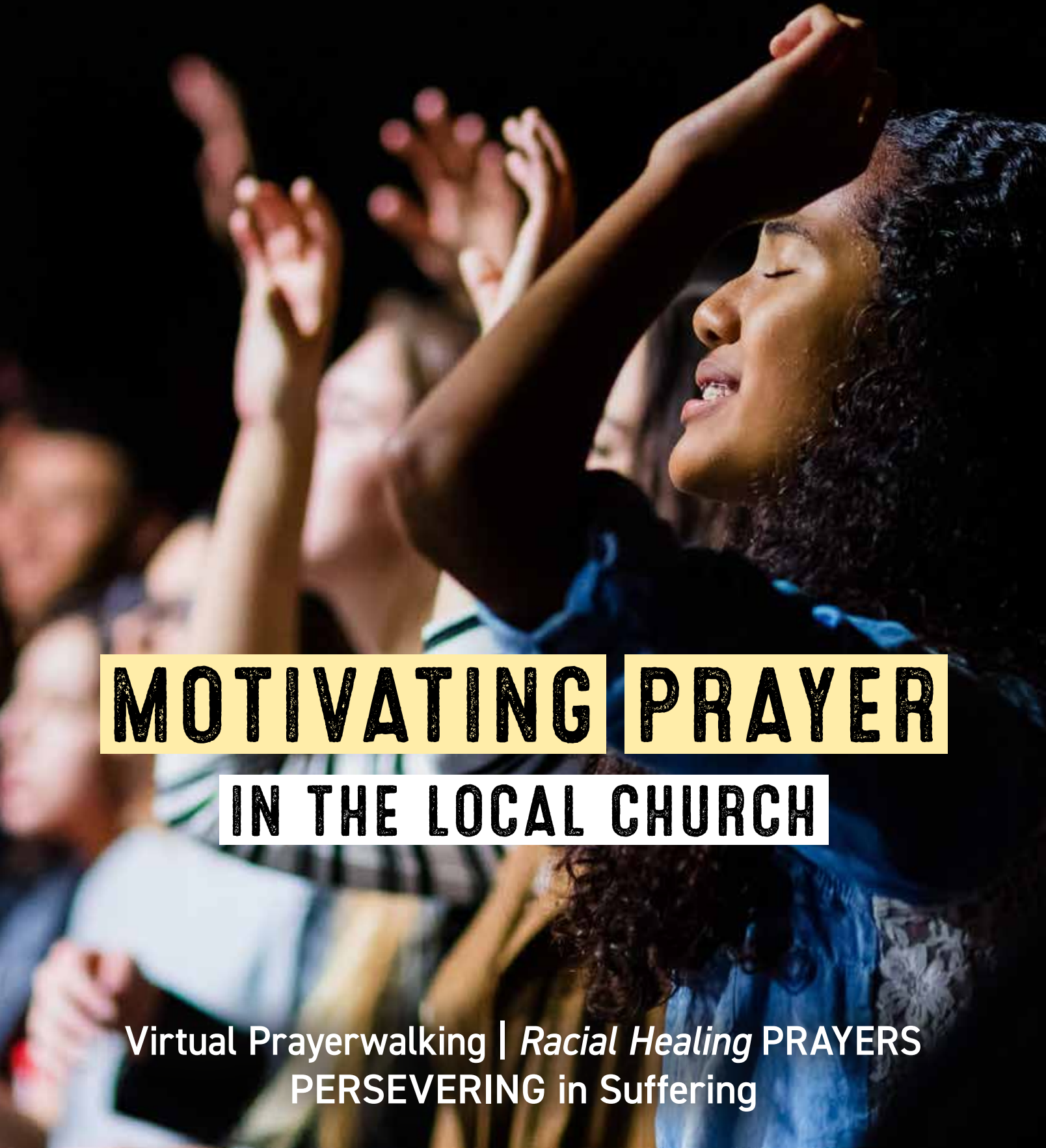


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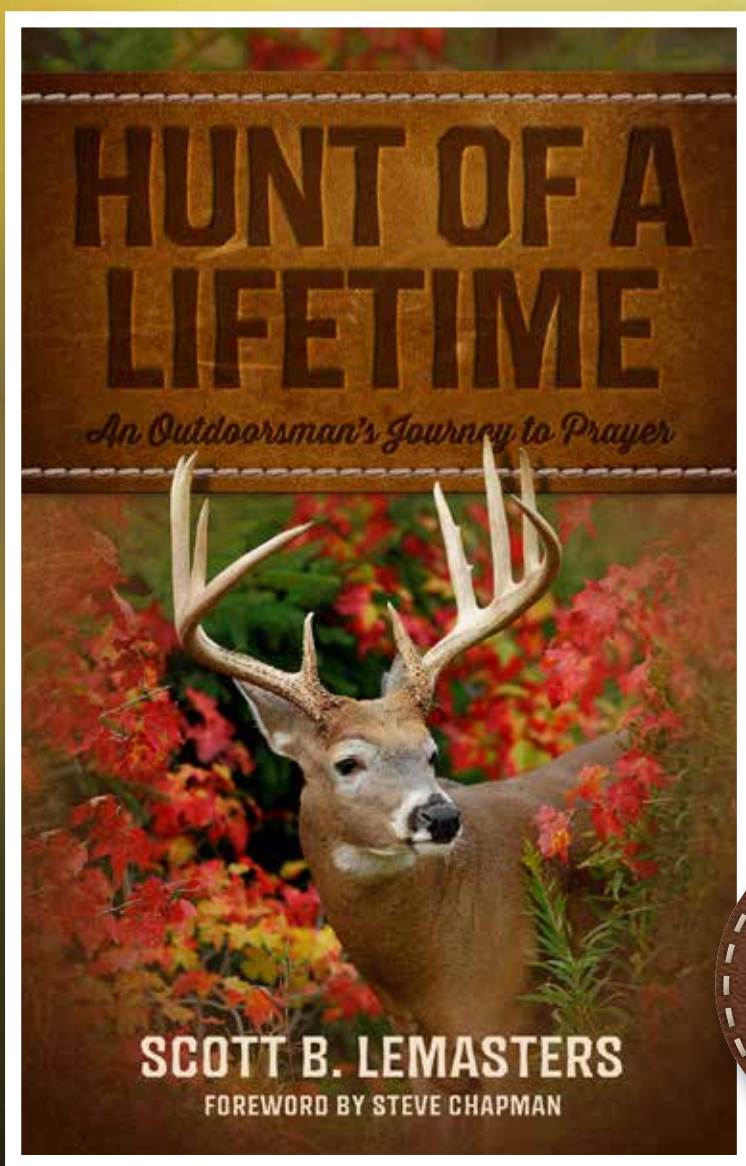


MOTIVATING PRAYER

IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Virtual Prayerwalking | *Racial Healing* PRAYERS
PERSEVERING in Suffering

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The first part of the book inspires and equips the reader to surrender his life to Jesus, while the second part is a 30-day devotional that helps the reader to learn to connect with God through prayer.



PrayerCONNECT

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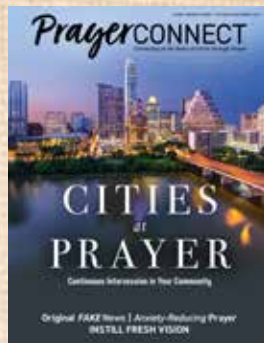
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Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

There are a number of gifted speakers associated with PRAYER CONNECT. Jonathan Graf regularly ministers in churches of varying sizes. Carol Madison is also available to minister in the area of prayer for revival and community transformation, and mentoring the next generation in prayer. The Church Prayer Leaders Network also has many speakers associated with its ministries. You can find contact information at the respective emails or websites.

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The mission of **PRAYER CONNECT** is

1. To encourage and equip believers toward a deeper walk with Jesus Christ through prayer—our experiential connection to God.
2. To resource prayer leaders and pastors with tools to help them motivate, disciple, and mobilize believers in churches to be a part of an army that seeks to pray the purposes of God for churches, communities, and the nations.
3. To be a unifying force between prayer ministries, community transformation groups, and churches.

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When we pray, we partner with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They play unique roles in a divine cycle of prayer—and we are invited in! Explore the joy of partnering with the Trinity. Order this issue and other back issues from prayershop.org.

Why Should I Pray for Racial Healing?



In Daniel 9, Daniel prays a prayer that modern intercessors call “identificational repentance.” What’s that? In his prayer, Daniel confesses the sins of Israel (generations of sin) that caused God to judge and punish Israel. That punishment had come about 70 years prior, and Daniel was likely only a young boy at the time. Those sins were not Daniel’s. He had nothing to do with them. They were the transgressions of his ancestors.

But Daniel chose to identify with those sins. He repented and asked forgiveness. God responded to Daniel’s prayer and soon poured out His blessing on Israel again.

Racism is a sin in America that keeps us divided as a nation and as a Church. Unfortunately, the narrative has been hijacked by two Marxist organizations (Black Lives Matter and Antifa). So many of my fellow white believers continue to downplay or ignore the issue. But our nonwhite brothers and sisters in Christ are hurting.

If we want to see the answer to Jesus’ unity prayer for His Church in John 17—for the Father to make us one—then it is time for a biblical response to racism, a Christian response. It’s time to identify with this sin and pray!

