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Interceding for Favor,
Peace, and Increase

PRAYERS *of* BLESSING

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PERSUADING COLD PEOPLE

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AROUND THE
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PrayerCONNECT

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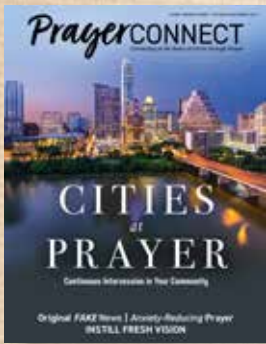
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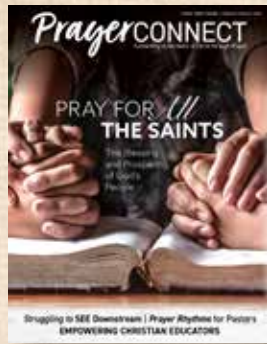
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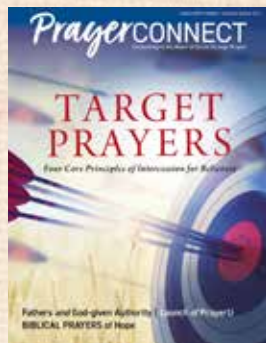
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There are a number of gifted speakers associated with PRAYER CONNECT. Jonathan Graf regularly ministers in churches of varying sizes. Carol Madison is also available to minister in the area of prayer for revival and community transformation, and mentoring 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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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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Effective Prayer Starts with Repentance



One of my favorite passages when I speak or preach is James 5:13–18. Most believe the Book of James was written by Jesus' brother James, who became a primary leader of the church in Jerusalem. Early Church historians record his nickname as "Camel Knees" because his knees were stiff and calloused from all the time he spent on them in prayer.

This passage offers powerful prayer truths he sought to help believers understand:

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Several interesting things stand out to me in this passage.

First, I am intrigued that even in the first century—so close to the time Jesus walked the earth—James had to remind people to use the gift of prayer. He even explained situations that should compel one to pray.

This should be a reminder to leaders today. We need to coax, challenge, and inspire people to pray. They do not naturally remember to do it! Church leaders need to continually encourage and equip their people to pray.

Second, James explains how important it is to have a clean and pure heart if you expect results from prayer. He ties confession of sins to the request for healing. Then, as the bridge to the incredible story of Elijah's experience when his prayers ended a drought, James writes these famous words we often quote: it is "the prayer of a *righteous* person" that is "powerful and effective" (*italics added*).

As a seasoned prayer warrior, James reveals that the key to powerful, effective prayer is righteousness—being clean and pure before God when you pray.

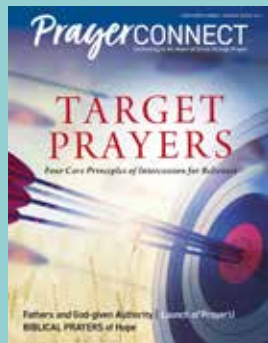
Truth to Live By

This truth has not changed. We modern believers need to learn and remember that living a holy life before God hugely affects our prayer lives. If we want to be effective in prayer, we need to have hearts of surrender and humility. We need to continually ask the Holy Spirit if there are any blockages between us and Him. Our next issue of *Prayer Connect* looks at the importance of repentance and confession as the pathway to revival.

If alive today, "Camel Knees" James would model and teach effective prayer to us in the same way he did centuries ago!

—Jonathan Graf

Previously in



Here is a great list of four core prayer principles to practice and teach: revival of the church, salvation of loved ones, spiritual awakening in our nation, and the spread of the gospel throughout the earth. Order the "Target Prayers" issue and other back issues from prayershop.org.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER | MAY 6TH, 2021



LORD POUR OUT YOUR
LOVE, LIFE, AND
Liberty



2 CORINTHIANS 3:17

WWW.NATIONALDAYOFPRAYER.ORG

70
Years of Prayer
for America
1952-2021

National Day of Prayer Observances on May 6

In observance of the 70th year of the National Day of Prayer (NDP) on May 6, Kathy Branzell (president of the NDP Task Force) announces the theme for 2021: “LORD, Pour Out Your Life, Love, and Liberty.”

“We are once again praying and proclaiming a promise of God in our theme verse,” says Branzell, “from 2 Corinthians 3:17: ‘Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty’” (NKJV).

The National Day of Prayer is an annual observance held on the first Thursday of May, inviting people of all faiths to pray for the nation. It was created in 1952 by a joint resolution of the United States Congress and signed into law by President Harry S. Truman.

“We are richly blessed to have a law that has proclaimed a day of prayer for our nation each year since the first observance

as the law was signed,” says Branzell. “Decades later, America still needs our prayers.”

The theme serves as a reminder to pray throughout 2021 that “the Spirit of the Lord [will] pour through us across America, to fill our lives, families, churches, workplace, education, military, government, arts, entertainment and media, with biblical—not cultural, not worldly—Spirit-empowered, Spirit-filled love, life, and liberty as designed and defined by our Creator and Savior.”

