

Hindus Turning to Christ

Intercessors for America has called for prayer for Hindu, Muslim, and other people groups for years—and now there are reports of hundreds of Hindus turning to Jesus Christ in areas once severely antagonistic to Christians.

According to Veronica Neffinger of Breaking Christian News, the 2008 murder of a Hindu leader sparked intense violence against Christians in the predominantly Hindu Kandhamal District

in eastern India. The Hindu radicals blamed Christians for the murder, and went on a rampage, destroying 300 churches and 6,000 homes, and displacing at least 50,000 people for months. Many fled to the jungles.

Recently there are reports that those very jungles where many Christians died are becoming places where numerous Hindus are encountering the Lord.

“By God’s grace we are holding

evangelistic jungle camps everywhere the violence took place,” said an indigenous religious leader. “It is God’s doing. . . . They are happy to accept Jesus as their God and Savior and to live for Him in the midst of persecution. Thousands gather in the jungle camps in Kandhamal District to hear the living Word of God. People were happy and encouraged to live for Jesus and His Kingdom,” he continued.

Taken from Intercessors for America (*ifapray.org*).

Australia Calls World to Fast and Pray for U.S.

For the past four years, the team behind Australia’s National Day of Prayer and Fasting has called other nations to fast and pray for six days for the United States (April 30–May 5).

Warwick Marsh from Australia explains that on May 7, 1942, the United States joined forces with Australia to win the strategic Battle of the Coral Sea, which helped to turn back the Japanese invasion landing force—and ultimately may have been the turning point of the Second World War. But the victory came at a high cost to the U.S. military forces, as 656 Americans lost their lives.

This is part of the Australians’ motivation to solicit prayer for the U.S. “Right now the USA is in a spiritual battle for its very survival as a nation under God,” Marsh says. “Secular forces have taken prayer out of school and progressively waged war against family, faith, and religious freedom. It is time for Australia and the people of the world to join with our brothers and sisters in Christ in the USA in this battle for their nation.

“We in Australia are grateful for the protection that America gave Australia during World War II,” he continues. “It is time for us to return the favor and get on our knees and pray for America.”

Prayer Calendar

Cry Out America
Sunday, September 11
awakeningamerica.us

See You at the Pole
Wednesday, September 28
syatp.com

Day of Prayer for Peace
of Jerusalem
Sunday, October 2
daytopray.com



GIVING VOICE TO YOUR PRAYERS

I don't consider myself much of a "prayer practitioner" when it comes to praying the Psalms. In fact, I put off writing this theme introduction for weeks because I kept thinking, *Uh-oh, what am I going to say? I'm really not very good at praying the Psalms. People are going to figure that out!*

Granted, I often turn to a psalm during corporate prayer times because the Psalms help me pray more than just, "God, You are really great and awesome, and . . . um . . . big. Amen." In those times when my words are inadequate to express my heart toward the Lord, the Psalms give me a language of praise.

But I discounted the impact the Psalms have had on my prayer life—until I started paging through my Bible. I discovered that, over the course of many years, the Lord has used the Psalms to minister to me during several key seasons in my life. I noted ways I had voiced a psalm to call out in times of pain or uncertainty. I recalled with surprise and gratitude the various psalms friends had used to pray for me—with the dates and some of the circumstances surrounding why they prayed that way.

One particular psalm was underlined—almost every verse—and my handwriting scribbled all over margins. In a season of my ministry life when I felt betrayed by others, I clung to Psalm 37 for weeks. I found myself making the words of David my own. I pleaded with God—just as David had—that He might deliver me from the pain caused by others and restore those things that seemed taken from me.

Now, looking back at the psalm several years later, I rejoice to see the ways God restored things in my life abundantly beyond what I could have imagined at that time. I suspect David felt the same way years after he prayed and penned that psalm.

As I continued paging through my Bible, I recalled a night when I found myself praying through all of Psalm 119—yes, the entire, lengthy psalm—alone in my hotel room while on a trip as a member of a pastoral search team. My heart was terribly conflicted that night and I could not sleep. I remember feeling a peace when I was finally finished—and I knew what the Lord was asking me to do.

God also brought to mind the verses (Ps. 139:17–18) that Evelyn Christiansen

(a national prayer leader) used when she prayed over me just a month before she died. I wrote in the margin that when she finished praying for me, she patted my shoulder and said, "There! You're ready to go." She took care to remind me how precious God's thoughts are, and that when I wake up in the morning, God is still with me.

Embracing the Psalms

In this issue, authors who are prayer practitioners of this "Book of Prayers" pass long helpful ways to embrace the Psalms. Ben Patterson points out that if Jesus thought the Psalms were important enough to include in His own prayer life, so should we! Tricia Rhodes distinguishes among the various kinds of psalms, noting that some fit times of joy while others fit times of pain or uncertainty. And you will be encouraged by ideas from members of America's National Prayer Committee as John Maempa compiles their best practices of praying the Psalms.

I'm not as much of a practitioner of praying the Psalms as I would like to be, but I am convinced it is truly "God's Prayer Book." I just needed the reminder. **PC**

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.





WHY THE PSALMS MATTER

The Go-to Prayer Book

W

hy should the Psalms matter to us? Here's possibly the best reason: because they mattered greatly to Jesus!

As a Jew, Jesus grew up with the Psalms. They were His prayer book. When His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, He gave them what we know as the Lord's Prayer, or the Our Father. Everything Jesus told them—and us—to pray for in this great prayer was already there in the Psalms; there was nothing original. The Lord's Prayer simply distills and summarizes what was already recorded.

The Psalms were also important to Jesus personally. How did Jesus pray as He hung dying on the cross? Where did He look to find words to speak His anguish to His Father? He went to the Psalms. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46) is a quotation from Psalm 22:1. "Father, into your hands I commit

my spirit" (Luke 23:46) came from Psalm 31:5. Though Jesus was the grand original thinker, the master of creativity, He saw no need to be original or extemporaneous, to "pray from the heart" as we say. He prayed the Psalms because for Him to do so was to pray from the heart.

God's Word and Our Words

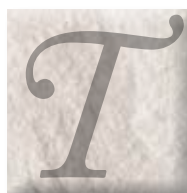
There are other reasons the Psalms should matter to us. The second is that they teach us to pray. They are the Bible's prayer book.

Think about it. What's a book of prayers doing in the Bible? The Bible is God's Word, words God speaks to us. Prayers are words we speak to God. What are we to make of the fact that God has something to say to us about what we say to Him—so much so that He actually gives us words to say? In fact, it appears He has a lot to say to us about what we say to Him, since the Book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible.

BY BEN PATTERSON

I used to think that in the Bible God speaks to me, and in prayer I speak to God. That is true, but the distinction is not that neat. A profound, organic relationship exists between what we say to God and what He says to us. It is embodied in Psalm 119, the longest psalm in the Book of Psalms and also an extended meditation on the Word of God. Psalm 119 is a 176-verse prayer to God using God's words to pray to Him about His Word!

God's Breath in Man Returning to Birth



This is a wonder perhaps best spoken of by poets. George Herbert (1593–1633) wrote that prayer is, “God’s breath in man returning to his birth.”¹

In prayer, something happens like the miracle that happened when God first breathed into Adam the breath of life and he “became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). Adam could not have breathed out unless God had first breathed His Spirit in. The Apostle Paul was surely thinking of this when he wrote, “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16, *ESV*). The same Spirit that breathed life into the first human continues to breathe into us life of a higher kind through His Word—teaching, reproof, correcting, and training in righteousness. The Holy Spirit permeates the Bible.

So when we pray well, we exhale what we have inhaled. We breathe out what God has breathed in. The Bible is God’s oxygen. Spiritual growth comes by listening to the voice of God in Scripture and turning what we hear into attitudes, affections, and deeds. Prayer is a calling out to the Spirit of Scripture to transform our lives by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1–2).

The 20th century martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this, “pure grace, that God tells us how we can speak with him and have fellowship with him.”² Our

Father wills that we learn to pray the way a child learns language—by listening. Deaf infants can learn to speak, but they learn with great difficulty. A hearing child listens and mimics and copies what that child hears—to the delight of parents, grandparents and friends—until words are woven into syntax, grammar, and meaning that become that child’s own unique style.

We Seek Because He Found

It is the same with prayer. We would never speak to God unless God had first spoken to us. “We seek only because He found,” wrote Peter Taylor Forsyth. “We beseech Him because He first besought us. . . . Our prayer is the answer to God’s.”³

God always takes the initiative with us. He makes the first move. We may ask God for something and wait for His answer. But the mere fact that we ask at all is an answer to His prayer that we ask! All our asking is really answering.

For example, what do you think Jesus is doing in heaven right now as He sits at the right hand of God the Father? The Bible says He’s praying for us. Jesus, our great High Priest, “always lives to intercede” for His people (Heb. 7:25). Always!

Imagine that. When we pray, we don’t pray to get His attention. We pray because He got ours. The praying didn’t begin when we started praying. We simply joined the praying that was already going on. We cry out for the Lord to come to our side, and He does, because He was already crying out for us to join Him at His side.

This is too much for human understanding to grasp. To pray is to enter into the glorious intercessory fellowship of the Godhead. *The Son* sits enthroned at the right hand of *the Father*, interceding for us (Rom. 8:34). And when words and understanding fail us, as they almost always do, when we don’t know what to pray, *the Holy Spirit* intercedes

for us, “with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26–27, *ESV*).

More than Self-Expression



ll this is to say that prayer, like language, is about much more than self-expression.

Babies come into the world quite capable of self-expression, equipped with a variety of grunts, squeals, sobs, and gurgles. And because their parents love them, they listen attentively to discern the meanings in these utterances. That’s just fine with a mom or dad. But it would not be fine if these were all the child was capable of at age 18. And worse, it would be beyond tragic if the 18-year-old were still asking for the same things he or she was asking for at 18 months.

Learning a language is much more than learning to inform the world what we want. With language comes a culture. With language come other people and their desires. Language expands us. It makes us more than we were when all we could do is merely express ourselves.

It is the same with prayer and all the ways our listening to the Word of God can turn into attitudes, affections, and deeds. The Father is teaching His children a language. *Abba* gives us words to pray, and the words He gives change us. Prayer is not a means to get God to give us what we want but a means He gives us to ask for what He wants to give.⁴

That’s what Bonhoeffer meant when he wrote, “The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart.”⁵ The Psalms are the prayer book of God’s family, His household, where His children learn the values and meaning of His Kingdom.