A Unified Crying Out

For this reason, God led two believers—Niko Peele, a young black prayer leader from Raleigh, NC, and me, an older white guy from the Midwest—to compile a book titled *Make Us One: A 31-Day Journey Toward Racial Healing*.

Why? you ask. Niko answers that in the introduction:

As new social justice and civil rights movements are pushing to dominate the narrative, the Church carries the kind of justice that meets both the temporal and eternal freedom that the world is searching for. It is a Jesus-justice fueled by biblical conviction, compassion, prayer, and action that will bring revival to the heart and transformation to society.

Niko and I—and many others—long to see believers from all ethnic streams deal with racism at the foot of the cross. We long to see believers opening their hearts to what the Holy Spirit wants to do in them and through the Church. We long for believers to model racial healing in this nation. We need it. Our nation needs it.

Maybe you don’t harbor racist attitudes. Maybe you’re not guilty of the sin of racism. Maybe no one in your church is a closet racist. But your brothers and sisters are hurting because they regularly feel the sting of racial discrimination. God calls each one of us to do our part to bring about racial healing. Imagine what the transforming power of the Holy Spirit will do in hurting communities across this nation as the Church prays!

Our challenge to you—and your church—is to courageously take a month and pray through the book *Make Us One*. I was astounded at what the Holy Spirit did in me as I worked on this prayer guide. You can find a preview on pages 24–25 of this issue of *Prayer Connect*.

—Jonathan Graf

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Young People Turning to Prayer During Pandemic

A new study finds 39 percent of students say that during the coronavirus crisis they're praying more often (38 percent of high school students and 39 percent of post-secondary students), and 28 percent say they're thinking about spiritual issues more often (24 percent of high school students and 31 percent of post-secondary students).

The new poll commissioned by Young America's Foundation (YAF) in partnership with *The Federalist* reveals the impact coronavirus has had on the everyday lives of today's high school and post-secondary students.

Spencer Brown, a spokesman for YAF, told *Just the News*, "Young people often think about the big questions in life as they come of age and seek to find a purpose and a place in this world." The poll showed that nearly half of the post-secondary students find their futures upended. "When they seek solace and guidance, spiritual fulfillment is one such place they look," Brown continued. "That said . . . once things are good and lives are busy again, people are less likely to continue those spiritual practices."

Rev. Anthony Thompson, pastor of Holy Trinity Reformed Episcopal Church of Charleston, SC, knows well the effects of tragedy. His wife was among the nine black churchgoers murdered by a



white supremacist in the 2015 shootings at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

"I believe that young people are far more interested in prayer and spiritual issues during the COVID-19 [crisis] than before," Thompson says, "because . . . all the things they depended on for security and happiness are gone, and with that so is their hope. I believe that young people are trying to retrieve that hope in God."

Christian author and journalist Billy Hallowell says that he was "not at all shocked" by the poll's results since he has observed "massive increases" in online church attendance and professions of faith nationwide. "Whether young people stay committed to these newfound areas of interest remains to be seen, though I would speculate that at least a portion of these individuals surely will continue on that path once the pandemic concludes," Hallowell says. "I think there

are countless church leaders across the U.S. who are ready and willing to tackle young people's concerns, and there are active efforts from evangelists like Nick Hall, among others, to reach youth."

Former drug dealer Dimas Salaberrios is now pastor of Infinity Bible Church in the South Bronx of New York City, a church he co-founded with well-known pastor Tim Keller. Salaberrios assesses the situation this way: "COVID-19 has given America an authentic reset," he told *Just the News*. "Young people have to look at their lives for the first time, and that level of self-reflection is driving kids to ask for help that transcends physical limitations . . . Kids are engaging in Zoom prayer, conference call prayer, and private prayer."

John Luppo is a pastor who serves as executive manager for Strawberry Ministries, founded by baseball legend Darryl Strawberry. According to their website, one arm of the ministry focuses on "rescuing . . . youth from abuse, neglect, addictions, criminal behaviors, sex trafficking, and rebellious tendencies." Luppo believes young people are more sensitive during COVID, looking to spiritual things to help them get through this. "This can be one of the biggest revivals of all time."

CARRIE SHEFFIELD, adapted from *Just the News* (justthenews.com).

San Diego Unites in Prayer During Unrest

Thousands of people from 135 churches hit the streets of San Diego in a unified prayer effort during the national unrest that has affected many cities across the nation.

We Pray San Diego is a prayer movement among multiple churches seeking

God for their city and nation amidst all the trials brought on by the pandemic and civil unrest. Almost 16,000 Christians spread throughout the city, kneeling to pray on sidewalks, in parks, and in other public places. People gathered in seven different prayer sites, bowing their

heads and lifting their hands in prayer, crying out to God for their city.

Miles McPherson, senior pastor of San Diego's Rock Church, notes the huge turnout at the June rally. He says that between the pandemic and protests, San Diego, like many other cities across

the nation, has been hit hard. However, McPherson says, “God can heal all of the unrest. He can bring good out of evil and good out of pain. We’re going to see, I believe, a transformation of San Diego and our country as we go through this.”

McPherson believes they are going to see the fruit of this prayer effort in the days and weeks to come across the city in people’s lives and hearts. “I know that God always hears our cries, and I can’t wait to hear what God has done,” he says, “not only in people’s hearts, but in families and businesses, [and] in people’s health and relationships.”

Among those who joined in the sweeping prayer movement were city leaders, a U.S. Representative, county supervisors, mayors, and city council



members. Another 8,600 joined online through social media.

Other cities also report Christians “taking to the streets” to pray and share the gospel in the midst of national turmoil. The unrest began in Minneapolis, MN, when George Floyd died while in custody of Minneapolis police. But nightly gatherings at the site on 38th Street and Chicago Avenue have drawn

thousands of people from around the city and nation. Evangelist Sammy Wanyonyi, who has preached the gospel there several times, says, “We continue to share the message of hope.” His organization, Shine in the World Ministries, reports that hundreds have been baptized at the now-famous intersection.

In Atlanta, thousands of Christians came together peacefully on Juneteenth (June 19, commemorating the end of slavery in the U.S.) to reject racism and pray together during the March on Atlanta, organized by the OneRace Movement. Even in smaller cities like Lakeland, FL, a racially diverse crowd of Christians united in prayer to declare, “In the name of Jesus, racism must die.”

— Adapted from CBN News (cbnnews.com).

Central Georgia Awakening Draws Thousands

For several weeks during summer 2020, thousands of people gathered in the small town of Roberta, GA, located about one-half hour southwest of Macon, for the Central Georgia Awakening.

The idea started the beginning of the year when Pastor Chet Cooper of the Crossroad Bible Church invited Evangelist D.R. Harrison of Voice of Hope Evangelistic Ministries to preach in an evangelistic meeting. God moved immediately, and several people accepted Christ. Cooper then asked Harrison to consider bringing his “big gospel tent” to central Georgia for extended meetings.

“COVID started hitting strong, and we just began to pray and seek God’s face,” Harrison says. Businessmen and women and others in the community started gathering around it, and on June 1, they conducted their first service. “God has just moved in an unbelievable way,” Harrison says.

Under the tent, in the first six weeks, more than 250 people—including alcoholics and drug addicts, a 79-year-old

man, and an 83-year-old woman—accepted Jesus Christ. “It’s just unbelievable to see what God’s doing,” Harrison reports. He also cites families reunited and marriages restored. Because of the pandemic, Harrison told CBN News, CDC guidelines, such as social distancing, masks, and sanitizing, were in place. Georgia Governor Brian Kemp allowed the evangelist to use the tent at 20 percent capacity—a challenge, Harrison says. “Our tent seats over 1,500 people, so we only allow 300 people under the tent, and then people sitting outside the tent.”

But some nights there have been so many people coming and going that it has been difficult to keep track. “It’s just been unbelievable,” he explains.

The revival services were attended by people from all over the U.S. and watched online by people from all 50 states and more than 15 countries.

In an email, Harrison reports that 150 churches united in seeking “the face of God for an awakening.” And he notes that “every revival that’s ever taken place

in history . . . and even in the Word of God—has always come when things were at [their] worst.”

“We can all agree America is in desperate need today,” he says, “and it is a perfect time for God to send a mighty awakening—a Great Awakening.”

— Taken from CBN News (cbnnews.com).



Prayer Calendar

Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem
Sunday, October 4
daytopray.com

Days of Prayer for the Persecuted Church
Sunday, November 1 and 8
idop.org

Weekend of Prayer to End Slavery and Trafficking
January 9–10, 2021
facebook.com/weekendofprayer

MOTIVATING PRAYER

IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

“**T**his is the best day of my life!” I laughed, hearing the young boy’s excitement as he walked past a prayer station at our family prayer night. Our prayer team had spent a lot of time putting together kid-friendly prayer activities—chalk art, bubbles, selfies, prayerwalking—all designed to encourage families to pray in unique ways. They could even take a quick “prayer run” around our church building. COVID restrictions forced us to create new ways to encourage prayer in an outdoor environment, but families responded with enthusiasm.

I suspect this little guy has had many “best days of his life.” But, as prayer leaders, we wish all our people would respond with such obvious joy to prayer-engagement opportunities!

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

People often envision prayer gatherings as either intimidating or boring. Some resist corporate prayer settings because they imagine themselves awkwardly stumbling through a prayer in front of everyone. Or the only thing they remember from a previous prayer meeting is an impassioned intercessor who dominated the prayer time. It’s tough to assure people that prayer can be a refreshing,

enriching, and inspiring time!