Last year’s NDP observance, normally originating from Washington, D.C., changed plans because of COVID restrictions in the nation’s capital. But a national broadcast drew more than



500,000 viewers online, along with a potential reach of 1.2 billion households through broadcasts around the world. In addition, social media platforms engaged 42 percent more people than 2019. More than 1.3 million people

were engaged each month through the website, social media, and email.

Plans for 2021 include an observance on Capitol Hill and an evening prayer broadcast, possibly from the Museum of the Bible. In addition, more than 60,000 local and virtual community events will be held through the 50 states.

To find an event near you or to learn more about the May 6 national observances, go to nationaldayofprayer.org.

America’s National Prayer Committee Reflects

Members of America’s National Prayer Committee met in Sarasota, FL, late January 2021, to report and reflect on the previous year, as well as pray for God’s direction for the new year.

The group convened their meetings the morning of the presidential Inauguration. Dave Butts, chairperson, invited members to pray for the nation. “I’ve never felt such a call for this particular group to be here together today to pray on Inauguration Day. God put this on the calendar for that purpose. You represent the prayer movement in the United States, and you are here to pray for our nation,” he said.

Several NPC members reflected on

the growth of the prayer movement in 2020, primarily due to the COVID pandemic, racial tensions, riots, and the elections. Some believe the nation is witnessing the start of revival because of the exponential increase of people engaging in more urgent prayer.

Kathy Branzell, president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force (NDP), notes that on Inauguration Day, “There was not a transition of power today. Never. God is on the throne. There was a transition of a person and a position, not of power.” She adds that through social media, Zoom calls, and email, “NDP reached more people than we ever, ever have. We did not cancel, we

pivoted. It was not a year of less. It was a year of more.”

Dave Kubal of Intercessors for America (located in the Washington, D.C., area) also spoke of the growth of the prayer movement, especially related to the elections. “The most exciting outcome of this election is the revival of the intercessory activist,” he observes. He sees a new wave of prayer coming—an awakening that is just beginning to develop. He believes this new wave will emphasize crying out to God for freedom to worship in this nation.

In addition to religious freedom as an urgent prayer point, Matt Lockett of Justice House of Prayer shared

additional challenges of ending abortion and racism. Lockett has prayed at the Supreme Court for 17 years and notes hopeful advances in the pro-life movement that include reduced abortion rates, three new pro-life Supreme Court Justices, and the appointment of more than 230 federal judges in the last four years. He also believes there is hope in healing racial division. “You see the counterfeit,” he says, “but God

is at work.” When Lockett and Will Ford (Will Ford Ministries) share their story of racial reconciliation around the country, racial barriers break down. “The enemy is raging with the riots. There is a war in this nation over the narrative,” he says. “But God’s got a better story to tell.”

An additional prayer strategy introduced to the group is called “Pray Beyond,” a vision to pray for every

person in the world by name. Brian Alarid of America Prays states “how powerful it is when someone remembers your name.” The desire is for eight billion people to be prayed for to the point of salvation.

Although prayer leaders anticipate challenges for the Church in 2021, Branzell (NDP) speaks to hope in the power of prayer. “We need to not become paranoid—but *passionate* prayer warriors.”

Global Family Launches Continuous Prayer Room

A prayer initiative launched on January 1, 2021, with the vision to unite nations, denominations and generations in a year of continuous prayer and worship.

Prayer leaders and worship teams from every continent lead the 168 hourly Zoom sessions each week in several languages. The meetings are accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. Participants must register on the website to receive the Zoom link to join.

The project was founded by Dr. Jason Hubbard of International Prayer Connect (ipcprayer.org) and Jonathan Friz of 10 Days 2021 (10days.net). The continuous

prayer gathering is run by a dedicated, multi-skilled team representing many different ministries and networks from around the world.

“The ability to pray together as the global church in the same space is brand new,” says Friz. “For the first time in history, we can approximate the sound of that great multitude gathered before the throne from every nation and language, declaring ‘Salvation belongs to our God, and to the Lamb!’”

One of the primary focuses of the Global Family is prayers for the unreached, explains Hubbard. Their goal is to reach every person by 2030, with a

focus on Unreached People Groups.

“There are about 5,000 such people groups still separated by language and culture with an average of only one believer per thousand. They need cross-cultural efforts integrated with focused, ongoing prayer to see indigenous gospel movements established in them.”

There are 50 or so hourly sessions available to would-be leaders in the weekly schedule. Prayer leaders who would like to take part are invited to visit the Leaders page on the website (globalfamily24-7prayer.org).

—Taken from International Prayer Connections (ipcprayer.org).

Australia Prays for America

For the ninth consecutive year, Australia is calling the nations of the world to join in prayer and fasting for the United States, to coincide with the U.S. National Day of Prayer.