Anatomy of the Soul

The third reason the Psalms should matter to us is that they mirror our humanity. As we read the Psalms we will discover

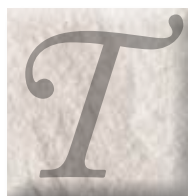
that they read us too. Every human situation and emotion is depicted in these prayers frankly and vividly.

Rowland Prothero (1851–1937) said the Psalms are, “a mirror in which each man sees the motions of his own soul.” John Calvin (1509–1564) described them as, “an anatomy of all the parts of the soul.” St. Athanasius (c. 295–373) marveled at the way the Psalms shared and surpassed the qualities of so many of the other books of the Bible. In his “Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms,” he wrote:

Elsewhere in the Bible you read only that the Law commands this or that to be done, you listen to the Prophets to learn about the Saviour’s coming or you turn to the historical books to learn the doings of the kings and holy men; but in the Psalter, besides all these things, you learn about *yourself*. You find depicted in it all the movements of your soul, all its changes, its ups and downs, its failures and recoveries [emphasis added].

As we study and pray the Psalms, we can say to ourselves, “These are written to me, for me, and *about* me!”

Every Page Whispers His Name



he fourth reason the Psalms matter is that they open a window to Jesus. Jesus said the Scriptures, which for Him were the books of the Old Testament, including the Psalms, “testify about me” (John 5:39).

Think of it—on the very day He put Death to death, on the day of His resurrection, Jesus went out of His way to explain to His followers that the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms were all about Him, and the way He fulfilled them (Luke 24:27, 44)! One of the greatest pleasures we can experience in

our study of the Psalms is the discovery that every page whispers His name.⁶

Family Introductions

The fifth reason the Psalms matter is that they introduce us to our family. The Psalms have been the prayers of God’s people in all times and places—for nearly 3,000 years. Some of the psalms are easy to relate to. They say what we feel. Others, perhaps many, seem alien.

But they are the words of our brothers and sisters, and they invite us to enter into their lives in ways that stretch and expand us. We can learn compassion by praying their prayers. And even though various psalms may not describe what we have experienced, they may prepare us for a future time very similar to what others have experienced. Praying the Psalms can be “practice” for a time when we will need the insight and strength they give.

Positioning Ourselves to Hear and Pray

As we pray the Psalms, the following suggestions can help us position ourselves to better hear God’s voice.

- Read the individual psalms slowly and thoughtfully, agreeing to what they say with as much understanding as you have. Don’t just read them—pray them. *Say them from the heart*. Reading them aloud can be helpful.
- Chew on a psalm and digest it until you make it your own. Then paraphrase it by writing it out in your own words. Don’t worry about whether it’s a good paraphrase. No one need hear it but you and your Guide, who delights in the prayers of His children.
- Memorize the Psalms. But learn them by heart, not by rote. In my book, *God’s Prayer Book*, I made these points: Practice saying their words with the same intonation and emphasis you would use if you had

written them yourself. I know of no better way to learn the Psalms. And I cannot tell you the number of times I have had just the prayer I needed in extreme situations in hospitals and grief, when I quite literally didn’t have a prayer of my own. Time and again the Psalms have brought tender comfort in sadness and pristine clarity in confusion.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “How instructive is this great truth that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to him, as it is to us; and . . . if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? . . . I think it well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of his spirit, so that his last words were a quotation from Scripture.”⁷

So, ultimately, why are the Psalms important to us and to our prayers? As Spurgeon indicated, if Jesus gave them such importance in His own life, shouldn’t we do the same? **PC**

¹“Prayer”: George Herbert, *Herbert: Poems*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 25.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms, The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 15.

³P. T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer* (London: Independent Press, 1954), 3.

⁴Bingham Hunter, *The God Who Hears* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 12.

⁵Bonhoeffer, *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶A phrase taken from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, written by Sally Lloyd-Jones (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

⁷Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 329.



BEN PATTERSON is campus pastor at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA. He is a contributing editor to *Christianity Today* and *Leadership Journal*, and the author of several books. This article is adapted from *God’s Prayer Book: The Power and Pleasure of Praying the Psalms*.





WHEN WORDS FAIL

The Blessed Practice of Praying the Psalms

A predawn hush enfolded me like a shroud as I thumbed listlessly through my Bible. Another sleepless night—the minutes and hours dragging on as I waited in silence for a God who would not speak. Beyond brokenness, I was numb. When the words of the psalmist David caught my eye, long-bottled-up tears threatened to erupt:

For it is not an enemy who taunts me—
then I could bear it;
it is not an adversary who deals insolently
with me—
then I could hide from him.
But it is you, a man, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend.
We used to take sweet counsel together;
within God's house we walked in the
throng (Ps. 55:12–14, ESV).

In that brief moment I grasped that God was deeply acquainted with the pain that had engulfed me since the betrayal by a dear friend of many years, a companion with whom I'd shared passions and pursued dreams and labored shoulder to shoulder in ministry. Looking back to the beginning of the psalm, I opened my mouth, finding there the words to express the gamut of emotions I'd tried so hard to bury—anger, sorrow, bitterness, confusion, frustration, and above all, hurt. I was undone.

I am thankful that my relationship with the Psalms transcends the ritual readings of my childhood or joyful releases in worship. They have become both a source for insight in prayer and a primer on how to stand brutally honest before God. A deep personal engagement with the Psalms is something that theologian Walter Brueggemann contends can be normal for each of us, given that they reflect a journey common to all of humanity.¹

BY TRICIA MCCARY RHODES

Specifically, Brueggemann suggests that our lives follow a rhythm that is always moving from *orientation* to *disorientation* to *reorientation*, and that through the Psalms, God has provided a way for us to form prayers for each, discovering in the process those hidden treasures in our relationship with Him.

Orientation— When All Is Well



*O*rientation describes those unique times when we feel good about how things are going—when confidence comes easy, when a sense of stability, particularly in our walk with God, permeates our hearts and minds. We look at the stars above

and proclaim: “LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Ps. 8:1).

These are times when we experience the joy of friendship and affirm in prayer: “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1). We are able to testify honestly: “The word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does” (Ps. 33:4). These times may seem all too uncommon and our tendency can be to commune with God haphazardly during them, lacking awareness of our need.

The Psalms remind us, however, that there are hundreds of ways to express our hearts to God from this place of equilibrium. As we do, our joy in Him deepens—a vital precursor to the inevitable moment when our world collapses and we enter a season of disorientation.

Disorientation—Wounded Hearts and Shattered Days

The betrayal I wrote about previously was one in a series of events that turned my world upside down. Beyond a litany of painful circumstances, I could not experience the presence of God—not in worship services or quiet times or hours of sleepless nights or endless, unpredictable days. Disorientation seasons are like this—we feel shattered, wondering if God has abandoned us.

While our religious training can cause us to deny or cover up our feelings with spiritual platitudes, the Psalms insist that God welcomes our questions, our raw candor, even our childlike demands: “LORD, you have seen this; do not be silent. Do not be far from me, Lord. Awake, and rise to my defense!

NOT ALL PSALMS ARE THE SAME

Praying the Psalms can be messy. We feel uncomfortable complaining in the presence of God, much less demanding He wreak vengeance on someone else. Common sense, as well as theological tradition, can help us know how and when to pray any given psalm. Here is a brief overview of some categories that might be helpful:

Psalms of Lament: These arise from some crisis and usually follow a structure that names the problem, asks for intervention, and ends by affirming God’s trustworthiness. These miseries are emotional and honest, providing us a way to express our own sadness, fear, anger, or confusion when things go wrong. We find spiritual sustenance as we move from candidly naming our pain to reaffirming our trust in God. (See Psalms 3, 4, 5, 22, 39, 53, 120, 142.)

Imprecatory (cursing) Psalms: These are a subcategory of the Lament Psalms, but are unique in that they demand action against our enemies. Theologians differ on how we should approach these. Some insist that under the new covenant, we should not pray them at all, particularly given Jesus’ words to love our enemies. Others suggest we re-form them in metaphorical ways so that we can pray them authentically. For example, we might reword Psalm 137:8–9 that says: “O daughter of

Babylon . . . Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!” (ESV) and instead pray: “Lord bless those who are not afraid to take a strong stand against the injustices caused by Satan’s schemes in this world.” (See Psalms 35, 69, 83, 88, 109, 137, 140.)

Thanksgiving Psalms: Both individual and communal expressions of gratitude permeate the Psalms and they often include a description of some difficulty—and then an emotive, joy-filled expression of gratitude for God’s intervention. (See Psalms 18, 21, 30, 75, 107, 116, 118, 124, 138.)

Hymns: While any of the psalms can be put to music, some were specifically written as songs and thus lend themselves more easily to worship. Focused on who God is, these psalms are valuable for reminding us of God’s saving actions throughout history and helping us remain God-centered in our prayers. (See Psalms 33, 95, 100, 111, 117, 145, 149, 150.)

Wisdom Psalms: These psalms tell us how we ought to live, what a just world looks like, and what it means to follow a holy God. While they are not usually direct prayers, they are easy to transform into personal prayer while instilling in us a stronger sense of God’s ways. (See Psalms 1, 37, 49, 73, 112, 128, 133.)

—TRICIA RHODES

Contend for me, my God and Lord. Vindicate me in your righteousness, LORD my God” (Ps. 35:22–24).

As the days drag on and hope wanes, we cry out with David: “How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Ps. 13:1). In desperation, we may throw up our hands and pray the words Jesus Himself uttered from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?” (Ps. 22:1). At some point we might even bargain, reminding God that His reputation is on the line if He doesn’t do something: “For your name’s sake, LORD, preserve my life” (Ps. 143:11).

The beauty, of course, is that in His sovereign wisdom and time, God does intervene, stunning us with His presence as we enter the season of reorientation.

Reorientation— Surprised by Joy



friend called the other day, unable to contain herself about all God was doing in her life. While the victories had not come without struggle, she now found herself whirling daily in a vortex of divine love. Like the psalmist, she wanted to shout from the mountaintop: “Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me” (Ps. 66:16).

Seasons of reorientation are like that. God catches us off guard and we can’t quite believe His goodness. We haven’t forgotten the pain of the past, but God’s presence is sweeter in light of it. Beyond being grateful, we are effusive about His goodness: “Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD” (Ps. 27:6).