But there has never been a more crucial moment to call our congregations to prayer. We are bombarded with news of burning cities, numerous fears, devastating sickness, lingering hurts from unjust treatment, shouting matches between opposing views, and anxiety about economic collapse. Add the polarization of elections, and you have cities and a nation in desperate need of the Church’s faithful intercession.

Many barriers keep people from praying effectively for those who need Jesus’ healing and restoring touch. As prayer leaders, we need to find ways to break down those barriers. Instead of simply issuing a call to prayer and expecting people to respond, we need creative ways to engage our churches in strategic and compelling intercession.

NOW IS THE TIME

Given all the discord in our nation, now is the time to capture the moment and engage people in prayer like never before! In this issue, you will learn some of the best prayer practices from pastors and other leaders known for effective prayer mobilization.

Veteran pastor Daniel Henderson, who has brought prayer-based revitalization to many churches, devotes himself

to helping pastors become better leaders in prayer and the ministry of the Word. In his article, he writes about the key role pastors play in rallying prayer. With today’s crises, we need a supernatural advancement of the gospel that “requires praying pastors who lead praying churches.”

Pastor and film producer Michael Catt reminds us that desperate times often move people to pray more fervently for revival and spiritual awakening. He demonstrates ways prayer leaders can tap into that desperation—often accompanied by passion—to build stronger prayer foundations.

Prayer Connect publisher Jonathan Graf sent a questionnaire to pastors and prayer leaders, asking for tips on motivating prayer in the local church. He compiles some of the best ideas into an article that will help refresh your prayer ministry.

We may not hear people, young or old, saying that a prayer experience we’ve orchestrated is “the best day of their lives.” But, in this crucial moment in history, we can pray that each life will be continuously transformed with hopeful, strategic prayer. **PC**

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect* and author of *Prayer That’s Caught and Taught* (prayershop.org).





RALLY CRY FOR PRAYER

The Role of Pastors and Leaders in Motivating People

Imagine sitting down one morning at the kitchen table, grabbing your phone, and glancing through your news app. You expect more depressing stories about economic woes, international conflict, crimes, and political punditry. Suddenly, a riveting headline captures your attention:

- From *USA Today*: “Conversions to Christianity Multiply Exponentially, Church Leaders Cannot Explain Why.”

Your curiosity on alert, you search for similar stories. Unbelievable news reports leap off the screen:

- From New York City: “Five Rabbis Leave Their Synagogues for Christian Church after Dramatic Conversions”
- From Minneapolis: “Dozens of Islamic Leaders Renounce Their Faith to Join Christian Movement”
- From Los Angeles: “Local Buddhist Priests Cause Stir by Declaring that Jesus Christ is God”
- From *Time* magazine: “Leading Atheists Embrace Evidence for Jesus’ Resurrection, Offer Public Apology to Christians.”

You cannot escape the thought that something supernatural has quietly emerged. Could this be the inauguration of a much-needed spiritual awakening when the nation is in chaos?

A SUPERNATURAL HIGH POINT

Having roused your imagination with hopeful headlines we long to see, I turn to perhaps the greatest revival moment in the New Testament narrative. In Acts 6:7 we read these words:

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Absorb the incalculable impact described in this succinct sentence. Disciples are not added. They are not multiplying. They’re “multiplying greatly.” Beyond this, a “great many” Jewish priests are converted. Hard-liners. This would be like a modern-day salvation wave engulfing some of the most notable atheists, skeptics, celebrities, domestic terrorists, and critics of the faith.

Truly amazing. Truly God. Truly possible!

By Daniel Henderson



THE LEADERSHIP CONNECTION

But we cannot ignore the connection between the conviction in the apostles' hearts—to devote themselves to prayer and teaching God's Word (Acts 6:4)—and this explosion of new believers (v. 7). Even though the people were demanding that the leaders fix the widow-feeding problem (vv. 1–3), the apostles instead delegated the task to other capable servants. This allowed the apostles to focus on the priority of church leadership: “[We] will give our attention to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (6:4).

This collective leadership tenacity was essential for receiving Christ's direction and power in the environment of a praying church. The same is true today. Pastoring a church is a supernatural assignment. We cannot afford to move away from a full, focused experience of Christ's person and presence, opting instead to solve operational problems or to implement new programs.

A supernatural advancement of the gospel in today's crisis moments requires praying pastors who lead praying churches.

CONVICTION ABOUT THE HIGHEST PRIORITIES

Too often we find it more desirable to *serve* the Lord than to *seek* the Lord. Overemphasis on service makes ministry an idol and diminishes a church's spiritual power and impact.

My friend and fellow pastor Keeney Dickenson notes, “We pray in the context of ministry, but Jesus ministered in the context of prayer.”¹ The apostles had seen, felt, and been forever changed by the way Christ lived, taught, and implemented the gospel ministry. They were imitating the One who only did what He saw His Father doing. Jesus lived with divine spiritual insight and power every day—through His life of prayer. His disciples dared not create a different paradigm. They had to walk in His steps through prayer and the ministry of the Word. That's the calling of every leader.

The apostles were also walking in the example established by many notable Old Testament leaders, who set the spiritual tone and averted crises through prayer.

- Moses communed with God “face to face” as he guided a rebellious people and encountered various crises (Ex. 33–34).

- Jehoshaphat, under enemy attack, led the people to seek the Lord in humility, and he won a supernatural victory (2 Chron. 20).
- Nehemiah, a man of prayer, led the people in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls (Neh. 1–3).

PRINCIPLES FOR LEADING A PRAYING CHURCH

In recent years I've had the opportunity to coach hundreds of pastors in developing a dynamic culture of prayer. Here are some key principles that prayer-minded pastors can implement to grow a praying church:

1. A culture of prayer always emanates from the epicenter of church leadership. The Acts 6:4 devotion to prayer was not just a reaction to crisis. It was a consistent conviction. The previous chapters of Acts demonstrate that the leaders took the lead in every prayer gathering.

A congregation's prayer level does not rise higher than the personal passion of its leadership. When conviction starts at the core, we *lead* the way instead of *pointing the way*. This conviction fuels life-giving prayer on a personal level, among the staff, within the board, among various ministry leaders, and ultimately throughout the entire church.

When I consult with a church, my first two questions are these:

1. How much time do the leaders spend together in prayer?
2. What kind of prayer is it?

There is a difference between meeting simply to pray about various needs and meeting primarily to seek God for all that the Head of the Church has promised. The leadership's current prayer conviction is the single greatest indicator of the congregation's future prayer commitment.

2. Teach people to pray by praying in community. Western culture has hyper-individualized prayer. And failure to prioritize corporate prayer has hindered our discipleship in private prayer. D.A. Carson wrote, “Many facets of Christian discipleship, not [the] least prayer, are rather more effectively passed on by modeling than by formal teaching. Good praying is more easily caught than taught. . . . We should choose models from whom we can learn . . . then become models for others.”²

Referring to the Lord's Prayer, Albert Mohler has aptly noted:

There is no first-person singular pronoun in the entire prayer. . . . One of the besetting sins of evangelicalism is our obsession with individualism. . . . The first-person singular pronoun reigns in our thinking. We tend to think about nearly everything (including the truths of God's Word) only as they relate to me. This is why when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he emphasizes from the very outset that we are part of a corporate people called the church.³

Pastors teach their people to pray by breaking the chains of individualism and consistently leading the gathered church in prayer. There is no other way.

3. Build sidewalks where footpaths already exist. It sounds counterintuitive, but I have discovered that the all-church prayer meeting may not initially be the *engine* of the prayer culture. Instead, in time, it can become the *expression* of the prayer culture. People stay away from the church prayer meeting, not for lack of a particular approach, but for lack of spiritual appetite. Beyond this, many churches are overprogrammed and people are over-busy. Adding another night out for a prayer meeting may not be a helpful strategy.

But we can grow the appetite for prayer by infusing established gatherings with what I call "Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, worship-based prayer." These gatherings may include small groups, Bible fellowship classes, ministry team meetings—and even worship times. Upon these footpaths of existing connection points, churches can build sidewalks of fresh experience to cultivate an appetite for life-giving prayer.

4. Engage in relentless rhythms of worship-based prayer. Fundamentally, there are two parts to the model prayer Jesus commanded us to experience and

enjoy.⁴ The first half is entirely Godward. The second half is manward. I characterize the two-part rhythm this way: "He is worthy. We are needy."

The more we pursue His worthiness, the more we are gripped by our neediness. A church that learns to seek His face, rather than just His hand, lives in a vital, beautiful sense of desperation for God. And that desperation becomes the DNA of a truly praying people. Awareness of our neediness flows from recognition of His worthiness.

IMAGINE WHAT GOD COULD DO!

Can we dream again of the powerful, supernatural advancement of the gospel demonstrated in Acts 6:7?

Embrace the leadership conviction of Acts 6:4, and make the next new thing the first old thing.

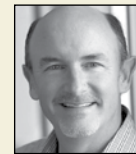
Imagine what God could do if praying leaders would lead praying churches to become houses of prayer for all nations. ☞

¹Keeney Dickenson, *Prayer Life vs. Life of Prayer*, <http://www.64fellowship.com/resources/articles/prayer-life-vs-life-of-prayer/>.

²D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 35.

³Albert Mohler from <https://albertmohler.com/2018/08/20/danger-christian-prayer/>.