Commissioner James Condon, chairman of Australia’s National Day of Prayer and Fasting team, says, “We have been praying and fasting on an annual basis since 2013 for the revival and transformation for USA. We in Australia believe it is our turn to stand in the gap for the nation of America.”

Andrew Scarborough, a member

of the Australian team, says, “President Abraham Lincoln’s humble call to prayer in 1863 resonates with us today. Both America and Australia need to come back to God in repentance and humility.”

Australia hosted its own National Day of Prayer and Fasting on February 27, which was their ten-year celebration. Indigenous Christian leaders helped lead the day. Their central prayer theme remains the same—that Australia will experience revival and transformation and millions will come to Christ (nationaldayofprayer.org.au).



Prayer Calendar

Global 4/14 Day of Prayer for Children
Wednesday, April 14
global414day.com

National Day of Prayer
Thursday, May 6
nationaldayofprayer.org

30 Days of Prayer for Muslim World
April 13–May 12
30daysprayer.com

Weekend of Prayer for Children at Risk
June 5–6
viva.org/pray

PRAYERS OF Interceding for Favor, Peace, and Increase BLESSING

It's sobering to remember that about a year ago most of us found ourselves in the early stages of a pandemic lockdown. At first, we thought the restrictions would last for just a couple of weeks. Flatten the curve; slow the spread of the virus. Then weeks stretched into months. And more months.

Early on I wrote a note to my building management company, pleading with them to keep the exercise room, pool, and other amenities open. I argued for personal responsibility. I received no response—and pretty quickly realized we had no voices in the looming shutdowns.

In fact, one day I discovered a brand-new plunger in front of my door—and all the other doors in my complex. There was no explanation, but the message was clear: *you are now on your own!*

We had no idea how much this pandemic would affect our daily lives. Churches moved to online services, businesses began relying on Zoom interactions, schools eliminated in-person classroom teaching, masks covered our smiles, and most of us felt isolated from family and friends.

It has been a season fraught with challenges, disappointments, fears, and restrictions.

May His Favor Be Upon You

But out of this tsunami of change arose an anthem that brought hope and encouragement to people around the world. “The Blessing” song by Cody Carnes, Kari Jobe, and Elevation Worship swept the Internet as people were confined to their homes.

“The Blessing” was first popular through the original artists, but the performances grew to include multiple people in a variety of languages harmonizing on Zoom calls. By mid-pandemic, virtual choirs were singing the hymn in more than 160 languages.

The song’s simplicity, based on an ancient Scripture, captures our attention and causes our spirits to soar. The lyrics are taken from Numbers 6:24–26 (often referred to as the Aaronic blessing):

“The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”

The artists continue the song lyrics with the hope that the Lord’s favor will rest on your family, your children, your children’s children, and a thousand generations. It’s a blessing prayer that has no end!

Prayer for the Ages

This issue is devoted to the power of blessing prayer, which typically includes asking God for favor, peace, and increase. In the lead article, Alvin VanderGriend explores the meaning of blessing prayer, including the idea of blessing the Lord and each other. Niko Peele tackles the challenge of blessing our enemies—and how God uses that obedience to bring healing in relationships. Kim Butts shares encouraging stories about the impact of praying blessings over others. She includes helpful scriptural blessings and practical application.

“The Blessing” song received a Grammy nomination and a Dove Award for Worship Recorded Song of the Year in 2020. Just think of it—a prayer of blessing from the days of Moses still ministers to millions of people around the world in the midst of a pandemic. I’m sure Aaron never imagined that the priestly blessing he offered over the people of Israel would be set to contemporary worship music thousands of years later and sent simultaneously to the ends of the earth.

I call that a powerful prayer for the ages! 🙏

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect* magazine and author of *Prayer That’s Caught and Taught: Mentoring the Next Generation* (prayershop.org).

It all started with prayer—the prayers of a church to bless its neighbors. I was privileged to pastor this new church plant in a Chicago suburb, a church committed to prayer and evangelism. Our building was in the middle of a new housing development with many unchurched families.

Our evangelism team and church leaders spent hours in prayer asking God to help us reach those neighbors for Christ. I remember the joy of kneeling with that evangelism team in a circle on a rug in the center of a living room as we poured out our hearts to God for the salvation of lost souls.

God heard our prayers and gave us a unique outreach strategy. Within a few months the classrooms in our new building filled up with preschool children coming to our story hour. While the little ones spent time learning about God through songs and games, their moms spent time in Bible study groups.

In the next two years, 52 of those young moms came to Christ. *What a blessing!*

And it did not stop there. Other churches inquired about our strategy, so we offered training for this new ministry called Coffee Break. Soon the ministry began to spread, first to the greater Chicago area, then throughout North America, and beyond that to South Korea.