While we aren’t sure why this is happening or how long it will last, we proclaim eagerly: “You turned my wailing

into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. LORD my God, I will praise you forever” (Ps. 30:11–12). Because no one could sustain this euphoric experience indefinitely, we will at some point move back into the more normal orientation to life. But for each step along the way, not only do the Psalms offer us the words we may lack, but in praying them, we glean many other benefits.

The Profound Benefits

Space does not allow a thorough exposition of the multiform blessings in praying the Psalms, but here are a few that mean the most to me. When we pray the Psalms:

- *We pray in words inspired by the Holy Spirit.* Since all Scripture is God-breathed, we can experience joyful reverence at the reality that our prayers from the Psalms were in the heart of God before the foundation of the earth.
- *We experience unity with Christ.* Jesus would have prayed many of Scripture’s psalms as part of His Jewish heritage. In our own pilgrimage, we offer up the Psalms of Ascent (120–134), in awe that Jesus prayed these same words as He journeyed toward Jerusalem. Identifying with the incarnate Christ, we agree in prayer: “I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope” (Ps. 130:5).
- *We learn spiritual disciplines like meditation and contemplation.* David, the man after God’s own heart, was the master of meditation and contemplation because these were the disciplines that drew him into God’s embrace: “I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land” (Ps. 143:5–6). David’s prayers

demonstrate a deep, reflective relationship with God. By praying them, we can practice these disciplines until they become our own.

- *We expand our understanding of God.* Most of us have a limited vocabulary when it comes to exalting God for who He is, but the Psalms offer us an endless supply of options. Last year I prayed through the Psalms chronologically and was astounded at the breadth of description I found. When I discovered more than 20 attributes of God in Psalm 145 alone, I memorized it, internalizing an endless supply of meditative material.

Recently I heard theologian N.T. Wright suggest, “Without the Psalms we are just not equipped to be humans, let alone Christians.”²

In praying the Psalms we gain a deeper connection with the people in our world and all that they experience on a daily basis, adding “a voice to the common elation, shared grief, and communal rage that besets us all.”³

But even more powerful is the reality that in praying the Psalms we gain a more profound understanding of what it means to walk with Christ. Nothing motivates me more in my Christian life than to pick up my Bible and plant myself in the Psalms as I pray. ☞

¹Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007), 2-3.

²N. T. Wright, *N.T. Wright on Scripture in Worship*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jf5uJf62eR8>.

³Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*, 2.



TRICIA RHODES is an adjunct professor of practical theology at Fuller Seminary. She ministers with her husband Joel at New Hope Church in San Diego, CA. She is the author of several books, including *The Wired Soul: Finding Spiritual Balance in a HyperConnected World*, just released by NavPress.

Do you struggle in prayer and long for more consistency?

You are not alone!

More than 70% of believers say they are unsatisfied with their prayer lives.

Would you like to grow in prayer and help others grow, too?

If you struggle in prayer, the PrayerCords™ tools, developed by Strategic Prayer Initiative, have been designed for you. PrayerCords is a simple, but proven way to help Christians become more effective in prayer and draw closer to Jesus. The commitment is not difficult or overly burdensome, and the benefits can be very helpful and powerful. If you already have a “good prayer life” you will be blessed by PrayerCords as you encourage two friends in their prayer lives!

Together you and your Cord covenant to do THREE THINGS:

Alone:

1. Pray for two (2) minutes per day. Tools are available to guide you.
2. Read two (2) verses of the Bible each day.

Together:

3. Meet with your Cord once per month for prayer, accountability, and encouragement.

Starting a Cord is easy:

1. Find two same-gender people who commit to being in a Cord with you.
2. Choose one of you to act as Administrator for the group.
3. Sign the confidentiality agreement.
4. Start praying, reading, and meeting!

*Here's what
people who use
PrayerCords
are saying!*

"It has been very positive, encouraging, uplifting. I look forward to our monthly times together and wish we could get together more often. Yet I believe it is because we are only expected to connect monthly that it is possible to make the commitment to be involved. Better to be left wanting more!"

"The experience for our Cord has been very positive. We have become more consistent in our prayer time and Bible reading. The clear guide for a Cord is helpful to keep us consistent."

"I have found that I am praying more consistently and being accountable is very helpful too. I love the *Love to Pray* book."

"My PrayerCord group has been a huge blessing. I'm so grateful for the ladies and to have a safe place to discuss very personal things. . . . It's nice to have been able to be flexible with what our Cord operates like. I feel like it's been a blessing knowing I'm lifted in prayer regularly."

PrayerCords can be used effectively with:

- you and two (2) others
- in an already existing small group
- or with entire churches.

PrayerCords is for you!

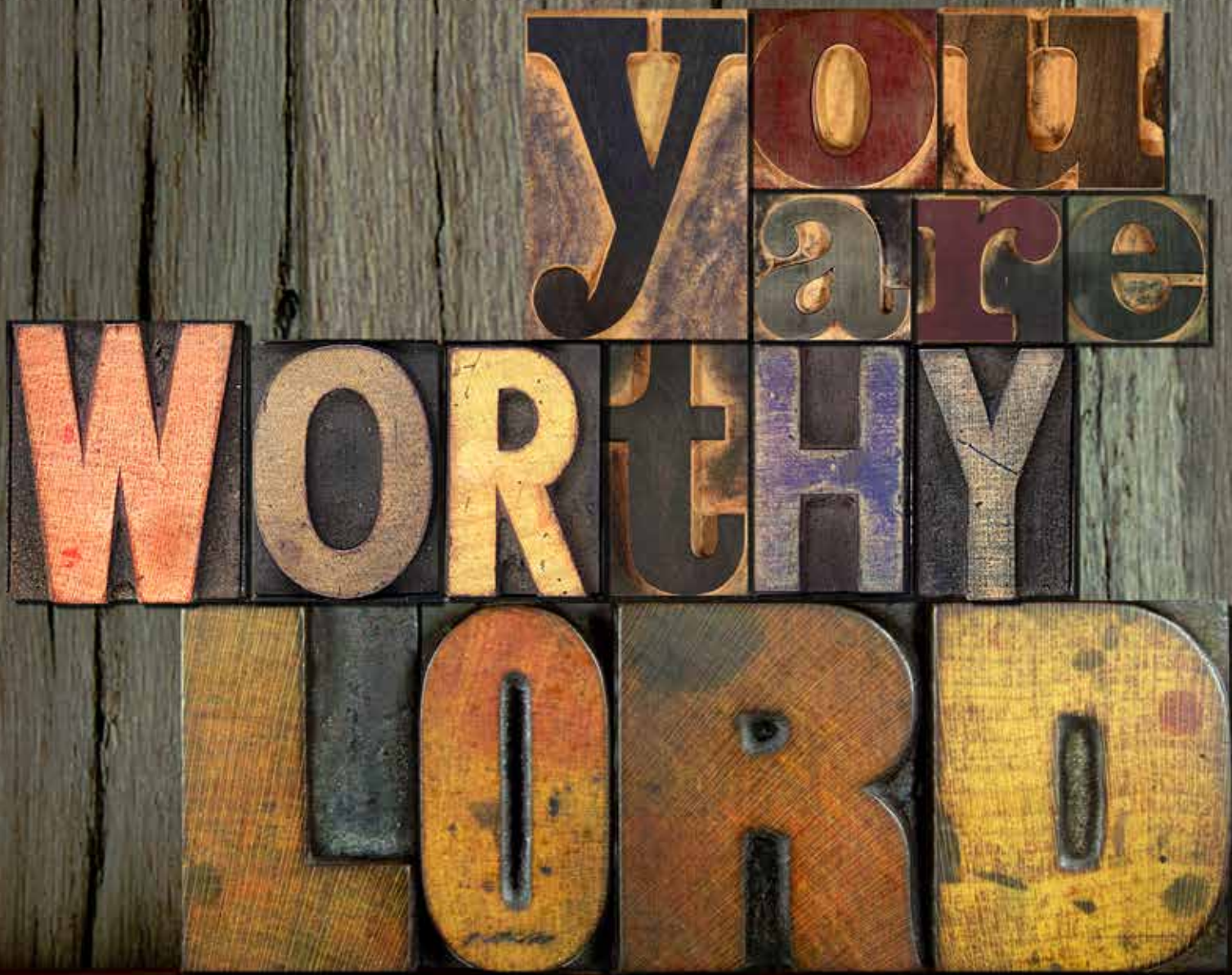
We are working to help genuine Christians in America to develop and/or maintain "Good Prayer Lives" so that they can more effectively fight the spiritual battle spoken of in Ephesians 6:12, Daniel 10:12-14,

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, 1 Peter 2:10-11 and Revelation 12:7-9.

Get more information on the PrayerCord tools or to receive
complementary PrayerCord materials, email
mike@harvestprayer.com or
call **708.655.1044**

strategicpi.org

PrayerCords™ is a ministry of Strategic Prayer Initiative.



THE PSALMS

BOOK ONE

Way of the Righteous and the Wicked
 Blessed is the man¹
 who walks not in the counsel of the
 wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
 but his delight is in the law² of the Lord,
 and on his law he meditates day and
 night.

- 9 You shall break³ them with a rod of iron
 and dash them in pieces like a potter's
 vessel.⁴
- 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
 be warned, O rulers of the earth.
- 11 Serve the Lord with fear,
 and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the Son,
 lest he be angry, and you perish
 in the way,
 for his wrath is quickly kindled.

You have given me relief when I was
 in distress.
 Be gracious to me and hear my
 prayer!

I will bow down toward your holy
 temple
 in the fear of you.

- 2 O men,¹ how long shall my honor be
 turned into shame?
 How long will you love vain words
 and seek after lies? *Selah*
- 3 But know that the Lord has set apart the
 godly for himself;
 the Lord hears when I call to him.
- 4 Be angry,² and do not sin;
 ponder in your own hearts on your
 beds, and be silent. *Selah*
- 5 Offer right sacrifices,
- 6 and say,
 "I will bow down toward your holy
 temple
 in the fear of you."
 7 Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness
 because of my enemies;
 make your way straight before me.
- 8 For there is no truth in their mouth;
 their inmost self is destruction;
 their throat is an open grave;
 they flatter with their tongue.
- 9 Make them bear their guilt, O God;
 let them fall by their own counsels;
 because of the abundance of their
 transgressions cast them out,
 for they have rebelled against you.