⁴When Jesus said, "Pray like this" (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2), it was not a suggestion or one of many options. In Greek it is an imperative. This command provides a consistent, biblical prayer pattern—for our good and His glory.

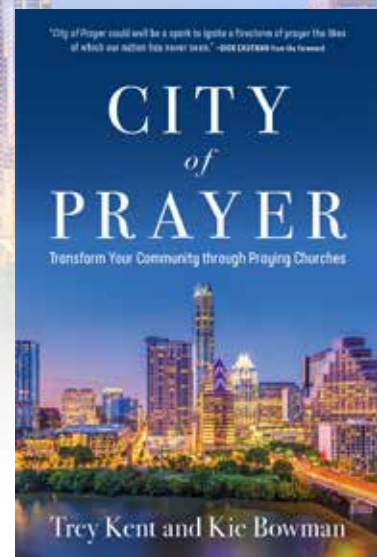


DANIEL HENDERSON served as senior pastor to thousands in congregations in California and Minnesota. He is an author, speaker, and coach to local churches, pastors, and business leaders in experiences of "powerful spiritual renewal." He is the president of Strategic Renewal (strategicrenewal.com) and also ministers through The 6:4 Fellowship (64fellowship.com).

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TAPPING INTO

PASSION AND

DESPERATION

Using Crises to Build Prayer Foundations

There are seasons in our lives we are never prepared for. No matter how spiritually in tune we are, something hits us like a gut punch. It knocks the wind out of us and may cause us to stumble, question, doubt, and fear.

It could be a doctor's report, the loss of financial security, a prodigal child, a tragic accident—or even our nation suddenly torn apart by pain and strife. We don't wake up in the morning expecting anything out of the norm, but it happens. It happens to all of us. Throughout my life, I've had to pray through many personal and church crises. Two particularly stand out for me, personally. When I was 39, I found out I was adopted—a family secret hidden from me until that point. Then, in 2018, I was diagnosed with cancer. Both of these situations required discernment in the middle of desperation. And in every situation, I've called on others to pray with me and for me.

NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT

At the church I pastor, we have a 24-hour intercessory prayer ministry, a “House of Prayer” before the evening services, and designated times in the worship services to pray for specific areas or needs. We've adopted a phrase that drives our ministry: *Prayer leads us to love God, grow together, serve others, and change the world.*

That means prayer can't be an add-on, an afterthought, or sporadic hit-or-miss. It must be at the forefront of our thinking and the core of all we do. In prayer, we discover the peace, power, and grace of God in uncertain moments.

In far too many churches today, there is little or no praying. This means a form of religion but no power. Faith has become a formula. As is too often the case, the church doesn't rally to pray until there is a crisis. But as

By Michael Catt

soon as the crisis is over, it's back to business as usual.

How much better it is to learn from our desperate times and raise the bar in our thinking and praying. Resolve not to go back to casual, rote prayers but rather change thought processes in order to change our praying. Desperation will show us whether our prayers are

self-centered or Christ-centered. The days following the storm will show us if we learned anything in the storm.

NOT THE LAST RESORT

When I read the Gospels, I see story after story of desperate people trying to get to Jesus. We don't have the physical presence

of Jesus today, but we have access to Him in prayer. The Spirit inside us prays. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, praying. When we join in with the Godhead in prayer, something supernatural happens in us and through us.

Scripture records 23 prayers of Jesus. In addition to His regular times, we find Him praying when He is baptized, praying when He selects the 12 disciples, praying at His transfiguration, praying when He feeds the 5,000, praying when He raises Lazarus, praying at Gethsemane, praying on the cross, and praying at His ascension.

Jesus prayed when He was alone or in a crowd. He prayed to His Father at the greatest heights of His ministry and the darkest moments of His earthly life. He prayed at the beginning of His earthly ministry and at the end of it. The Lord was passionate and disciplined about prayer. His response to doing the will of God was intentional and focused. Now He ever lives to make intercession.

The thought of Jesus praying for us and inviting us into His presence can build in us passionate praying. We don't need to put prayer in a silo and pull it out only when we think we need it.

Andrew Murray wrote, "Most Churches . . . know not that God rules the world by the prayers of His saints."¹ Hit-or-miss praying will not bring about a fresh work of God.

In a used bookstore I found a book titled *Ten Praying Churches*, about ten churches in England who have taken prayer seriously. These words in the foreword by Terry Virgo struck me:

Prayer must always be the distinctive feature of the house of God. When we make prayer a priority we are telling God that we totally depend on him. We need his interventions and the manifestation of his presence and power. Without prayer we start trusting in our own ability and resourcefulness, and as we begin to trust in human skills and organising expertise we lose the glory of God.

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By his own example, Jesus taught his disciples that prayer was crucial. They would have yielded to the demands of the crowds and to other people's expectations, but Jesus refused every distraction. Later the apostles demonstrated that they had learned the lesson well by withdrawing from the clamour of the growing church and giving themselves to prayer.

The early church never regarded prayer meetings as dull routine—a duty to be performed and a proof of evangelical orthodoxy. In the Book of Acts the church at prayer was also the church in action. The Day of Pentecost started as a prayer meeting, but God broke in and they broke out. Who can tell from the narrative precisely when they moved from sitting in the house in prayer and came into the streets in power? The next recorded prayer meeting concludes not only with the building shaking but also with the disciples freshly filled with the Holy Spirit and power.

When Peter was taken to prison, the church's natural reflex action was to once again gather to pray, resulting in his miraculous release. When the church at Antioch met to pray, the meeting resulted in a breakthrough of missionary activity as the people released their leaders to advance the gospel to other lands.

The boredom often associated with prayer meetings in the past has been caused by their predictability and lack of living purpose. But if churches are actively involved in works of faith that require the presence of God, prayer will become relevant and exciting.²

We have been offered the opportunity to approach the God of heaven boldly. Find people who will join you in building a prayer culture. Find the intercessors and ask them to help you learn to pray. Remind yourself and others that prayer is

not a last resort, but the first option.

CAPTURE THE MOMENT

Desperation often leads to prayers that bring about a revival. Every revival in history has been birthed in prayer. When God's people pray, God hears. The revival tends to wane when we forget

what ushered us into the atmosphere of revival in the first place.

I find these words by O. Hallesby convicting: "The work of praying is prerequisite to all other work in the kingdom of God, for the simple reason that it is by prayer that we couple the powers of heaven to our helplessness, the powers which can turn water into wine

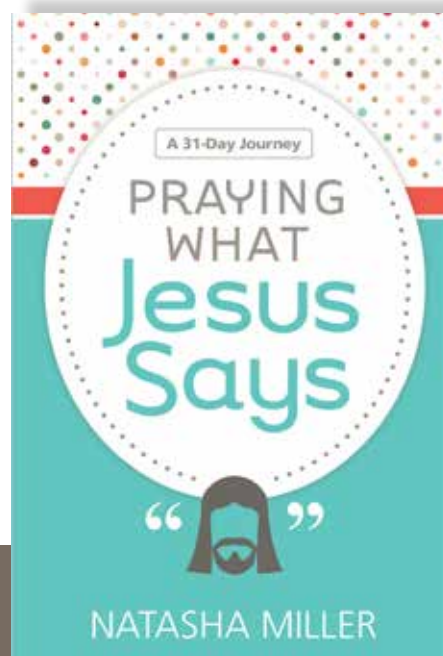
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ATTRACTING AND ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

No church can be truly “prayer saturated” without the participation of the younger generations. However, attracting and engaging children, teens, and young adults is one of the biggest challenges facing churches today. Many congregations are facing the dilemma of a shrinking and aging population. *What can we as church leaders do to become more effective with young people? How can we do a better job of creating an environment they find inviting and relevant?*

My experience in working with churches of every size and denomination leads me to believe this: engaging the emerging generations in dynamic “vertical” worship and Spirit-empowered prayer ignites their passion for the Lord and stirs their spiritual hunger in ways that nothing else can. In fact, history records that most revivals and spiritual awakenings were preceded by a new sound of worship that attracted a new generation of followers.

Many churches around the country are attracting and engaging young people in various ways. Bethel Church in Redding, CA, is at the forefront of a growing—and decidedly youthful—evangelical Christian revival.

Bethel draws young adults in droves, sending students into the city and across the globe, armed with biblical training

in Spirit-empowered ministry, hearing God’s voice, and healing prayer (John 14:12). These experiences give them purpose, community, and connection with their friends and with God—all things that surveys commonly reveal are the things young people are looking for in a church.

Hillsong Church similarly attracts large numbers of young people. At Hillsong Phoenix, where my husband and I attend, young adults greet us at the door, lead in worship and prayer, and sometimes bring the sermon. The majority of these young leaders are under the age of 35. In addition to powerful worship and prayer, young people are also attracted to Hillsong because there is a place for them to serve and learn to lead.

LIFE-TRANSFORMING ENCOUNTERS

If you want to engage young people in your church, here are a few other suggestions straight from the mouths of the young people themselves. Millennials and “Gen Z” say they are looking for an encounter with God when they come to church. They don’t want canned sermons, timed worship sets, or prayer formulas. They want to have a life-transforming experience with God! And they want their friends to experience the same.

They want their prayers to change the world. They are a justice generation

and want to pray for causes like sex trafficking, homelessness, and poverty.