Today Coffee Break is flourishing and has taken root in 25 nations of the world. Thousands are coming to Christ.¹

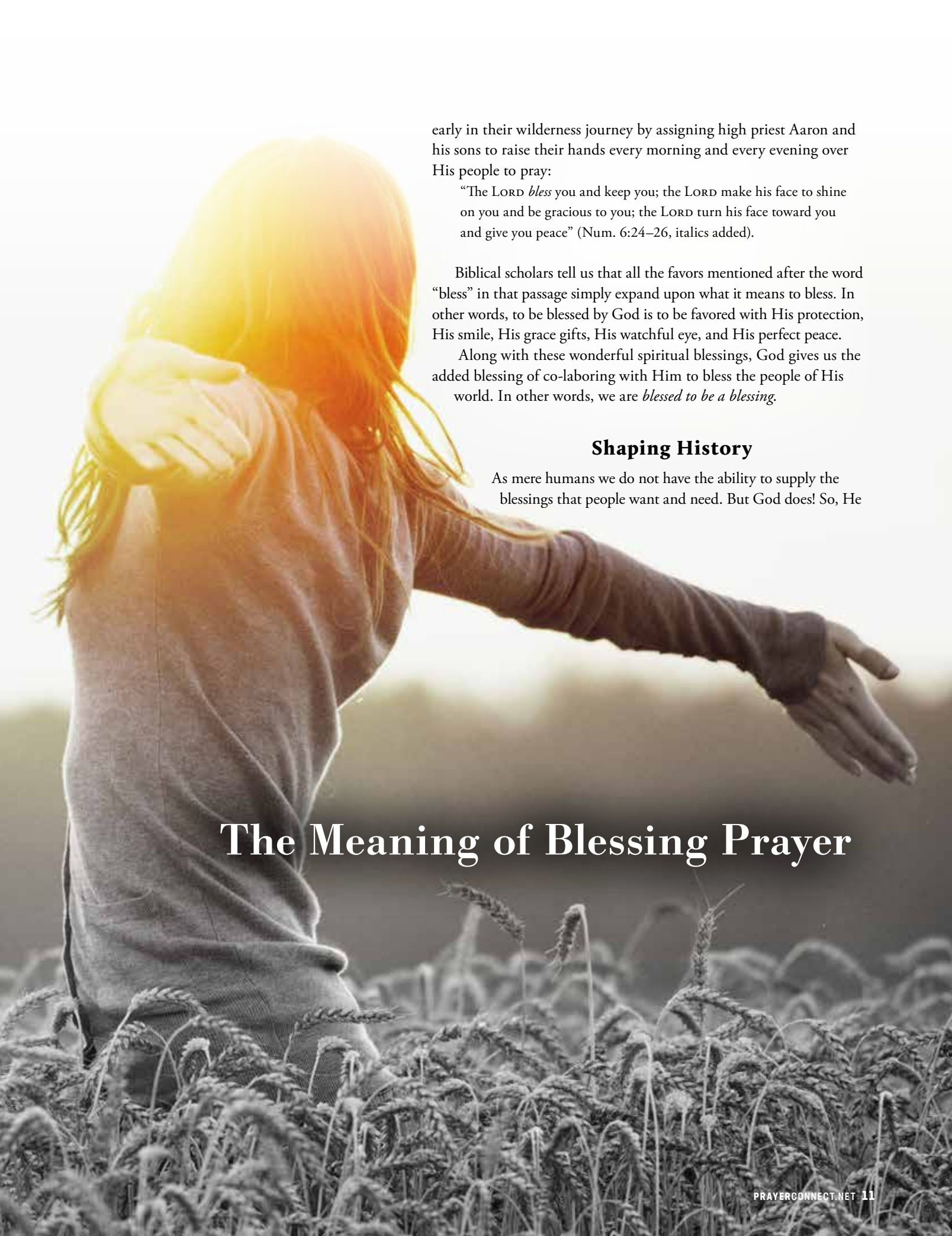
Talk about blessing!

God's Nature to Bless

To *bless* is to favor with a gift—a gift that brings the person receiving it comfort and joy. God loves to bless. It's His very nature. He made that clear to His chosen people—the Israelites—

BLESS THE LORD— AND EACH OTHER!

BY ALVIN VANDERGRIEND



early in their wilderness journey by assigning high priest Aaron and his sons to raise their hands every morning and every evening over His people to pray:

“The LORD *bless* you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24–26, italics added).

Biblical scholars tell us that all the favors mentioned after the word “bless” in that passage simply expand upon what it means to bless. In other words, to be blessed by God is to be favored with His protection, His smile, His grace gifts, His watchful eye, and His perfect peace.

Along with these wonderful spiritual blessings, God gives us the added blessing of co-laboring with Him to bless the people of His world. In other words, we are *blessed to be a blessing*.

Shaping History

As mere humans we do not have the ability to supply the blessings that people want and need. But God does! So, He

The Meaning of Blessing Prayer

GOD USES ORDINARY PEOPLE

to rain down His blessings on our hurting and needy world.

has given us a unique and special way to release His blessings into the lives of others. He has given us *prayer*—the ability to ask Him to bless those who cannot or do not pray for themselves. We can release His power and grace into their lives.