HOW MY FRIENDS AND I PRAY THE PSALMS

Prayer Leaders Share Their Best Practices

How often have we heard people say, “I know I should pray, but I just don’t know what to pray about or where to begin”? Frankly, all of us have struggled with that from time to time. Yet, for people who continue to wrestle with knowing how or what to pray, we can direct them to the Book of Psalms, the prayer book of Scripture.

While the Book of Psalms isn’t all about prayers, there are a lot of them—prayers of praise, prayers of confession, prayers for help and protection, and prayers of hope and trust. There is a template for almost any kind of challenge or concern we might face in life. Because this is true, most of us find ourselves turning to the Psalms over and over again in our prayer experience.

For a number of years as director of the prayer center for the Assemblies of God national offices, I had the responsibility and privilege of providing a brief intercom devotional at the

beginning of the workday, four mornings each week. Additionally, I recorded a daily Scripture and prayer “prayervotional” on a call-in phone line. With that many devotionals to prepare throughout the year, I turned to the Psalms many times. I took a basic approach—select a psalm, build a brief devotional around it, and then pray the psalm. Here is an example from Psalm 93:1–2:

“The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure. Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.”

Prayer: O, Lord God, we are in awe of Your greatness, power, majesty, and holiness. There is no one like You in the heavens above or the earth beneath. You alone are the Almighty God, the architect of the world and universe and all that exists therein. You are past our comprehension, yet You love us with

BY JOHN T. MAEMPA

PRAYING THE PSALMS CREATIVELY AS A FAMILY

If you yearn for a fuller, richer life of prayer, spend time hanging out in the Psalms! For both individuals and families, the Book of Psalms is the most amazing prayer book. Through it, we can discover more fully the nature and character of God, we can gain a richer vocabulary to express our hearts to God, and we can step into the creativity of prayer. Here are a few possibilities to explore:

Learn about God's character. As you read and pray through the Psalms, gather descriptions and names of God. This can be an ongoing delight, for each time you read through a psalm, or even a different version of the psalm, you will discover something new about God that you may not have seen before. Psalm 145 is a good place to jumpstart your search.

As you gather names, add them to a poster board or assemble them into a collage that can hang on a wall in your child's bedroom as a daily reminder of God's character.

Pray as the psalmists describe. Here is an amazing opportunity for the creativity of prayer that will engage young and old alike. Psalm 98:1 says, "Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him."

What is a new song? It is one you make up yourself either using the words of the psalmist to your own tune and style—or singing whatever the Holy Spirit has placed in your heart. Practice doing this alone, and then ask God for the courage to share your new song with your family. Teach it to your family and sing it before your mealtime prayers.

The Book of Psalms also encourages praise to the Lord through the

use of musical instruments and physical movement. Psalm 149:3 says, "Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp." We can express praise to God by moving our bodies (in whatever form dancing looks like for you) or by the addition of piano or other instruments. This can be a fun expression of prayer. My little granddaughter likes to use rhythm instruments as she dances for Jesus. Families can learn together and encourage one another to have a fuller expression of praise.

At times the Holy Spirit will urge you into fresh, new experiences of praying the Psalms that might make you a bit uncomfortable. But as you practice, it can also set your heart free to fully engage God's presence if you will remember that He is the only audience! Find a balance in free expression when around others. We never want to distract others as they worship in their own ways. So keep this in mind as you learn and grow in your prayers of praise to the Father.

Use your imagination. One wonderful way to use the Psalms as you pray is to exercise your God-given creativity through drawing, painting, or sculpting. Both children and adults can enjoy praying the Psalms by "drawing" their prayers or artfully crafting them in other ways! Perhaps the Psalms can become a unique coloring book for your prayer life. Psalm-based art projects of various types can also cure children's boredom during school vacations.

Listen to what the Spirit speaks to your heart as you pray through this amazing book of prayer, and unleash your imagination to pray the Psalms in many creative and engaging ways.

KIM BUTTS is co-founder of Harvest Prayer Ministries.

an everlasting love. We thank You and praise You on this day for the unspeakable blessings of Your love, grace, and favor toward us. Amen.

On another occasion, wanting to encourage the listeners to collectively and individually be a symphony of praise, I chose Psalm 63:3–8:

"Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands . . . with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me."

Prayer: O, Lord God, may we, like David, be instruments of praise unto You. May our lips glorify You, not only in the sanctuary but in the workplace, in the marketplace, in our neighborhoods, and in our families. Then may we collectively comprise a beautiful symphony of praise that will compel a troubled world to stop and listen and be drawn to the love, joy, and peace we share. Amen.

Another meaningful way I've discovered to pray the Psalms is to personalize them by adding the names of those close to me. For example, I may pray Psalm 33:13–14 this way: "From heaven, O Lord, I know that You are not only watching over all mankind, but You are watching over my family. From Your dwelling place, You can see John, Heidi, Ashley, Ryan, and Sydney. I thank You that they never escape Your notice. What a wonderful assurance this is! Amen."

From My Praying Friends

A number of my friends and ministry colleagues on America's National Prayer Committee also have discovered the value of tapping into the rich treasure

trove of the Psalms in their prayer lives. I asked some of them to share insights on how they approach the Psalms in prayer. Many thanks for their rich contributions!

Jeff Eckart is director of Claim Your Campus, an organization that mobilizes students to pray every day on high school and middle school campuses in America:

I read through a psalm passage in its entirety and always try to be mindful of the context and the author's original intent. Then I break the text I am praying into different groupings by looking for natural breaks or changes in the themes or content of the passage. These groupings and themes guide me in praying. I simply allow the Holy Spirit to lead the way and allow the biblical content to shape my time of prayer.

Kevin Senapatiratne leads a ministry called Christ Connection that seeks to encourage pastors, bring hope to smaller churches, and raise up a movement of prayer. He relates the value of the Psalms in his prayer life from a unique cultural perspective:

[As] a man living in Minnesota, expressing emotion is not always encouraged. That is why, since my teen years, I have loved praying the Psalms. I find the full range of feelings expressed. I love to take a psalm, learn its story, and then make it part of my prayer life over a period of time. Sometimes I memorize the psalm. Then when I'm feeling an emotion that I don't know how to express, the words of the psalm become my words. I love praying the Psalms!

Rebecca Shirey is a speaker and author who also travels extensively with her husband Lou in prayer and pastoral care ministries in the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. She delights in the privilege of praying the Psalms:

These poetic verses comprised the prayer book of Jesus when He was on earth. We have the opportunity to pray the prayers He prayed. When praying the Psalms I sometimes kneel, which places me in a posture of humility and receptivity. Different phrases become prayer points as I repeat them, reword them, and insert my name or the name of someone I'm praying for, making each phrase personal to the need at the time.

One year, after reading each psalm, I listed in the margin of my Bible what I learned about God. Each characteristic became a prayer of praise back to Him. This record in the margin of my Bible is a catalog of His goodness with each rereading of the psalm, a reminder of His greatness.

Senator Ed Moore (Oklahoma, retired) crisscrosses the nation in America's flagship of prayer, Prayer Force One. He is blessed by the impact the Psalms have on preparing his heart for prayer:

Praying the promises of Scripture, especially the Psalms, is always the foundation of expectant prayer. However, I have found that conditioning my heart with Psalms *before* I pray is so very helpful. To pray with a heart in tune with God is essential and nothing does this better for me than the tender beauties of the Psalms.

Someone once said, "Strange that a harp of a thousand strings should stay in tune so long." The Psalms serve to keep my heart in tune with the majesty and mercy of God. When the Bible says, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee" (Prov. 3:3, KJV), it admonishes us to depend on the mercies of God as the basis of all our supplications. If we bathe ourselves in the Psalms *before* we pray, we will have no difficulties in voicing them *as* we pray; for, "Surely your goodness and love will

follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Ps. 23:6).

Doug Small is founder and director of Project Pray and director of prayer for the Church of God, Cleveland, TN. He relays his approach to the Psalms from the perspective of personal transformation:

I simply read a unit, several verses that hang together, several times. I reflect and then I ask myself, *What word, phrase, or verse is leaping off the page at me?* Then I wrestle with that idea in context. *What is God saying to me in this moment? Is there something in me to be changed? Is there some new idea or awareness to be cultivated? Is there an attitude or action involved here?*

Sometimes the answer is clear, at other times the pursuit occurs over a series of days or weeks. The goal is not only clarity and cognitive learning, but transformation. With an answer, I rest. The goal is congruence, reconciliation with what God is saying, followed by a resolve to congruent action—read, reflect, reason, wrestle, and redirect.

Kay Horner is executive director of the Awakening America Alliance and Center for Spiritual Renewal. She notes that a spiritual mentor in the faith helped her early on to understand the power of praying God's Word:

Incorporating God's Word into my prayers is one of the most powerful elements in my personal prayer life. We are to enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, and nothing inspires our hearts to praise like God's Word does!

On the first day of the month, for example, I would pray Psalm 1, 31, 61, and 121 (adding 30 to each day's date allows you to pray through

Change the Course of History

INVITE GOD INTO OUR ELECTION PROCESS

An expanded version of the prayer guide on pages 18-21 of this issue, now available in a convenient 4" x 6", 16-page booklet.

Single Copies: .99 each
Packs of 10: \$7.99
Packs of 100: \$59.99



Available at prayershop.org • 812 238-5504

the entire Book of Psalms by the end of the month). The Psalms have since become a rich part of my prayer life on a consistent basis. They are rich not only in praise but also in petitions or cries of desperation. There are many prayers that I can personalize for my life situations. While we want prayer to flow from a heart that is in right relationship with God, He is OK with our using His words when we don't seem to be able to verbalize our own. Just as He's comfortable with our silence, He loves hearing the Holy Spirit breathe His written Word through our lips.

John Bornschein is senior pastor of Calvary Fellowship Fountain Valley Church, Colorado Springs, CO, and the former vice chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. He echoes the value of praying God's Word:



Scripture calls praise the "fruit" of our lips (Heb. 13:15). With our lips we glorify God, praise Him, and honor Him. The Psalms often describe this form of audible expression and encourage it greatly. For example, Psalm 63:3-4, states, "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live." Similarly, Psalm 66:2 calls the people to, "Sing out the honor of His name; make His praise glorious" (NKJV).

Indeed, may we all "make His praise glorious" as we tap into the rich, deep, and very real, human, expressions of prayer, praise, and petition found in the Psalms. **PC**



JOHN T. MAEMPA recently retired as director of the Office of Prayer and Spiritual Care at the Assemblies of God (AG) national office in Springfield, MO. He continues to write, speak, and represent the AG on the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America Prayer Commission.



www.prayershop.org

We're Everything Prayer!