They want to connect with older leaders who are authentic and genuine; those who will not just preach to them but worship and pray alongside them and show them how to walk out their faith.

How do we create an atmosphere that invites and engages young people? Ultimately it is a work of the Holy Spirit. Take a look at Bethel Church. Each week their intercessors and leaders pray for every child and young person who will be in their service. They ask for hungry hearts and a desire for more of God. They plead with God that each young person will encounter the Lord—and that their hearts will be open and all “walls” separating them from God will break down.

God wants to draw this next generation to Himself. Jesus says that if He is lifted up, He will draw people to Himself (John 12:32). When we relentlessly invite the Holy Spirit to come and change the spiritual atmosphere, when we focus on exalting Christ Jesus, then hearts of hungry young people will be drawn unto *Him*.


CHERYL SACKS is a bestselling author and inspirational speaker. Her “Saturate” series—*The Prayer Saturated Church*, *Prayer Saturated Kids*, and *The Prayer Saturated Family*—have mentored thousands of individuals and impacted thousands of churches.

and remove mountains in our own life and in the lives of others, the powers which can awaken those who sleep in sin and raise up the dead, the powers which can capture strongholds and make the impossible possible.”³

If you want to build a prayer culture, model it. When people ask you to pray for them, stop and pray for them right then. Host concerts of prayer in your church as reminders that prayer is not optional in the Christian life. Invite men and women who lead prayer ministries to come speak

to your church. Learn from people who are further down the road than you are. Listen to people who stretch you to want to pray more. Read books on prayer.

Paul exhorts us in Philippians 4:6: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything [everything means everything] by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (NKJV, brackets added). The more we pray, the more we want to pray.

None of us have ever met anyone who prayed too much! 

¹ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 76.

² Donald English, *Ten Praying Churches* (MARK Monarch Publications, 1989), 7–8.

³ O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 82.



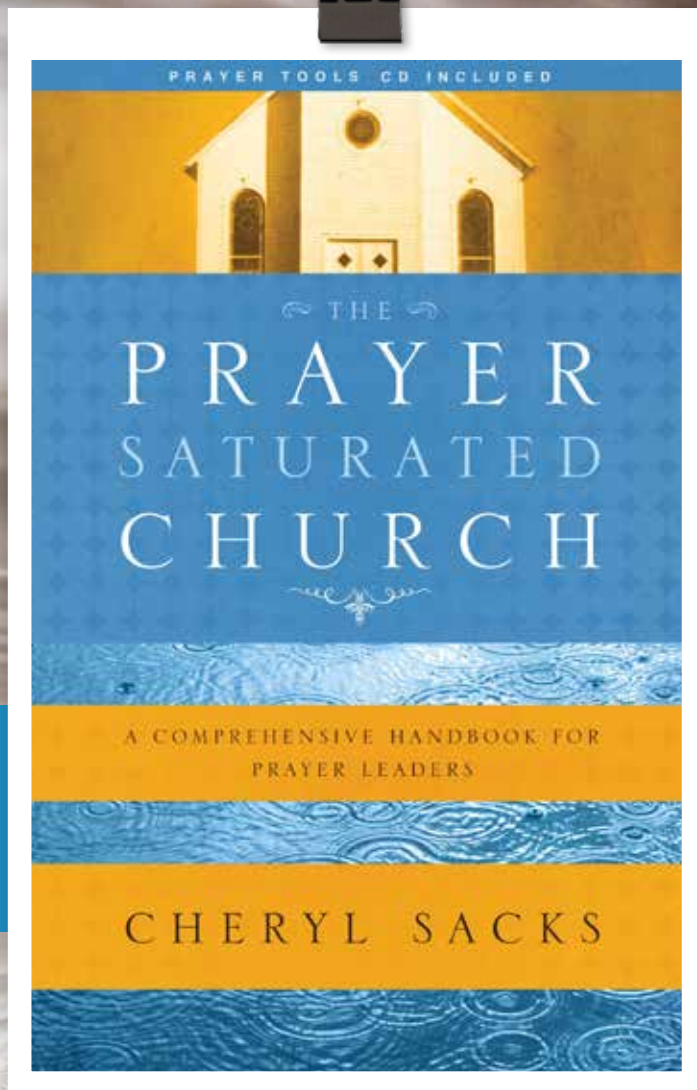
MICHAEL CATT is senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, GA. He is also the author of several books, including *The Power of Persistence: Breakthroughs in Your Prayer Life*, and the executive producer of several films with Sherwood Pictures (michaelcatt.com).

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THE INFLUENCE OF A LEADER

Motivational Tips to Move a Congregation to Pray

As a pastor, Jamie Morgan has taught, modeled, prodded, encouraged, and equipped her people to pray. And the results are obvious!

The people of Life Church in Williamstown, NJ, are used to praying because their pastor models prayer and has created unique prayer experiences. She has led them on many prayer journeys beyond the walls of their church to places such as Israel, the Philippines, and former revival sites in the U.S.

The church held a spontaneous prayer meeting in the parking lot of a movie theater after seeing *Unplanned* (a movie about the abortion industry). They journeyed to 214 Bonnie Brae St., Los Angeles, CA (the site of the Azusa Street revival), and cried out to God to do it again. Recently, 12 members of Life Church flew to Orlando, FL, at their own expense, to host the “Prayer Experience” at their denomination’s national conference. There they prayed for pastors, missionaries, and key leaders around the world, many of whom needed encouragement to continue.

When a pastor engages his or her people in unique prayer opportunities, the results can be transformational for a church, a city, and even a nation.

A LEADER’S ROLE

Recently I did a study of prayer mobilization in the Bible and discovered an interesting pattern: people were typically mobilized to pray as a direct result of a challenge issued by a leader.

In the Old Testament, Nehemiah, Ezra, Jehoshaphat—to name a few leaders—challenged people to seek God, and then provided a venue to do so.

But you might be thinking, *That isn’t the case in the New Testament.* The examples from Acts and the birth of the early Church seem to indicate more shared leadership or spontaneous prayer meetings.

It’s possible that for the first months and even a few years in the life of the early Church, believers took the

By Jonathan Graf

FOR MOST, PRAYER DOES NOT COME NATURALLY. WE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT TO DO IT!

initiative to pray with or without leaders' encouragement. It was part of the DNA of the newly launched church.

But by the time the epistles were written, Paul and James were challenging those under their care to pray. James wrote a lengthy encouragement for people to pray more often because of the inherent power of prayer offered in faith (James 5:13–18). Paul asked people to join his missionary endeavors by praying (Rom. 15:30–33; Eph. 6:19–20; Phil. 1:3–6; 2 Cor. 1:8–11). He also challenged people to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:16–18, *KJV*), to pray when they had anxiety (Phil. 4:6–7), and to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1–2). I suspect James and Paul issued all these challenges because they saw the believers relaxing their prayer urgency.

It is common for people to become careless or complacent in their prayer lives. For most, prayer does not come naturally. We need encouragement to do it! As pastors, elders, small group leaders, and prayer leaders—we need to challenge people to pray.

In light of this pattern of effective prayer mobilization, I asked those charged with leading their congregations in prayer this question: “What prayer opportunities are the most effective in mobilizing a congregation to pray?”

Here are two of the best I answers I received:

1. ENGAGE YOUR CONGREGATION WITH A PRAYER INITIATIVE.

A prayer initiative, designed to engage everyone in a congregation to pray in unity, focuses on a given theme for a set period of time. The most popular time frames for a prayer initiative are 24 hours, one or two weeks, a month, or 40 days. If done well, this unified prayer effort can be your most successful tool in drawing the most people into prayer. And many participants will have such a good experience that they will catch the importance of prayer and be better equipped for the rest of their lives.

Why is a prayer initiative so helpful?

- Most initiatives use Scripture-based prayer guides that teach people to pray God’s Word

and move them to pray beyond personal needs to adopt a Kingdom agenda.

- When the entire church is involved, people are reminded week after week to participate. Hearing others talk about their experiences creates a built-in accountability and grows within each person a desire to participate more.
- Prayer initiatives provide a twofold, manageable time commitment. First, people are not making a commitment to pray every day for the rest of their lives. (While that would be great, it is too scary a commitment for most.) Instead, they know they are committing to 30 days or three weeks. Second, most prayer initiative guides ask for no more than a two- to five-minute commitment each day. That makes it less intimidating.

Remember, however, a prayer initiative will succeed only if it is well planned, prepared for, and promoted. Just purchasing prayer guides a week ahead of the Sunday you announce the initiative will not work.

Thompson Station Church in Thompson Station, TN, does prayer initiatives well. They plan two each year—one in January (a 21-day fasting initiative) and one at another point in the year. The second prayer initiative is often tied to a sermon series, which makes it unique and inviting for everyone. The prayer leader, Leighann McCoy, develops a prayer guide based on the sermons that the lead pastor (her husband Tom) will preach.

Leighann says this is a great way to connect the entire congregation with prayer. “By participating in churchwide prayer initiatives, we introduce the work of prayer to people who’ve possibly never participated in such work before,” she explains.

2. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A “PASSIONATE” NEED.

People will pray if they feel desperation or a deep concern for an issue. Good leaders pay attention to those times when prayer happens naturally—and they build on it.

First, when a congregation’s heart seems to be focused somewhere, take note. Has something unusual or difficult happened in the life of your congregation—a natural disaster or catastrophe

in your community or the world? Is there something going on that naturally moves people to cry out to God? Take advantage of those situations and work hard to rally meaningful prayer through events, meetings, groups, and worship services.