God has always used intercessors and their prayers to bless people and shape history. God used:

- Moses' prayers to help Joshua and the Israelite army win a strategic battle (Ex. 17:10–13)
- Elijah's prayers to stop rainfall in Canaan for three-and-a-half years and then to restart the rain once His people had repented (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17–18)

- Daniel's prayers to return Israel to the Promised Land (Dan. 9)
- Watchmen posted on the walls of Jerusalem to prayerfully "call on the LORD" day and night (Isa. 62:6).

God still does today what He did throughout history. He uses ordinary people like you and me to rain down His blessings on our hurting and needy world.

Prayers Bring Blessing

Our prayers can be used by God to bring blessings in a variety of ways, from within our homes to the broader scope of our nation.

Blessings into the lives of children and families. When people brought little children to Jesus, His disciples protested. But Jesus "took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:13–16). In other words, Jesus released His Father's blessings into their lives through prayer.

I am sure His blessing prayers made a huge difference in the lives of those children. Today, Christlike believers can pray to bring God's power, grace, and protection into the lives of children and families, friends and neighbors, teachers and schools.

Blessings to needy or hurting persons. Jesus told the story of a person who has no bread with which to bless a friend who came at midnight. Unable to meet the need of his late-night guest, this host went to another friend. He pleaded boldly and shamelessly until he received what was needed, and then carried it back to his friend in need (Luke 11:5–8).

I call him the "friend in the middle." That is what we are, friends in the middle, pleading with God to supply needs in our hurting world, needs that we in our own strength cannot meet.

Blessings, peace, and prosperity to whole cities. God urged Jewish exiles deported to Babylon to pray in this way:

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“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jer. 29:7).

Though we are limited in what we can do for our world, by means of prayer we can make an enormous difference. Our intercessory prayers can quell unrest, foster peace, avert disasters, and bring prosperity. Helmut Thielecki writes, “The globe itself lives and is upheld as by Atlas arms through the prayers of those whose love has not grown cold. The world lives by these uplifted hands, and by nothing else!”²

Blessings to leaders and nations.

God wants His world to function as He intends, and prayer is a means to make that happen. Paul urged:

First, I want you to pray for all people. Ask God to help and bless them. Give thanks for them. Pray for kings. Pray for everyone who is

in authority. Pray that we can live peaceful and quiet lives. And pray that we will be godly and holy. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior (1 Tim. 2:1–3, NIV).

Those in authority include leaders in government, business, education, health, and media, as well as the church. Authorities exert powerful influence. Their decisions affect many lives. Our prayers can help give them wisdom, health, strength, protection, endurance, and much more.

Eugene Peterson writes about the value of prayer for leaders: “Far more of our nation’s life is shaped by prayer than is formed by legislation. That we have not collapsed into anarchy is due more to prayer than to the police . . . to business prosperity or a flourishing of the arts. The single most important action contributing to whatever health and strength there is in our land is prayer.”³

Bless the Lord

Our prayers are even *a blessing to God*—not that God Himself will be minus anything if we do not pray.

He lacks nothing. However, He is blessed in and through our intercession. The blessing He receives when we pray is the glory He receives when He accomplishes things on earth in response to our prayers.

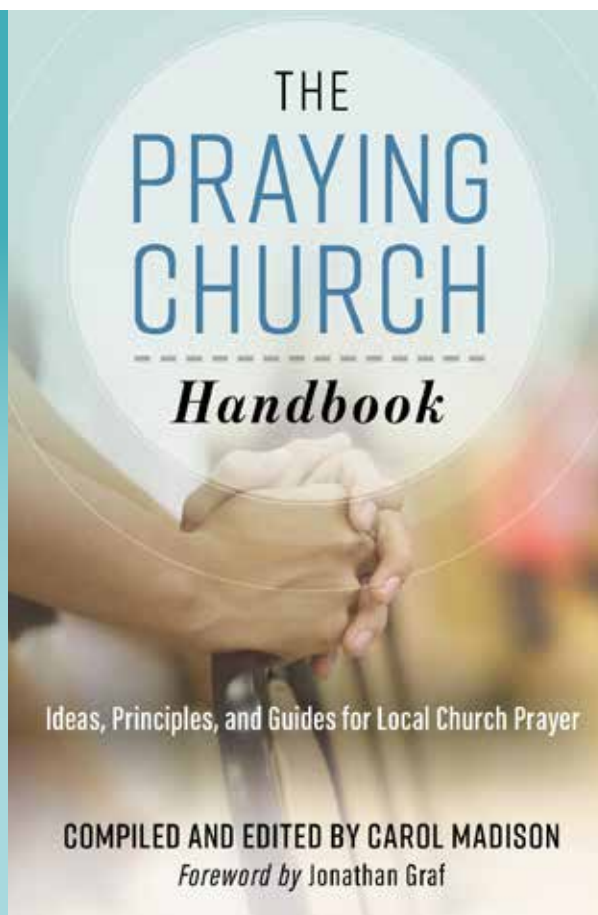
Jesus, in the final day of teaching His disciples, stressed that the grand scale purpose of intercession is to glorify God. Having promised that great things would happen if they asked “in my name,” He added that “the Father may be glorified in the Son” through such prayers (John 14:12–13).