Corporate Prayer • Bible Studies/Small Groups • Personal Prayer
Intercession • Prayer Guides • Spiritual Warfare
Prayer Ministry Teams • Church • Women • Children • Youth • Men
Conferences • Prayer Evangelism and 24 other categories

Sponsored by



Harvest Prayer
MINISTRIES



www.prayershop.org



BIBLE STUDY

Giving Voice to Your Prayers

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.*



When I first discovered the actual power we have in prayer—that it *really* works—I longed to “get it right.” It isn’t that I think God disregards the prayers of a “newbie.” In fact, I

sometimes think they are *more* precious to Him—just as a baby’s first steps are precious for us to watch.

But my practical side didn’t want to spend time praying for things that seemed right to me but were opposed to God’s purposes. Then the whole “Balaam syndrome” (read Numbers 22–24, paying special attention to 22:9–22) bothered me. Balaam continued to ask God for something outside of God’s will, and God finally acquiesced—but He was *not* pleased. Despite many interpretations of what happened, one lesson is clear: Be careful what you ask for, or you just might get it! One Bible teacher commented that God’s yes to Balaam was essentially, “Fine, we’ll do it your way if you insist!”

Not wanting to pull a Balaam blunder, I turned to praying Scripture. Praying God’s Word back to Him is foolproof. He has promised that His Word will not return empty but will accomplish what He desires (Isa. 55:11).

The Psalms are also the perfect place to hang out for prayer inspiration! Many psalms were written by Solomon,

who was graced by God with wisdom. Others were written by David—described as a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). As I sought to pray God’s heart for those around me, it seemed like a no-brainer to pattern my prayers after someone described in such a way.

However, I did ask God how David could possibly fit such a description when he was guilty of adultery and murder. God responded that I should think of that phrase not as someone with God’s tastes and preferences, but as a man chasing after God’s own heart’s desires.

Discussion Questions

Ben Patterson linked George Herbert’s quotation that prayer is, “God’s breath in man returning to his birth,” with Patterson’s own thoughts that praying well means, “we exhale what we have inhaled. We breathe out what God has breathed in.” Read Genesis 2:7, 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV), and Romans 12:1–2 and discuss your thoughts about what he means by this.

BY SANDRA HIGLEY

“God always takes the initiative with us. He makes the first move. . . . When we pray, we don’t pray to get His attention. We pray because He got ours. The praying didn’t begin when we started praying. We simply joined the praying that was already going on,” Patterson says. How do you find this concept of God taking the initiative played out in Jeremiah 29:12–14, John 6:44, Romans 8:26–27 (ESV), and Hebrews 7:25?

Based on Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, what are some of the uses for psalms? Following Jesus’ example of prayer that benefits those who hear it (John 11:41–42), how can praying the

Psalms be beneficial in a group setting?

John Maempa gives us a glimpse into the way several members of America’s National Prayer Committee tap into using the Psalms as they pray. He quotes Kevin Senapatiratne from Christ Connection, “[As] a man living in Minnesota, expressing emotion is not always encouraged. That is why, since my teen years, I have loved praying the Psalms. I find the full range of feelings expressed.” Look up the following passages in the Book of Psalms and list the emotions found in each: Psalm 1:2; 2:11; 4:4, 7–8; 6:7; 9:2; 10:17; 21:1; 25:16; 27:3; 31:10; 33:8, 22;

34:18; 35:18; 38:18; 42:5; 44:15; 51:17; 69:9, 29; 118:23. How might this list change the way you pray? How might it affect your prayers for others?

Discussing her own personal journey into the Psalms as a source for “words to express the gamut of emotions I’d tried so hard to bury,” Tricia Rhodes reflects on the rhythm found there as pointed out by Walter Brueggemann. Identify which rhythm category (listed below) the following passages belong in: Psalm 6:3; 8:1; 10:1, 14; 13:1–2; 30:11–12; 33:11; 34:1; 35:22–24; 57:5, 6, 7; 66:16; 70:1; 71:2, 24; 86:1–3; 89:1–2; 118:21–24; 143:11; 145:8.

- *Orientation* (when all is well)
- *Disorientation* (when hearts are wounded and days are shattered)
- *Reorientation* (when we are surprised by joy)

Action Steps

Tricia Rhodes lists these profound benefits of praying the Psalms:

- We pray in words inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- We experience unity with Christ.
- We learn spiritual disciplines like meditation and contemplation.
- We expand our understanding of God.

Rhodes points out that there are more than 20 attributes of God listed in Psalm 145 alone. Examine Psalm 145 and record the attributes you find there—a gold mine of ways to praise and approach Him. Find other psalms (103 is a good place to start) that provide prayer points and can increase your worship vocabulary. Commit these passages to memory. **PC**

SANDRA HIGLEY resides in Colorado Springs, CO, and is the editor of *Real Life Downloaded* (youth editions), a Sunday school curriculum supplement available free of charge from David C Cook Publishers (reallifedownloaded.com).

Encourage
prayer
for God to move in America
during the election season!

Share your passion to see God’s transformational power in our nation that only comes through prayer. **That’s** the change we need!

The **Get Out The Prayer 2016 Campaign Box** features great tools to use and to share with friends to make God’s desire for our nation the focus of the 2016 elections.

© Intercessors for America
Get your GOTP Campaign Box today - \$24.99 plus S & H.
GetOutThePrayer.com

Will you pray daily for the fulfillment of the Great Commission?

The body of Christ has prayed faithfully for generations that God would fulfill the Great Commission. We invite you to join a specific prayer initiative, *Pray2020*, asking God to raise up 10 million Christ-centered multiplying disciples by 2020 so that everyone might know someone who truly follows Jesus.



A GOOD TIME TO BEGIN:

Set a reminder alarm to pray daily at 20:20 (8:20 p.m.) Pray the words of Matthew 9:37-38, and pray, “Lord, **MOLD** our hearts to be one with Your heart. **MULTIPLY** our lives through others. **MOBILIZE** laborers through prayer and ministry efforts.”

#pray2020

pray2020.org

cru 
cru.org

 PRAY2020

Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.’” — Matthew 9:37-38



PUT ME

*Executing Your
Prayer Assignment*

By Pierre Eade

In the Game, Coach!

I GREW UP PLAYING THREE team sports: baseball, basketball, and football. Of the three, football requires the most team involvement to win games. A superstar basketball player can potentially carry a team to victory. An all-star pitcher with a great ability to shut down batters can hold an opposing team in check.

In football, however, it's impossible to win a game without great team cooperation. There are so many assignments that no one player can cover them all. A running back cannot break through the line without a coordinated effort by the linemen. Teammates have to cooperate and execute their roles well in order to win.

In the same way, in God's Kingdom all of His children have roles to play. And when it comes to prayer, the Lord gives each of us specific "assignments." He calls some to block the enemy and others to carry the ball of the gospel past the goal line. Each person has a God-assigned prayer burden.

Handing Out Assignments

The Bible makes it clear that our God

is full of compassion: "The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion" (Ps. 116:5). And when Jesus saw the multitudes, Scripture says, "he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36, KJV).

We might wish we had that kind of compassion, but I have told our church congregation, "If God gave you (as an individual) all of His compassion for the world at one time, you would be crushed." In fact, the only One ever able to bear all the compassion of the Father's heart at one time was His Son, Jesus, as He hung on the cross.

It is as if God distributes His compassion to His children like coaches give assignments to team members. And out of the compassion He gives us, He compels us to pray. One person, filled with compassion to pray for the lost, feels compelled to pray for individual people's salvation. Another person, filled with compassion for the unborn, is burdened to pray about abortion. Yet another, filled with compassion for our country,

feels a compulsion to pray for spiritual awakening in our land.

The Apostle Paul was a man of many passions. One burden he carried was for the people of Israel to come to know their Messiah. He wrote to the believers in Rome, "Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved" (Rom. 10:1, NLT). Paul's longing and desire to see all of Israel saved created within him a prayer burden for his people.

When Prayer Is Easy

Paul's burden for Israel was obviously connected to his heritage and upbringing. On the other hand, most scholars agree that Luke was a Gentile. For this reason, I presume that Luke did not share the same burden for Israel that Paul did. If Luke tried to pray with the same fervency and frequency as Paul did for the people of Israel, he would probably soon feel exhausted in prayer.

The same is true for us. If we try to take on someone else's burden for prayer

about a particular topic, we will eventually feel weighed down and unable to carry the unique assignment associated with that burden. But if we identify our role on the team and keep our head in the game, prayer comes more easily. Here are a couple examples:

As a pastor, I love intercessors. When God places it on a person's heart to pray for me—especially for my family—it is like a kiss on the cheek from heaven. I truly feel God's love through the intercessory burden He gives to other people on behalf of my family and the ministries the Lord has entrusted to me. One intercessor, a dear saint, recently said to me, "It's not hard to pray for you and your family, Pierre. It comes real easy. It's not a burden. It's a delight. It just flows from within me."

When God gave Nehemiah a specific prayer burden, this servant took his assignment seriously. He had received

a troubling report of his people in his beloved city of Jerusalem. The Jews had survived the exile, but their city lay in disarray—its walls broken down and its gates burned (Neh. 1:3). Listen to Nehemiah's compassionate response in verse 4:

"When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven."

Nehemiah's heart was broken. His obvious great burden for his people not only translated into personal sorrow but into a time of fasting. Intercessory prayer flowed naturally. God uniquely chose Nehemiah to pray on behalf of His people, and Nehemiah, in turn, fulfilled God's purposes in rebuilding the wall.

Follow Your Unique Burden

What are the things that break your

heart these days? What news do you hear on television or read in the newspaper or on the Internet that causes you to cry out to God? Do you see things within your church family or other circles of influence that translate into a prayer burden? Where is God challenging you to fast, pray, and believe Him for renewal, revival, or reconstruction of broken-down walls (in people, families, or societies)?

Personally, I struggle with discouragement over the breakdown of society around me. I look at all the problems—including crime, hatred, pain, and sorrow—and I get overwhelmed. I can't carry all those burdens in prayer. It is too much for me to take on singlehandedly.

The good news is this: God never meant for me to carry it all by myself. He assigns certain burdens to me, but in His sovereignty He gives others their own unique prayer burdens. As all of His people carry out their individual assignments, God demonstrates His compassion to this world.