As I was writing this article, the United States was in the midst of both the COVID-19 scare and the horrific George Floyd death in Minneapolis, and the rioting that followed in cities across the nation. I guarantee your people were praying! These situations provide the perfect opportunities for leaders to organize people to pray together continually in Kingdom-focused intercession.

The pastor and elders of my church rallied us to a seven-day prayer initiative to pray for our nation. We had seven organized prayer meetings that week—four via Zoom and three in person at the church. Half of our congregation participated during the week (double the usual prayer meeting attendance).


Second, pay attention if there is an area of unusual need in your congregation. Many in your church may be struggling with cancer, job loss due to COVID, company closures, and other distressing factors. People's hearts are tender in such times. That can be an opportunity to rally more prayer than normal.

Third, is a particular area of your church's ministry growing significantly? Maybe your youth group is suddenly expanding, or maybe your Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) program has more women in it from the community than from your church. Look for those kinds of things and rally prayer around them. God is at work there, which means Satan will be on the attack. This may be an opportunity to motivate more people to pray for protection and prosperity.

Areas of passionate need often call for spontaneity—like the Life Church people who were so touched by the message of *Unplanned* that they broke into a prayer meeting in a theater parking lot, crying out to God for an end to abortion.

CAPITALIZE ON THE MOMENT

Above all, capitalizing on these events will have a far-reaching impact on your church. If given a meaningful opportunity, your people will pray. Want to see your church grow in prayer? Then make the most of special moments and rally your people to pray.

Dr. Jamie Morgan affirms prayer that goes beyond the walls of the church: "I teach my congregation the necessity of prayer, the power of individual, corporate, and on-site prayer, and that God gives every Christian and church prayer assignments," she says. "As a consequence, my Life Church family believes that praying outside the four church walls via prayer journeys is normal Christianity; they don't want to miss out on what God is going to do!" 



JONATHAN GRAF is president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network. His heart beats to help churches grow their people in prayer. Among his five books on prayer is *Restored*

Power, which expands on these concepts (prayershop.org).

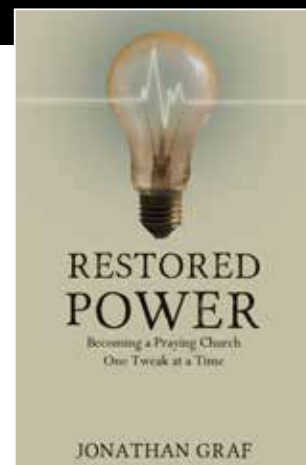
FOR FURTHER READING

Check out some additional articles on blogs and websites related to "Motivating Prayer in the Local Church" at prayerleader.com/issue-42-extras.

- "Becoming a Praying Church," by Gregory Brown
- "Mobilizing Your Church to Pray," by Athens Prayer Network USA
- "Mobilising Churches as Houses of Prayer," by Global Prayer Resource Network

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Lord, Make Us

Prayers Toward Racial Healing

FIRES OF RACIAL TENSION HAVE BEEN IGNITED IN OUR NATION. HURT, FEAR, ANGER, SUSPICION, DISAPPOINTMENT, PAIN, MISUNDERSTANDING, AND JUDGMENT SURFACE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RACES. MANY PEOPLE EXPRESS STRUGGLES THAT HAVE MARKED THEIR LIVES FOR YEARS; OTHERS ARE UNCERTAIN OF HOW TO RESPOND.

But the common cry within the Church and much of society is for change, healing, and a way forward.

What if the Church committed herself to 31 days of concerted prayer, seeking God to bring healing, restoring—and yes, even revival and spiritual awakening—to our nation? That would be a way forward that brings glory to God and hope to those who are hurting and in despair.

Niko Peele and Jonathan Graf invited prayer leaders from around the country to write prayers for racial healing that are steeped in God's Word. Peele and Graf have edited and compiled the book, titled *Make Us One*, to release this fall.

In this article we feature a sample of prayers that you can begin praying now. As you pray, invite God to do a radical work by using the Church to bring racial reconciliation through the power of Jesus Christ. Pray that God will use a season of concerted prayer to ignite new fires that consume our nation with love for God and for each other.

FORGIVE US, RESTORE US

Our loving heavenly Father, we come to You in the most powerful name of Jesus. We worship and praise You with every breath that is within us. We desperately

seek You during this chaotic time. Our nation is in a spiritually war-torn state. Please cleanse us, forgive us, revive us, transform us, heal us! We cry out to You to intervene and heal our minds and hearts from any hatred, hurt, pain, confusion, or misunderstandings.

Search the depths of our souls and reveal anything contrary to Your Word that hinders the process of healing needed in our nation. Remove any pride and blind spots that keep us from accepting each other and being united in the body of Christ and our country.

Forgive us for the sin of racism—an age-old strategy and lie of the enemy that makes us feel or think we are better, more important, more valuable, or superior than someone who looks different from ourselves in color, ethnicity, nationality, wealth, or culture.

Forgive America for the part it played in slavery and racism in our country's formation. This issue continues to plague us.

Help us to be patient with one another and to listen and learn from our differences. Help us to show empathy toward others even if we don't understand or agree with their point of view.

Father, restore to us a holy reverence and fear of God and a fresh revelation and understanding of Your Word, which declares we are all created from one blood and are all made in Your image after Your likeness. Penetrate our hearts so deeply with this truth that we can celebrate the truth that we are all part of the same human race, regardless of our background or the color of our skin. Saturate us with Your love so that we may embrace our calling as reconcilers and healers.

We expect to see a great spiritual awakening because we know Your eyes are on the righteous and Your ears are

attentive to our prayers. We realize it is not by our own might nor by our own power, but it is by your Holy Spirit that this battle will be won! You are the Warrior; the Lord is Your name. Thank You for leading us and hearing our prayer.

In Jesus' name, amen.

(Genesis 1:26; Acts 17:28; Acts 17:26; 1 Peter 3:12; Zechariah 4:6; Exodus 15:3)

PAT CHEN is a board member of the National Day of Prayer and America's National Prayer Committee. She is the president of First Love Ministries International Prayer Ministry, located in the San Francisco Bay area and Washington, D.C.

MOVE ME CLOSER

Father, Jesus said that nation (*ethnos*) would rise against nation (*ethnos*), and kingdom against kingdom. But that would be just the beginning of the birth pains. The subject of race is one of the most discussed topics in our culture today. Racism is one of the most basic and deadly problems in history—and it is increasing in power.

However, we know the Church is called to be different. Father, You call us to "move closer" to You and to one another. This problem of racism only changes if we change—from up close. It's easy to judge what we don't understand, but everything changes when we move closer to one another. We seek Your forgiveness:

- Father, forgive us for thinking that some races are better than others.
- Father, forgive us for thinking there is something better in us than in others.
- Father, forgive us for showing favoritism when we are all undeserving of Your mercy and grace.
- Father, forgive us for our pride, feeling sufficient in ourselves, believing that we don't need God or anyone else.

- Father, forgive us for judging based on externals.
- Father, forgive us for our insecurity, for being afraid of those who are different and those we can't control.
- Father, forgive us for not being a house of prayer for all nations (*ethnos*), for every race.
- Father, forgive us for partnering with Satan, the accuser of the brethren, rather than partnering with Your Son, the Lord Jesus, who lives to intercede for us.
- Father, forgive us for separating ourselves from one another.

Father, help us learn to “listen” to one another. May we “move closer” to You and to one another. In the name of Jesus, amen. (Matthew 24:7–8; Hebrews 7:25)

DR. JASON HUBBARD is chaplain and associate professor at Arizona Christian University, and a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

JESUS, AWAKEN ME WITH LIGHT

Father, Your Word tells us that You are our light and salvation. I, along with my brothers and sisters, acknowledge that, more than ever, we need Your light to shine in the darkness of the culture that threatens to overtake our nation, our churches, our neighborhoods, our homes, and our hearts. You are our only source of redemption and healing.

We proclaim Jesus is the light of the world. Help us to see all people, in all their array of colors and diversity, as manifestations of Your light, for we are all created in Your image and are sacred in Your sight. Shine Your light in our hearts, dispelling any place of prejudice. With boldness and courage, we ask You to change us any way You want.

Empower us to love others in the same way You love each of us personally. Awaken our ears to hear the pain and

suffering of others. May we also be quick to extend our hands in service, for we love not only with words, but also with action.

We are in awe that You have commissioned us to live as light bearers. As agents of Your light and dispensers of Your love, we speak grace and peace over fractured families, over our national discord, and over racial unrest. May we live collectively as “the city on the hill” that gives light to everyone and brings glory to God.

We ask this in Your name, amen.

(Psalm 27:1; 36:9; Matthew 5:14–16)

REBECCA SHIREY is a speaker and writer who serves alongside her husband Lou (a retired military chaplain) in leading Galatians 6:6 retreats for ministry couples. She is also a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

These prayers are excerpted from *Make Us One: A 31-Day Prayer Journey Toward Racial Healing*, compiled and edited by Niko Peele and Jonathan Graf, to be released October 2020 (prayershop.org).