Ole Hallesby synopsized that wonderfully, saying, “The fundamental law in prayer is this. Prayer is given and ordained for the purpose of glorifying God. Prayer is the appointed way of giving

Real Help to Grow Prayer in Your Church!

The Praying Church Handbook offers 30 chapters of ideas, principles and prayer guides, all taken from the pages of *Prayer Connect* magazine, that will help a pastor or prayer leader encourage, motivate and mobilize prayer in his or her church.

You will refer again and again to *The Praying Church Handbook* as you minister as a catalyst for prayer in your church.



Jesus an opportunity to exercise His supernatural power of salvation.”⁴

When we think of intercession as more for God than for us, our outlook on prayer will change. Instead of asking, “What do we *want* from God?” we will ask, “What will *bring God glory*?”

When our intercessory prayers release God’s rich blessings in the world, God

will be the first to be blessed. That is clearly what happened when the people of God in Israel were threatened by a vast three-nation army. Jehoshaphat led the people in prayer: “Our God . . . we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chron. 20:12).

God’s answer to that humble prayer

came in the form of an astonishing victory that happened as a choir went out ahead of the army, singing praises to God and saying: “Give thanks to the LORD for his love endures forever” (vs. 21). The Lord fought the battle that day and defeated the enemy. Israel’s intact army returned to camp praising the Lord, and God’s people thronged to the temple to give Him the glory.

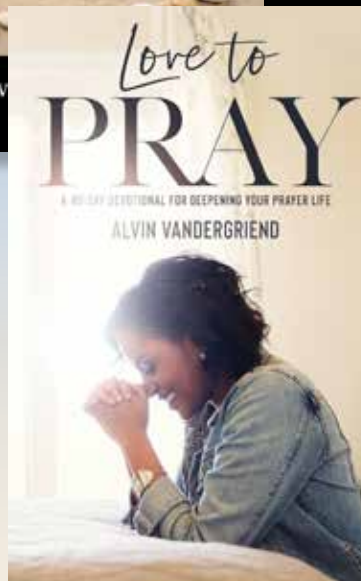
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Release of Power

God’s power is released from heaven through our prayers. His love is conveyed to people through our prayers. When we obey the call to pray, God does what only He can do!

The kind of prayer God expects of us is not the quick and easy, short and shallow, bless-me kinds of prayers so widely practiced today. Jesus planted the Church on earth to be devoted to bold and persistent prayer—and the world has been blessed through it. We are His Church, and He expects no less from us.

Sometimes, when I get a prayer request from a friend by text or e-mail, I respond simply by saying, “Count on me!”

Today our friend Jesus is asking us to pray down His blessings on our world. My response to Him is, “Count on me!”

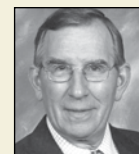
Are you with me? 

¹For questions or information on training about Global Coffee Break, visit globalcoffeebreak.org or contact program manager Juan Sierra at jsierra@crna.org.

² Helmut Thielecki, *Our Heavenly Father* (New York: Harper, 1960), 109.

³ Eugene Peterson, *Where Your Treasure Is* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 6.

⁴ Ole Hallesby, *Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991), 127-128.



ALVIN VANDERGRIEND is the prayer evangelism associate for Harvest Prayer Ministries and a member of America’s National Prayer Committee. He is the author of several books, including *Love to Pray* (prayer-shop.org).



PRAY FOR YOUR COMMUNITY!

RAISE UP OTHERS TO PRAY WITH YOU!