When we remember this truth, we no longer have to feel responsible for praying for *everything*. Instead, each of us can ask God to reveal the burdens or passions He has assigned us, individually, for prayer. Then our responsibility is simply to walk in obedience to that calling.

So how do we know whether or not we are being called to pray for a particular issue, need, or vision? I personally like to test my spiritual assignments by the *should-versus-must* test. Here is how it works:

If our prayer burden completely relies upon a feeling that we *should* pray about it, we may be taking up another "teammate's" assignment. Whenever we hear the word *should* rising in our thoughts, it may indicate that this issue is *not* our prayer assignment from the Lord. Obligatory prayer is rarely powerful, focused, and effective prayer.

The healthier and stronger word that compels us is *must*. When our spirit is gripped with the sense that we *must* pray

LEARNING PRAYER THRU THE FUN OF A NOVEL

The Prayers

BOOK ONE

"Troubles"

by **MARK S MIRZA**



Author, Blogger, Conference Speaker
Founder Common Thread Ministries



Available in
soft cover, audio
and eBook editions

ORDER ONLINE: www.ThePrayers.com

about something—or we can't go on—I believe that indicates a burden, a passion, and thus a prayer assignment from the Lord. We want to be Spirit-led, empowered intercessors, not just burden bearers.

God Decides and Assigns

Sometimes a football coach may assign a player to an entirely different position. Seeing a coachable skill set, the coach may shift that player around, assigning particular positions most needed at the time to make a team complete.

In like fashion, the Lord, our heavenly coach, will often move us from one assignment to another in prayer. In this transition, some *must* prayers become *should* prayers for us—because they're not our responsibility. Here's a battlefield example: When King Saul tried to put his armor on David for a showdown with Goliath, David realized he needed to

shed that armor and operate in a different way to be effective in battle (1 Sam. 17:39). At times God will direct us to shed an assumed prayer assignment to put on an assignment more fitting to a new role.

I have often heard of intercessors carrying prayer assignments well past their expiration date, and soon prayer was no longer a delight. When prayer becomes a constraint and an overwhelming burden, the intercessor can become unmotivated and ineffective.

In every sport I played, I learned that the most important quality of an effective team player is a good attitude. The players who are eager, waiting, and ready for the coach to send them into the game are the players most likely to accomplish the team goal. Strategic team members are the ones who take up their individual assignments and keep going—even when they're tired or when time is running

out—because they know that their contribution to the team is invaluable.

Thanks be to God, who is our great Coach! He knows how to use us strategically in His Kingdom. He guides us in our assignments, and then He refreshes us and encourages us in the battle. When we team up with God and follow His instructions, we know we are on the path of spiritual victory in Jesus.

Intercessors, ask God to put you in the game. Ask for your prayer assignment, and pray it with all your heart. Then trust God to use your teammates in the same way. As your Coach, He knows how to manage each of His players. And He has the end game all figured out. **PC**



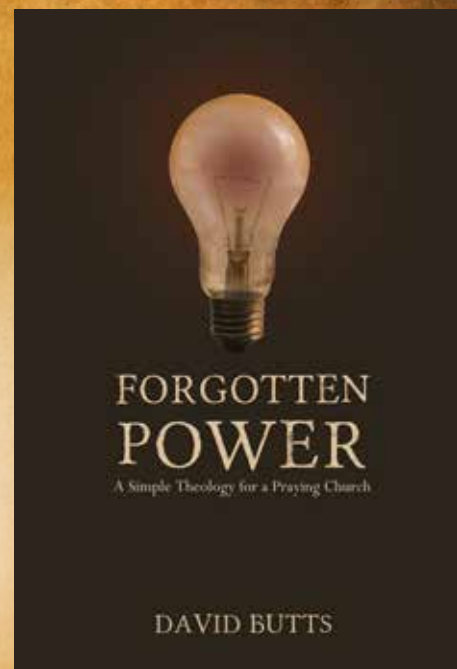
PIERRE EADE serves as a pastor and is the author of *Born to Grow*. His book and other writings on spiritual growth can be found on his blog, discipleshipnetwork.com.

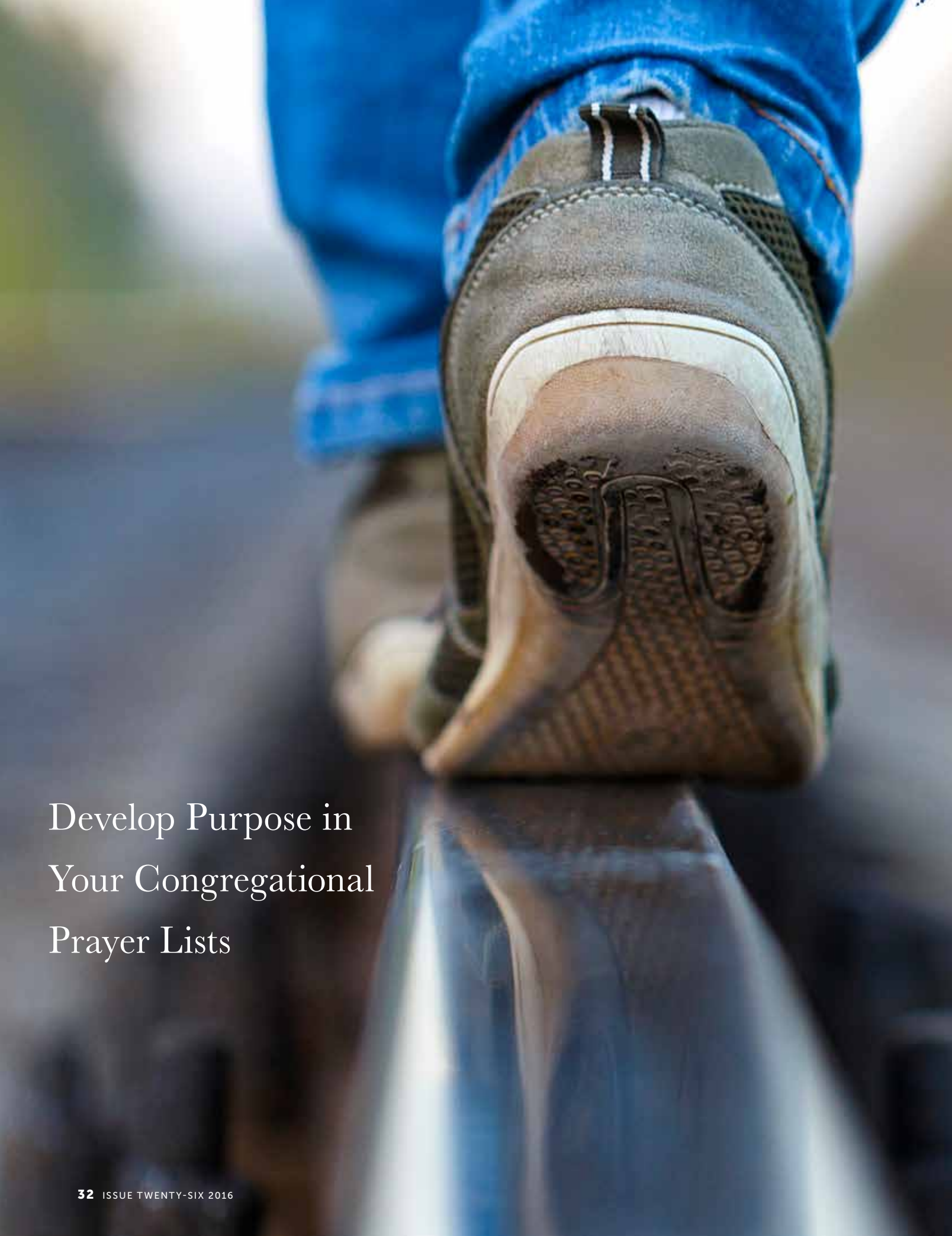
Tap into the POWER!

“Much power has been ignored by the Church because of its failure in the area of prayer.” —David Butts

Forgotten Power is a must read for pastors, elders, church board members—anyone who leads in a church. It is time that leaders understand the importance of prayer and what can happen if it is put into practice in their church. Use it as a discussion starter in your church.

Available from prayershop.org or through your usual Christian book outlet





Develop Purpose in
Your Congregational
Prayer Lists

Kingdom BALANCE

A FEW MONTHS AGO I PREACHED at a church in the Midwest. The pastor specifically asked me to teach about Kingdom praying, so I tweaked a message I love to give, entitled “Get into the Battle.” This message focuses on the truth that prayer is our primary weapon to grow the Kingdom of Christ.

I arrived a little early for the first service and looked around the church lobby. My attention was drawn toward the church’s prayer sheet. It was a 5 x 8 card, with one side filled with needs of people. I noticed that the back side of the card was blank. I also noticed there were no ministry prayer requests. Everything on this list was, I assumed, a personal need of people in the church.

An idea came to me as I looked at the card, so I stuck it in my Bible in the spot where I would conclude my message.

Typical Duty

This church’s practice is common in the Western Church. Most churches make some kind of prayer list available to those in the congregation who want it. Some smaller congregations put it in the bulletin so all can see what the needs are.

In most cases, the lists are entirely

focused—like the Midwest church I visited—on the needs of people. There are lots of health needs, requests for relatives in the military, and a few personal needs other than health—finances, a school issue, car problem, etc. While most requests are about people in the church, often many on the list are needs of people whom most in the church do not know—a cousin of a church member, a coworker, or a friend of a friend.

Since I speak regularly in churches, I see lots of these lists. They are very similar. But I rarely see lists that include prayer requests for church-related items, for things that will grow God’s Kingdom.

I understand why church prayer lists focus on the personal. One of the ways we show love to others is to pray for their concerns and whatever is on their hearts. I also understand that the “person in charge”—the pastor—often has a shepherd’s heart. That pastor’s heart puts his people’s comfort and desires above anything else. So even if pastors wish to teach their people to focus outwardly in their prayer lives, any time there is a need in the body, it ends up taking precedence.

By Jonathan Graf

Would you like to see
the people of your
church more excited
about prayer?

Would you like to see
them focused on
praying for God's
kingdom concerns?

Invite
JON GRAF
TO IGNITE THEIR
PRAYER LIVES.