JOIN THE CRY of Jesus' Heart in John 17

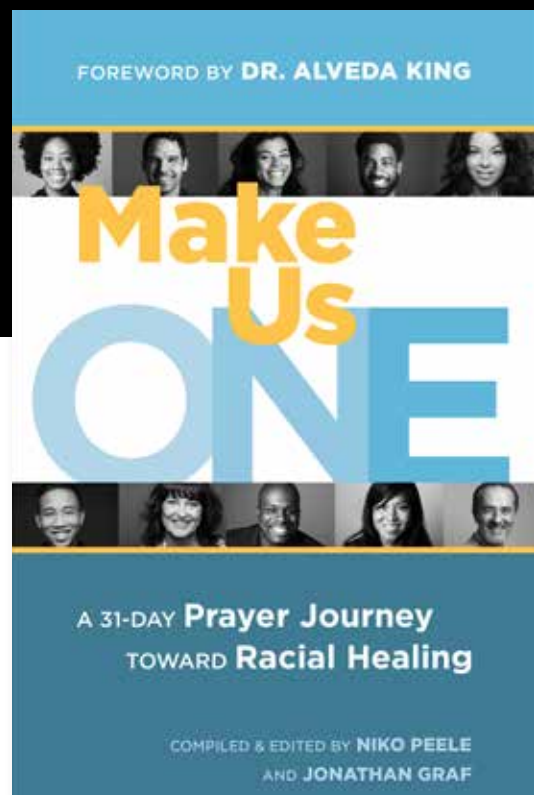
Make Us One is a compilation prayer guide that offers a Christian, biblical response to the racial division in our nation.

Each of the powerful, insightful, Scripture-based prayers is written by a national prayer leader or pastor of multiple ethnicities. It has a hard-hitting, clear, prophetic voice for our times, and a message to the Church that it cannot turn a blind eye to this issue any longer, but needs to live out Jesus' prayer in John 17—that we would be one.



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Seeking

God

through Suffering

Crying Out to God with a Kingdom Perspective



By Heather Hagstrom

When I was diagnosed with cancer, I cried out to God every day. I knew my diagnosis would change my plans, desires, and dreams. But at first, faced with numerous surgeries and cancer treatments, I didn't even know how to pray. However, knowing that God had a bigger purpose and plan helped me seek after Him in prayer.

To encourage me and give me hope, God led me to specific Bible verses. As I prayed through Scripture during the physical and emotional struggles, He gave me peace and joy. And He taught me some principles that can guide all of us in praying through suffering—our own and that of others.

Pray Faithfully

God calls us to persevere whether we are praying for ourselves or interceding for others who are suffering. Romans 12:12 encourages us to “be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Before every doctor's appointment, medical test, surgery, and cancer treatment, I persevered in prayer, and God gave me patience to endure the pain and stress. As I focused my attention on Him through prayer—instead of dwelling on my pain,

disappointment, and suffering—He also gave me joy and filled me with hope.

God calls us to pray faithfully for others, also, as they suffer. Paul says, “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people” (Eph. 6:18).

Now, when I hear that someone has cancer or is struggling physically or emotionally, I know the importance of praying consistently for him or her. Even when we think there is nothing we can do except pray, that is actually the most important thing we can do.

Pray Honestly

God invites us to pray and intercede honestly. When King David fled from Saul into a cave, he prayed honestly about his need for God's help: “Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed” (Psalm 57:1).

When we share with God our concerns, fears, and emotions, our dependence on God deepens. As we depend on God more, our relationship with God grows stronger.

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). When I came to God and honestly prayed through all of my emotions, He gave me His peace and rest.

God also assures us that as we honestly pray for His comfort, He alone comforts us so that we can comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3–4). That’s what He did in my case. God’s comfort to me showed me how to pray and how to speak to others with cancer and other struggles.

Pray Submissively

God calls us to submit to His perfect plan. Instead of only praying that the suffering will end, it is better to pray that God will be glorified and that His will may be done. Praying with a submissive heart in the midst of our suffering can be difficult, but it can prevent disappointment and anger when our prayers are not answered the way we want.

Jesus, on the night before His crucifixion, modeled a submissive prayer. His honest and heartfelt prayer in Luke 22:42 gives us permission to pray with emotion and passion, but also with trust: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

Understandably, Jesus wanted to avoid the excruciating physical and emotional pain of the cross. But He submitted that desire to God. As Jesus prayed, Luke writes, “an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him” (Luke 22:43). When we pray for God’s will to be done—even if that means enduring intense suffering—God will strengthen us to persevere.

I remember talking to the Lord about losing all of my long, beautiful hair during cancer treatments. As I submitted my will and desires to God, He helped me endure through each step, including losing my hair twice and watching it grow back in again.

Even though suffering initially seems negative, God can use it to promote

His Kingdom. As I prayed submissively, God gave me numerous opportunities to share His love and salvation message with other sufferers. We cannot fully understand why we are enduring intense suffering, but praying submissively can deepen our trust in God’s sovereignty and fill us with His peace.

Pray Thankfully

God also calls us to “rejoice always, pray continually, [and] give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:16–18, brackets added). How can we be thankful in intense pain and suffering? We do not have to give thanks for everything, but we can pray thankfully in every circumstance. Since God’s character never changes, we can praise Him and thank Him for who He is even when we are suffering.

The week I found out I would have to undergo 34 cancer treatments and lose my hair was the week of Thanksgiving. Even though I did not initially feel thankful, when I thanked God through prayer for His love for me, I know His presence was with me. I was, and am, grateful for His love in saving me from my sins so that I do not have to fear death. In my gratitude, God gave me joy.

Now, as I look back to the way God carried me through my entire cancer journey, I am so thankful for the opportunity God gave me to deepen my personal relationship with Him and to use this experience to share Jesus’ love and salvation with others. I am thankful that I am currently in remission and blessed with curly hair. As I go to my follow-up appointments every six months, I pray for opportunities to encourage others who are currently receiving cancer treatments.

Even if our prayers are not answered in the ways we want, we can be thankful for God’s constant presence, His faithful character, His unfailing love, and His unending grace. As believers in Jesus, we can be thankful even when facing death because Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

Believers in Jesus have the assurance we will be with Him for eternity. When we pray thankfully in good times or in suffering, God fills us with His joy.

Confident Trust

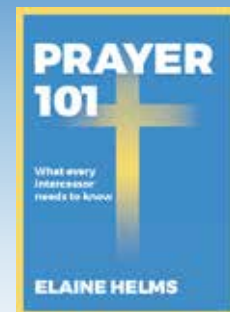
Above all, God calls us to be confident as we pray. When facing suffering or when praying for someone else who is, we can pray faithfully, honestly, submissively, and thankfully. And because God hears our prayers and concerns, we can pray confidently (1 John 5:14–15).

We can trust Him. He is always with us, right by our side, in every situation, to encourage and comfort us in our suffering. **PC**



HEATHER HAGSTROM, who lives in Kansas, is a teacher and a member of the Heart of America Christian Writers Network.

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Getting Down to Business

Every Tuesday morning I meet with four others for a prayer time around a kitchen table. During our 90 minutes together, we claim God's promise to hear our prayers, and then, one by one, we bring before Him more than 100 requests, each one with a name and a story.

We have our best-laid plans to cover the whole list, but our spiritual enemy has other intentions. And he uses his favorite weapon against us: our fondness for talking.

Typically, our leader arrives with an organized list of that day's requests, but inevitably we have additions and updates. The danger is to let talking-time gobble up praying-time. Focused, faithful prayer takes determination. If we spend too much time chatting *about* the requests but not actually praying, it's as if Jesus is sitting at the table with us but excluded from our conversation.

So how do we stop talking and start

praying?

One day I realized we were talking together for 75 of our 90 minutes before ever addressing the Lord. That left 15 minutes to cover 100 requests. As I got into my car that day, I was overcome with sadness. How could we flip-flop our priorities like that, elevating human dialogue over conversation with the Almighty?

The next week we discussed our struggle, and we determined the only way to stop chatting was to sound an alarm—literally. We agreed to set an alarm for an allotted time of talking—and strictly adhere to it.

Though some sharing is always necessary, a blast of noise now stops us from overtalking and underpraying. Old habits die hard, though, and enjoyable conversation tends to shorten our prayer time. When the alarm goes off, one of us



might say, "Oh, just one more thing." Those few words can signal a whole new round of chatting! So we have to hold each other accountable.

The temptation to keep talking is understandable because we are good friends who want to stay current with each other's lives. But we all agree that our Tuesday prayer time is not for everyday chitchat. We schedule other times to gather for lunch and conversation. No alarms allowed at that lunch table!

But on Prayer Tuesdays, with bulldog determination, we've learned to obey our alarm. We steadily improve at inviting our heavenly Father into a full hour of conversation each week. And once in a while, we even start praying before the alarm has sounded!

MARGARET NYMAN blogs at gettingthroughthis.com.

Prayerwalk Your Favorite Campus Virtually

For several years, my alma mater in St. Paul, MN, hosted a campus prayerwalk in August, prior to the start of the school year. Alumni with a heart for this Christian liberal arts university gathered to hear specific prayer requests and a "state of the union" from the president of the university. We then broke into teams and wandered around the campus, stopping to pray at various sites. Less-mobile participants enjoyed being chauffeured around by a university vehicle to various prayer spots. It was fun to see some of the old sites, like Doc's

corner, where students would hang out for coffee and conversation. And it was also interesting to see new construction of dorms and academic buildings.