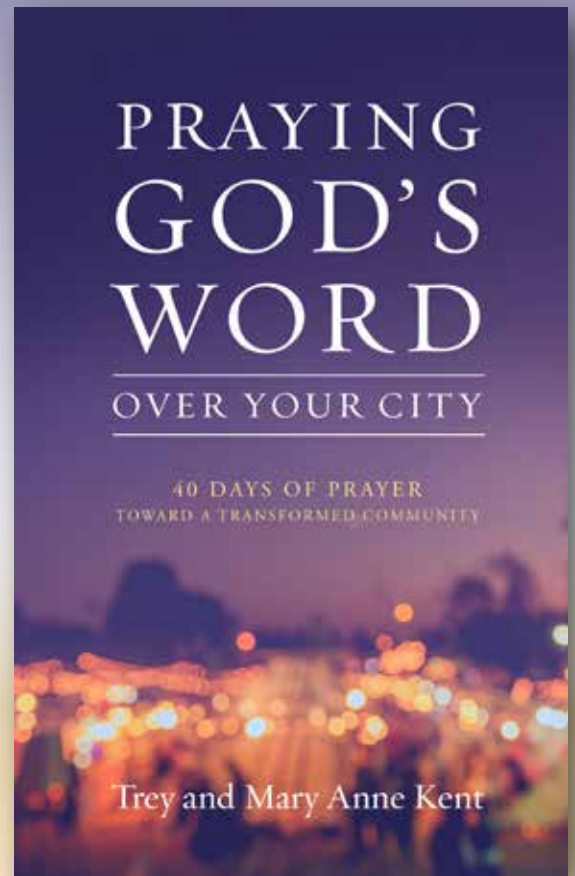
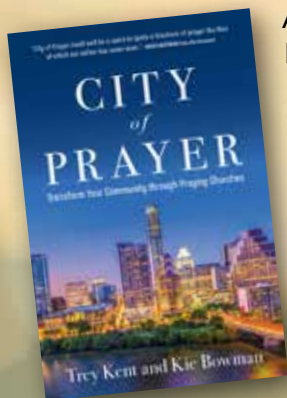
Praying God's Word Over Your City will make you and your congregation more effective in praying for your community. It is a prayer guide that can be used either for a 40-day period of time or as an ongoing prayer guide to pray for your city.

This guide follows the America Prays "7 topics for prayer" model. Each topic covers 5 or 6 days, and each day includes a Scripture, prayer points and a powerful prayer to pray.

Use it to pray for your community and you will both come to understand God's heart for your city and learn to pray His Word over it!

Praying God's Word Over Your City is written by Trey and Mary Anne Kent, who are leaders in a movement of more than 100 praying churches in Austin, Texas.

Praying God's Word Over Your City is a sequel to *City of Prayer* by Trey Kent and Kie Bowman. *City of Prayer* tells the story of how God raised up 100 churches to pray together for Austin, Texas, and it shows you how to do the same in your community. *Praying God's Word Over Your City*, provides the "what to pray."



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What a unique time in history! In the midst of a global pandemic, we also have seen a high rise in economic struggle, political unrest, and racial tension. Many are drawn into the hostility of cultural arguments, counting those who disagree with them (and their causes) as enemies.

We see this especially in today's "cancel culture." Many have zero tolerance for anyone who tweets, posts, speaks, or does something they deem as offensive. This is the kind of attitude and response the world encourages a generation to embrace—a hatred for our enemies.

Love Grown Cold

If we examine the fruit and outcome of these behaviors, we

realize the root cause of the deep division and polarization in our culture isn't from just simple disagreement. It is the fruit of hatred rooted in the increase of sin and wickedness. Jesus spoke of this day:

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matt. 24:12–13).

We've all had run-ins with people whose "love has grown cold." Or perhaps we are the ones with the cold hearts toward others.

LORD, BLESS MY ENEMIES

BY NIKO PEELE

Let's look at two types of enemies. The first is the kind who intentionally attacks others. They are people or groups who openly desire to hurt and harm, whether in word or deed.

The second kind of enemy can sometimes be more camouflaged and even justified by our own personal biases. This is the enemy *we* create and attack through an attitude in our hearts toward them, either knowingly or unknowingly. In this case, many times the person or people don't even know they have offended us or, quite frankly, that we even exist. Other times we cancel them out in our interactions, avoid them, or simply close off our hearts to them.

Let's look at Matthew 24 again. In the same verse where Jesus describes the increase of sin and the decline of love in a generation, He also speaks of a remnant that will stand firm and endure to

the end. This remnant is the Church, His Bride—you and me!

In the context of a lawless society where it is so easy to make enemies, Jesus prophesies there will be those who outshine the hatred and wickedness. This can only happen when we are filled with the truth and light of His love while being grounded and established in His Word.

Be Countercultural!

In Matthew 5, we hear Jesus yet again calling us higher. Line by line He presents a radical message to the world, laying out the core values of the Kingdom of God. In verse 44 He says:

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (NKJV).

Prayers that Heal

WHY BLESS ISRAEL?

Many Christians find themselves drawn emotionally toward the little country of Israel with its amazing biblical history. Prayers of blessing for Israel are frequent and passionate. The question remains though, *why pray for Israel?*

The answers might surprise you:

1. Praying for Israel brings you into prophetic fulfillment through your prayers. Isaiah ties your prayers of blessing to the fulfillment of God's purposes, not just for Israel but for the world. "You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isa. 62:6-7).

2. Praying for Israel is an act of obedience to the Word of God. We are clearly given this command: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure" (Ps. 122:6).