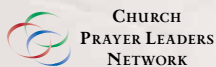
His **LEARNING TO PRAY WITH FAITH AND PURPOSE** seminars are being used across the country and around the world to change people's prayer lives and make them effective kingdom pray-ers in their churches. A gifted communicator, Jon has been discipling in prayer for the past 19 years. His message motivates the average believer toward a deeper prayer life.

Contact him now to talk about
the possibilities.

Go to harvestprayer.com
and click on
Teaching-Teachers-Jonathan Graf
for more information.

jong@harvestprayer.com
812 238-5504

- Publisher *Prayer Connect*
- Author of *The Power of Personal Prayer and Praying Like Paul*
- President of Church Prayer Leaders Network



But the challenge comes when outward prayers—prayers for the ministry life of the church—take a back seat to the personal needs.

We do not see this practice when we look at prayer throughout Scripture. When Paul writes to the believers in Colosse, he sends a greeting from Epaphras, who, Paul says: “is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured” (Col. 4:12). Epaphras was not wrestling over an illness or a new job in someone’s life, but over the spiritual health of others.

In Acts 4, following a beating of the apostles and a threat on their lives if they ever preached Christ again, the apostles return to their fellow believers and pray about the situation. Rather than pray the way most of us would in the same situation (“make the situation better, remove the evil men from office, protect us”), they pray, “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29–30). Yes, they expressed, “consider their threats, Lord,” but the prayer was primarily to give them the strength and enablement they needed to still proclaim Christ in the midst of the difficulty.

I could be wrong, but I cannot picture the apostles pouring over a modern church list, offering prayers for the everyday stuff that concerns us. Even after they pulled back from the nitty-gritty of ministry to instead give themselves to prayer and the Word (see Acts 6:4), I don’t think they let up on their Kingdom-focused prayers.

The answer is not to get rid of church prayer lists. The answer is to make them more balanced between personal and ministry-related needs. Here are a few suggestions to help make this shift in your prayer ministry:

1 Add Relevant Church Ministry Prayer Points

One of the simplest tweaks is to add specific prayer ministry items to the list. Include a section in the prayer list for prayer points about the preaching ministry, worship, outreach, youth, children’s ministry, etc.

If an outreach event is coming up in your youth group, get the church praying. If the women’s ministry is bringing in a special speaker for a retreat, put that on the prayer list. What about the missionaries your church supports? Why not include recent prayer requests from them?

Include points about the moving of the Spirit in your midst, or praying for people to be spiritually hungry. Pray for the pastor’s sermon preparation, for ears to hear among the people. Any of those things will help to balance the list.

One of the best prayer lists I’ve seen was a monthly list used at Shandon Baptist Church in Columbia, SC. (I was there years ago, so I do not know if the church still does this.) The list was an 8.5 x 11 sheet folded in half so it looked like a 4-page booklet. There were individuals and needs mentioned in one section of the prayer guide, but half or more of the items on the prayer list were ministry-related. That church understood balance.

2 Remind People to Pray for Kingdom Growth

Another great way to bring balance is to put prayer prompts along with the needs list, reminding people to pray beyond the obvious. So when you list a believer’s need, you might add something like, “Pray that Susan will display the character of Christ to her unsaved loved ones as she goes through this trial. Pray that her family will see the power of Jesus displayed in this situation and will be drawn to Christ.”

Think of things you can add as prayer points that will clearly grow the Kingdom of God and bring glory to His Son, Jesus Christ. This will teach your

people that God often wants to do things beyond the quick fix in people's lives. It will also help them start thinking about His Kingdom work in your eyes.

Perhaps add a few prayer points that challenge people to pray for a biblical virtue or characteristic for all the believers in your congregation. This point can often come from the current sermon series. Praying a response to the sermon the pastor just preached helps people internalize the biblical principles.

3. Remove Unknown People

This may sound heartless, but if you want to encourage more people to pray, I would not include in the prayer list a request for someone few people in the church know. People grow weary of prayer when they are asked to cover things outside their sphere of knowledge

(distant relative, friend of a friend, etc.).

Establishing this policy can also preclude any legal liabilities. Some people your church members know do not want their life situations made known to others. Often those who add people to a prayer list do not think to ask permission to do so. It is not a good practice to allow private information on lists without seeking permission of the people involved.

If you are in a smaller church, there is an exception to this rule. Sometimes a church member has been witnessing to and praying for the salvation of a family member or friend, someone unknown to most. It may be possible to include the name and need of that person on a list seen only in a prayer meeting setting when the witnessing church member is present and can add some knowledge to the request. Then you are probably safe. But I would still not put this person's information on a list available to the entire church.

The Importance of Lists

Prayer lists can still play a vital role in the life of a church. But to make them more effective, I challenge you to more fully develop the Kingdom side of the list to bring balance—and likely more participation from your congregation.

What did I do in the church in the Midwest? As I came to the end of my message and suggested ways to “get into the battle” through prayer, I held up the list. I challenged the congregation to use the list. But I also urged the leadership—in front of their congregation—to fill up the blank side of the prayer guide with church-ministry prayer points! **PC**



JONATHAN GRAF is the publisher of *Prayer Connect*. A popular speaker on prayer, Jon is also the author of multiple books on prayer including the recently released, *Restored Power: Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time* (available at prayershop.org).

EMPOWERED... TO PRAY

The Midwest Regional Prayer Conference
of the CPLN and Harvest Prayer Ministries

Keynotes by

October 21-22, 2016
Columbus, OH

Inspiring Keynotes • Dynamic Worship
Practical Workshops



Jonathan Graf



Dr. Dave Butts

REGISTER EARLY AND SAVE • prayerleader.com

The Challenge of Praying through the Bible

A few years ago, I decided to pray through the Bible. I had read somewhere that George Mueller made a regular practice of praying through the Bible every year while on his knees, so I decided to try it myself.

I devised a plan based on Mueller's life and Psalm 119:164, which says, "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws." I decided my "seven times a day" would be 6:00, 8:00, and 10:00 a.m.; noon, and 2:00, 4:00, and 6:00 p.m. My plan was to take out my Bible and invest 20 minutes praying in whatever way I was prompted while I read.

It was an ambitious plan. If successful, I would end up praying two hours and 20 minutes a day.

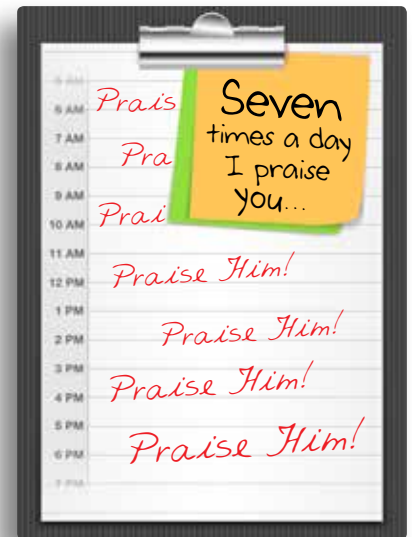
Lessons Learned

It did not go exactly as planned. But here are some valuable lessons I learned that encouraged me to continue the practice of praying through the Bible:

- There is plenty of prayer material in the Bible!
- It was almost impossible to pray every two hours between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. every day. On average, I was able to pray four or five times each day. Sometimes I was motivated to pray for 15 or 20 minutes; sometimes only five minutes.
- It became easier to pray so many times each day as the weeks went by. I found it becoming more of a habit. I was pleased that my enthusiasm lasted as I prayed through the entire Bible.
- Praying through the Bible allowed God to bring to mind things I needed to pray about. God made certain things stand out: sins, examples, commands, or promises. I believe I was praying more what

God wanted me to pray about and less what I wanted to pray.

- In many Old Testament books, several chapters provided me few promptings for prayer. Perhaps praying through the Bible a few more times will provide increased enlightenment.
- Praying through the Bible is a combination of reading, meditation, and prayer.
- I looked for recorded prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer, the prayer of Jabez, the prayer of Moses, and the prayers of David in the Chronicles. I tried to pray the words as they appear in the Bible yet personalized them to my specific situations.
- I spent more time praising God than I would have without having Scripture in front of me because much of the Bible refers to the attributes and actions of God.
- Praying on my knees helped me focus. But kneeling prayer is difficult when away from the privacy of your own home or when your office doesn't have a door you can shut. By the end of the year, I was rarely praying on my knees. As much as I wanted to emulate Mueller, it was hard with my daily schedule.
- I used an inexpensive Bible I could carry with me at all times. As I read through a passage the first time, I used a red pen to highlight key points. On the second read-through, I used a blue pen as I prayed a passage.
- It took me about six months to pray through the Bible the first time. I am proceeding through it much slower the second time. I find myself praying longer prayers as I take my time through a passage.



- God can use any passage to prompt me to pray. What I pray about might not be directly related to the passage, but it will be related to my life through the work of the Holy Spirit. For instance, Exodus 16:36 says that an omer (a unit of measure) "is one-tenth of an ephah." God used the words *one-tenth* to remind me that the recommended Old Testament gift to God was one-tenth of my increase. This convicted me to pray about where I was currently giving my tithes and offerings. It was not a direct correlation to the passage, but God used it to prompt me to pray about a specific area of my life.

The longer I prayed, the more I realized there is no right way or wrong way for me to pray through the Bible. I just did it—and learned as I went along. Your experience may be different from mine, but it's worth the effort to see God's Word come alive in your prayer life.

GEORGE WHITE has developed his own website about the pursuit of Jesus at practical-discipleship.com.

Private Prayer in Public Worship

How do you pray in a formal worship service? Of course we want to join our hearts to prayers that are prayed out loud as part of the service. And we pour ourselves into the praises being sung.

However, there's so much more praying we can do in a worship service. Every time we enter a worship service we can ask God to help us hear His voice. One of my life Scriptures is Matthew 23:1–12. In those verses Jesus said none of us were to be called rabbi or instructor “for you have one Instructor, the Messiah [Christ].”

This is a reminder that if we learn from or are stirred by a preacher, Christ Jesus Himself is speaking through that person.

For many years, as a pastor, I began worship services by inviting people to ask God to speak to them and let them hear His voice. I usually added words like, “I

do not believe it offends God for you to pray, ‘God if You are real, let me hear Your voice.’”

I have also asked people to pray the same prayer for the persons seated on either side of them. We may not know exactly what that person needs to hear from God, but He knows. During the course of the service, worshipers can pray for many people seated around them. Pastors can encourage this to become a regular practice. When your mind wanders, bring it back by praying for the person next to you!