Each year I looked forward to this opportunity. I prayed for students to enjoy spiritual encouragement and healthy relationships, as I did. I prayed for favor in their academic studies (that I wish I had enjoyed more!). And, without fail, I prayed for revival and spiritual awakening on that campus. I remember the joy, one year, of hearing that students had established a 24/7 prayer tent in the

main square of the campus to pray all hours of the day and night for that long-desired revival!

Eventually, however, with the challenges of schedule conflicts and driving to the other side of the Twin Cities in rush-hour traffic, I lost track of the event. And I joined the ranks of most alumni who find it difficult to return to their campuses.

A New Way to Pray for Campuses

But distance and inconvenience do not

TIPS & tools

need to limit our vision for prayerwalking every campus in the U.S. (and *your* campus). Through a virtual prayerwalking site developed by EveryCampus, it is now possible to prayerwalk a campus next door—and even one thousands of miles away!

Go to everycampus.com, click on the prayer tab, and type in the name of your alma mater or any other school. Or put in a zip code to find a campus in your own community. Once you've prayed for a campus, you can expand your virtual prayerwalking to search for campuses across the United States that have not yet been adopted for prayer.

When you select a campus, the site offers a downloadable prayer guide. Step-by-step instructions prepare you for your prayerwalk, suggest ways to spend your time, and give you an opportunity to debrief.



Clicking on the Overview tab opens a Google Maps link of the campus that includes the details of the academic buildings, dorms, and other facilities.

Then the fun begins. Select a “Pegman” icon (representing a virtual you as you prayerwalk) and drag the icon around the campus. If you stop on a site and select Street View, you can see the actual buildings. Then rotate 360 degrees and begin your prayerwalk. To cover the entire campus, click on more buildings and areas—even the athletic fields and parking lots!

This fall some colleges and universities are welcoming returning students; others, because of COVID precautions, are continuing distance learning. All are facing unique challenges. Although you may not be physically present, you can prepare the way in prayer for students to thrive in their educational pursuits—and perhaps encounter Christ.

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect* magazine.

A background image showing a group of people in a church setting. A woman in a blue dress is seen from the side, and a man in a white shirt is in the foreground, possibly in prayer. The image is slightly blurred and has a warm, golden light.

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Reimagine Prayer as Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, Wider-spread

Phil Miglioratti

The Bible was written to change our lives; not increase our knowledge.” When I first heard this exhortation from esteemed seminary professor and author Howard Hendricks, it became foundational to my understanding of how to read the Bible.

I immediately understood that whenever I read or heard Holy Scripture, I could not merely stockpile new information. I was responsible to apply that truth, insight, or exhortation to my life as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Later, I realized that the Bible was also written to transform my praying:

“When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you” (John 16:13–15).

An encounter with scriptural truth should be a prompting to pray. It’s an invitation, from the Spirit of truth, into the conversation of the triune God—one God, three “personas”: Holy Sovereign, Holy Savior, Holy Spirit.

When we respond to that prompting—by first listening to the conversation of the Godhead rather than listing our concerns—the Holy Spirit will guide our prayers to correspond to the triune prayer: God’s Word, the mind of Christ, and the leading of the Spirit. In other words, “The Bible was written to change how we pray; not merely increase our knowledge.”

Listen, Don’t Tell

Whenever we are hearing, reading, meditating on, or memorizing the Bible, the Holy Spirit longs to transform our mind’s self-conversation into an ongoing conversation with Almighty God. No longer do I consider prayer as my simply telling God what I need. Now, by listening to the guiding-speaking-telling-revealing of the Spirit of truth, I participate in knowing God’s will.

In addition, “The word of God is alive and active” (Heb. 4:12). Its power goes beyond my personal habits and hopes. It gives me strength and takes me deeper into the ways of God:

Every Scripture has been written by the Holy Spirit, the breath of God. It will empower you by its instruction and correction, giving you the strength to take the right direction and lead you deeper into the path of godliness. Then you will be God’s servant, fully mature and perfectly prepared to fulfill any assignment God gives you (2 Tim. 3:16–17, TPT).

Applying Scripture must never stop at a personal application-only level. This limits the length and breadth and depth of the living Word of God. The Holy Spirit’s work—through the written Word of God—is meant to change, empower, and equip us as individuals. But God also designed it to flow from us, His change agents. Each biblical encounter is a call to pray God’s Word into every segment and role of our lives.

Prayer Format

The following format can serve as a guide for praying even the simplest

Scripture passages into our lives. As you read Scripture, offer a prayer like this:

- I seek the filling of the Holy Spirit so that I will be led into God’s truth.
- I am eager to know the mind of Christ so that I may do God’s will.
- I want to know the heart of the Father so that I exhibit and proclaim God’s love.

Then, as you pray, expand your application of the Scripture text to these life components by asking the question:

How can this Scripture apply to:

- Worship: helping me exalt God’s character and attributes?
- Discipleship: teaching me to exhibit a life in Christ of obedience and joy?
- Stewardship: reminding me to express gratitude and generosity?
- Leadership: inspiring me to exceptional service and ministry?
- Fellowship: producing an extraordinary “one another” community?
- Citizenship: directing me to extend the love of Jesus to my neighbors and community?
- Relationship: leading me into authentic relationships in my family and with friends?

Of course, the Bible *can* increase our knowledge, but its greatest purpose is to change our lives. This happens when we pray! **PC**



PHIL MIGLIORATTI is the curator and coordinator for The #ReimagineFORUM@Pray.Network, a collaboration of prayer-fueled leaders, who are applying Romans 12:2

(“don’t be conformed; be transformed”) to their understanding and ministry of prayer.

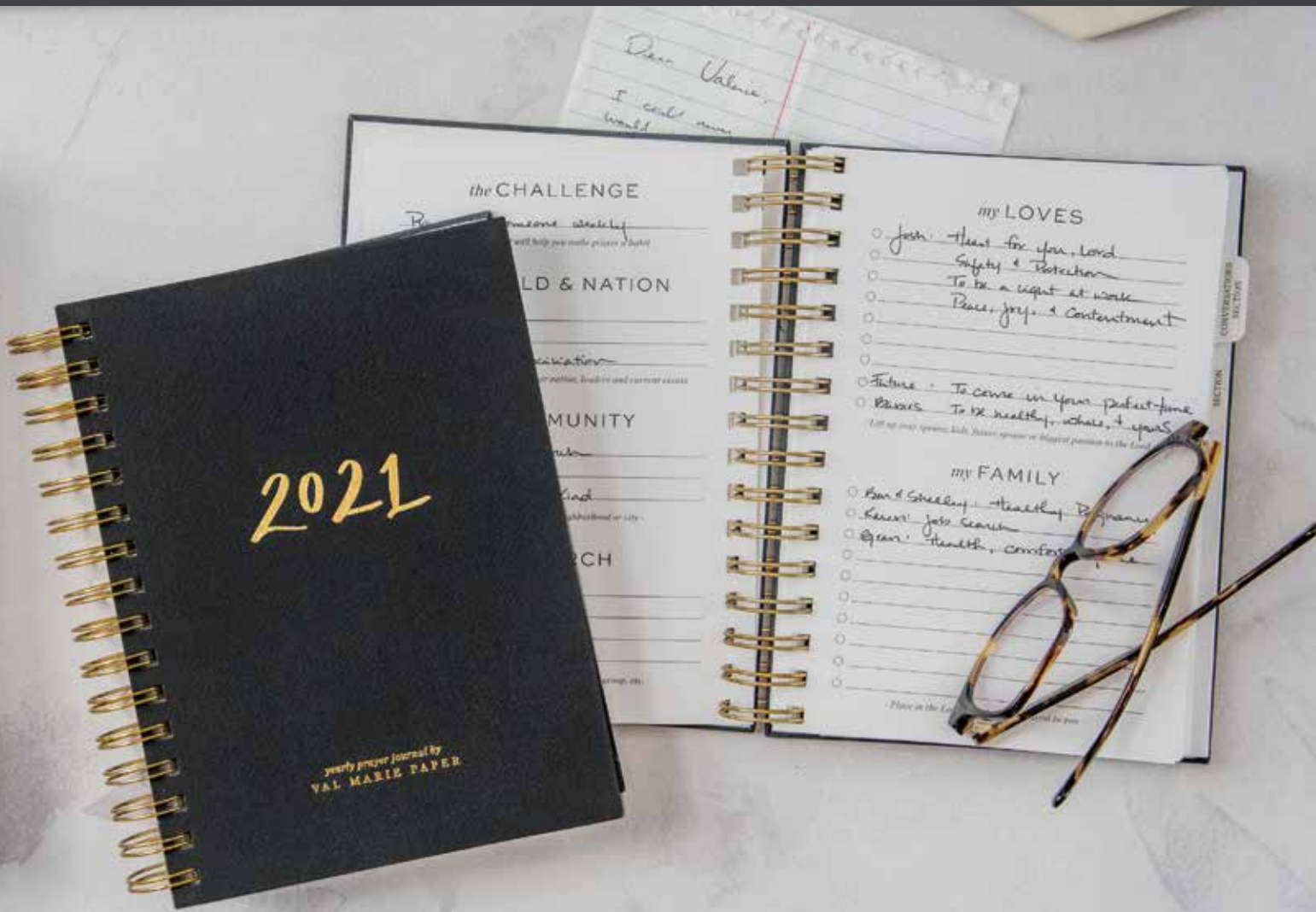


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