Though it is good not to be distracted from our own needs or sins, I believe we ourselves are more likely to hear God's voice if we are praying for others throughout the service.

DAVID YOUNG, a retired pastor, devotes himself to prayer and writing (watchinginprayer.com).

Will You Pray with Us?

We know our subscribers are also pray-ers, and so we consider you a part of our intercessory prayer team. Please lift us up in prayer in these areas:

- Carol Madison, editor, is coordinating intercessory prayer for Together 2016 in Washington, D.C., on July 16. Dave and Kim Butts will also be there to help provide prayer coverage, as will many of *Prayer Connect's* ministry partners. Please ask the Lord for strength, endurance, and spiritual protection for all who will be gathered to pray and worship Jesus.
- We continue to sell copies of the April–June 2016 issue of *Prayer Connect*, focused on praying for the elections. Please pray that all extra copies will be distributed and used for strategic prayer.
- Pray for increased subscriptions as a result of extra copies of back issues being sold. Continue to pray for financial stability of the magazine.
- Pray for Jonathan Graf, publisher, as he works to secure enough advertising to pay for the printing of *Prayer Connect*.
- Pray for art director Bridget Rennie as she comes up with creative solutions for the graphic design of each issue. She is such a valued member of the *Prayer Connect* team!

Subscription Information



Take Prayer to a

NEW LEVEL

If you enjoy this issue of *Prayer Connect* magazine, why not start a regular subscription?

There are three types of subscriptions available:

Print Subscription: \$24.99

Digital Subscription: \$19.99

CPLN Member Subscription: \$30

Three Ways to Subscribe:

Online. Go to prayerconnect.net and click on “Purchase” on the upper right hand side of the toolbar at the top. Then simply select the type of subscription you want and follow the instructions.

Phone. Call Joanne at 1-800-217-5200 or 1-812-238-5504 and have her help you place an order (you need to have a credit card available). She is available 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM EST.

By Mail. Simply make out a check to *Prayer Connect*, in the amount of the subscription you want and mail it to us. Mail to: **Prayer Connect, P.O. Box 10667, Terre Haute, IN 47801.**

1-(812) 238-5504
prayerconnect.net

Creative Intergenerational Prayer Gatherings | By Kim Butts

In our increasingly dark and seductive culture, how well are we discipling children and youth in prayer, teaching them to seek Jesus and listen to *His* voice instead of other potentially dangerous voices around them? As adults, we need to impart what we have learned about the purpose and power of prayer.

In visits to hundreds of churches over the past two decades, I have seen very few congregations that intentionally include children or entire families in their corporate prayer gatherings. Rarely have I seen youth from middle school or high school involved.

However, when churches initiate creative prayer experiences, families and people of all ages can become fully engaged, meeting with God in new, fresh ways. Instead of viewing prayer as a perfunctory act or a duty, they discover it to be a delight. This is especially true when the prayer experience crosses generations.

I believe the lack of intergenerational prayer is robbing the Lord's Church of her power and Kingdom purpose. Remember that children do not have a junior Holy Spirit. Youth and children are fully capable of engaging in the deep things of God! Do not marginalize them spiritually—especially in prayer.

Creative Prayer Experiences

Prayer leaders and pastors can employ simple strategies to help their churches become intergenerational praying churches. Here are some ideas:

- **Prayer Stations:** Develop prayer stations to engage everyone in creative prayer. Allow for people to move from one station to the next in their own time. For more detailed information, look up “prayer stations” on

Pinterest, or email kim@harvestprayer.com.

- **Kingdom Praying:** Praying through the Scriptures helps people to see the difference between our “default” mode of prayer—which is largely focused on oneself or the health needs of others—and praying the purposes of God. As we incorporate Scripture, we see that God is interested in things like Christian unity (John 17:11), love for one another (John 13:34–35), and sending workers into the harvest field (Matt. 9:37–38).
- **Prayer Encounters/Prayer Parties:** This is a fun way to engage families and teach prayer concepts at the same time. Offer several short prayer activities that a family can do together around a table. For instance, provide a map or globe and let each family member choose a country. Pray for all of the children and teens who are orphans, who live in poverty, or who live in families torn apart by war. Making a paper chain (using one link for each nation), and then taking the chain home, can serve as a reminder to continue praying.
- **Bless a Pastor:** Using sticky notes, write some prayers including specific ways you want God to bless your pastor or a church leader. When finished, the whole family can get up and “stick it to the pastor” or whomever they have chosen to bless in prayer.
- **Body Prayer:** Together look up Scriptures that describe how several people in the Bible prayed from various body postures. Bowing our heads and folding our hands are not the only ways to seek God with our bodies. Postures help to describe the attitudes of our hearts at various times.

(See Abraham in Gen. 17:3, 17; Moses in Ex. 9:27–29; King Solomon in 1 Kings 8:54, and Jesus in Mark 6:41 and John 11:41, 17:1). Talk about how emotions can affect the ways we choose to use our bodies in prayer. What posture expresses humility? Which is a posture of expectation? How can we use our bodies to pray with thankfulness?

- **Prayer and the Senses:** Create ways to pray that use each of the senses. Write the names of people in sand as you pray for them. Or pray as you listen to worship music. Give thanks to God as you “taste and see” that He is good (different kinds of finger foods). Smell flowers or spices and give God praise for all He has created.
- **Praying in Color:** Draw your prayers to the Lord with markers or crayons. This is especially good for young children who can't read or write yet.
- **Praying the World:** Ahead of time, create passports that each child or family can use as they move around the room, praying for missionaries and the nations/people groups they serve. Stamp the passports at each station.

The creativity of our God allows us so much freedom of expression in prayer! He wants all of His people to seek His face. With a bit of creativity, you can connect all the generations with the heart of the Father—and significantly grow the prayer movement in your church. ☑



KIM BUTTS, a contributing writer to *Prayer Connect*, is the co-founder of Harvest Prayer Ministries (harvestprayer.com).



God's Great Need | By An Unknown Christian

God Wondered." This is a very striking thought! The very boldness of the idea ought surely to arrest the attention of every earnest Christian man, woman, and child. A wondering God!

God "wondered that there was no intercessor" (Isa. 59:16, KJV). Oh, how great must be God's wonder today! For how few there are among us who know what prevailing prayer really is! Every one of us would confess that we believe in prayer, yet how many of us truly believe in the power of prayer?

Why are many Christians so often defeated? Because they pray so little. Why are not our churches simply on fire for God? Because there is so little real prayer.

The Lord Jesus is as powerful today as ever before. The Lord Jesus is as anxious for men to be saved as ever before. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save; but He cannot stretch forth His arm unless we pray more—and more really.

We may be assured of this—the secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer.

If God "wondered" in the days of Isaiah, we need not be surprised to find that in the days of His flesh our Lord "marveled." He marveled at the unbelief of some—unbelief which actually prevented Him from doing any mighty work in their cities (Mark 6:6, KJV).

Astonishing Prayerlessness

Surely there is nothing so absolutely astonishing as a practically prayerless Christian. These are eventful and ominous days. In fact, there are many evidences that these are "the last days" in which God promised to pour out His Spirit—the Spirit of supplication—upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). Yet the vast majority of professing Christians scarcely know what "supplication" means; and very

many of our churches not only have no prayer meeting, but sometimes unblushingly condemn such meetings, and even ridicule them.

And what of those churches where the old-fashioned weekly prayer meeting is retained? Would not *weakly* be the more appropriate word? Have we ceased to believe in prayer? If you still hold your weekly gathering for prayer, is it not a fact that the very great majority of your church members never come near it? Yes, and never even think of coming near it. Why is this? Whose fault is it? Is it a joy or just a duty?

We are never so high as when we are on our knees. We believe the time has come when a clarion call to the individual and to the Church is needed—a call to prayer.

Not an Option

Has it ever occurred to you that our Lord never gave an unnecessary or an optional command? It can easily be shown that all want of success, and all failure in the spiritual life and in Christian work, is due to defective or insufficient prayer. Unless we pray aright we cannot live aright or serve aright. This may appear, at first sight, to be gross exaggeration, but the more we think it over in the light Scripture throws upon it, the more convinced shall we be of the truth of this statement.

Now, as we begin once more to see what the Bible has to say about this mysterious and wonderful subject, shall we endeavor to read some of our Lord's promises, as though we had never heard

them before. What will the effect be?

The inspired words of the Apostle of Love need to be heeded today as much as ever before: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness towards God; and [then] whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him" (1 John 3:21, DARBY).

"True—and I believe it." Yes, indeed, it is a limitless promise, and yet how little we realize it, how little we claim from Christ. And our Lord "marvels" at our unbelief. Will you give heed to it? Or shall it fall on deaf ears and leave you prayerless?

Devil Dreads It

Fellow Christians, let us awake! The devil is blinding our eyes. He is endeavoring to prevent us from facing this question of prayer. Do we realize that there is nothing the devil dreads so much as prayer? His great concern is to keep us from praying. He loves to see us "up to our eyes" in work—provided we do not pray. He does not fear because we are eager and earnest Bible students—provided we are little in prayer.

Let us never forget that the greatest thing we can do for God or for man is to pray. For we can accomplish far more by our prayers than by our work. Prayer is omnipotent; it can do anything that God can do! When we pray, God works.

All fruitfulness in service is the outcome of prayer—of the worker's prayers, or of those who are holding up holy hands on his behalf. We all know how to pray, but perhaps many of us need to cry as the disciples did of old, "Lord, teach us to pray." ☞

AN UNKNOWN CHRISTIAN, who chose to remain anonymous, wrote a classic book on prayer in the 1930s titled *A Kneeling Christian*. This article is excerpted from that book.



3525 S. 3rd Place
Terre Haute, IN 47802

Introducing the

ACPR

WASHINGTON, D.C.



AMERICAN CENTER FOR PRAYER AND REVIVAL

“PRAYING LIFE BACK INTO AMERICA!”

The American Center for Prayer and Revival (ACPR) is a center designed for day and night prayer in Washington, D.C. The sole focus is to cry out to God continuously for a spiritual awakening and revival across America. One of our initiatives is to mobilize “Circles Makers” to come to Washington, D.C. to pray circles around our nation’s historic monuments and government institutions.

To learn more, visit ACPR.org

ACPR — a ministry of Every Home for Christ in cooperation with America’s National Prayer Committee and a coalition of prayer ministries in Washington, D.C.



info@EHC.org | 1-800-423-5054 | www.EHC.org