3. Praying for the salvation of the Jewish people will reveal the great mercies of God to a watching world. In Romans 11 Paul devotes an entire chapter to God's dealing with Israel and expresses His desire for their salvation. In verse 15 Paul writes of the astonishing impact of Israel's salvation: "For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

4. Praying for Israel brings about God's promise of blessing. You will be blessed as you pray for Israel! God spoke to Abraham words of blessings and curses—and our prayers of blessing for Israel bring us under God's blessing. "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3).

5. Praying for Israel's protection will keep the righteous from doing evil. There is an amazing promise to pray over Israel that comes from Psalm 125:3: "The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil." Wicked leaders can easily lead the people astray and cause them to do what God has forbidden. Godly leaders point people toward God.

Prayer of Blessing for Israel

Lord, I thank You that we are living in the day in which Your people Israel have returned to the land allotted to them in Your Word. Help us to be faithful people of prayer for Israel. For Israel, we speak blessing from Your Word in Psalm 122:9, "For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity."

DAVE BUTTS is cofounder and president of Harvest Prayer Ministries (harvestprayer.com) and chairman of America's National Prayer Committee.

Jesus makes the antidote for dealing with our enemies so clear in this passage: *Love them, bless them, do good to them, and pray for them.*

I know, I know, so much easier said than done, right? While this is completely the opposite of what our culture teaches us, it is a foundational principle that is key to standing firm as the remnant.

Herein lies one of the beauties of Jesus' leadership: When we are not fully capable of doing what He has called us to do, His grace enables us. This means that His strength is activated to overcome our inability to do what is difficult. Jesus can infuse us with grace to love because He has already overcome the spirit of the world.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the Lord declares this truth to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." And Paul concludes: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." *Praise God for His enabling power!*

The value system of the Kingdom of God is revolutionary, countercultural, and will always prove to be the higher way. There is such rich blessing and deep freedom that comes when we walk in the way of Jesus. We become enemy-less as He grants us, through His grace, an unoffendable heart—one that looks more like His!

"Son, Pray Longer"

Payer is the most powerful place to start in blessing our enemy because it is also the most powerful weapon we have. It disarms our hearts from offense. It shatters any hatred in our thoughts. It shifts our perspective away from ourselves and into a higher reality where we begin to gain God's heart and vision for others. Prayer is the most beautiful place, a piece of heaven on earth, where we can experience real breakthrough as we align with God's will for our enemy.

God set my own heart free of having an enemy through my time in prayer with Him. A few years ago I struggled with an offense in my heart toward a brother. Every time I saw him, I felt it. It was a terrible feeling that I knew was not of God.

I tried to ignore it and just go about life, but during my times of prayer his name would come up. The Lord invited me to pray for him. Well, I'd pray for about two seconds and then move on. When I did, I felt the Lord say, "Son, pray longer."

The longer I prayed, the more God began to reveal His heart to me for this person. My heart and emotions began slowly to shift. I continued to pray for this "enemy" of my heart.

Soon enough, all the terrible things I felt toward him were outnumbered by all the incredible truths God spoke to me about him. Before I knew it, God had eradicated the offense in my heart. It was completely gone, and my relationship with this brother began to flourish in a new way!

I understand this was a situation where this person had done nothing to me. Sometimes we think it's easier to pray for someone who did not intentionally hurt us versus someone who purposefully attacked us in some way.

It may seem so, but truly the principles are the same for a person who spitefully hurts another. Jesus prayed for His enemies while they were crucifying Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Even when an injustice is done toward us, when we choose to pray God's heart for people, our emotions begin to change toward them. We were not born to live in the bondage of keeping enemies. We were not born to live in hatred and wickedness. We were born to walk in the ways of Jesus. The way of grace and mercy brings deep healing and rich freedom.

We were born to be countercultural, Kingdom ambassadors who bless those who do us wrong while keeping no record of their wrongs.

Prayers that Bless and Heal

Here are three practical ways you can pray blessings over your enemy:

- 1. Be Transparent Before God.** The first step to breakthrough in prayer is being honest with God. He is not afraid of our true thoughts and feelings toward a person. He wants us to bring our feelings to Him and not hide behind them. Prayer is the place of divine exchange. God is able to replace any wrong thought and emotion with truth.
- 2. Ask God for His Help.** Through our transparency and honesty, we can easily identify the specific areas that we need God's help. From this posture, ask for God's help to love and bless your enemy. God's grace is ready to fill and empower us in this area.

3. Pray God's Word Over Them.

God's Word is truth. It is His thoughts and desires toward others and us. When His Word is spoken over others, it releases blessings! When we pray His will over our enemies we begin to see and relate to them differently. Resist the temptation to pray "fix-them" prayers. If you are offended with people, your "fix-them" prayers will most likely come from an impure place.

Today, I release you to bless your enemies with the Word of God, in Jesus' name. **PC**



NIKO PEELE is the founder and executive director of Ignite Movement. He also helped compile and coedit the book *Make Us One: A 31-day Prayer Journey Toward Racial Healing*

(prayershop.org).

JOIN THE CRY of Jesus' Heart in John 17

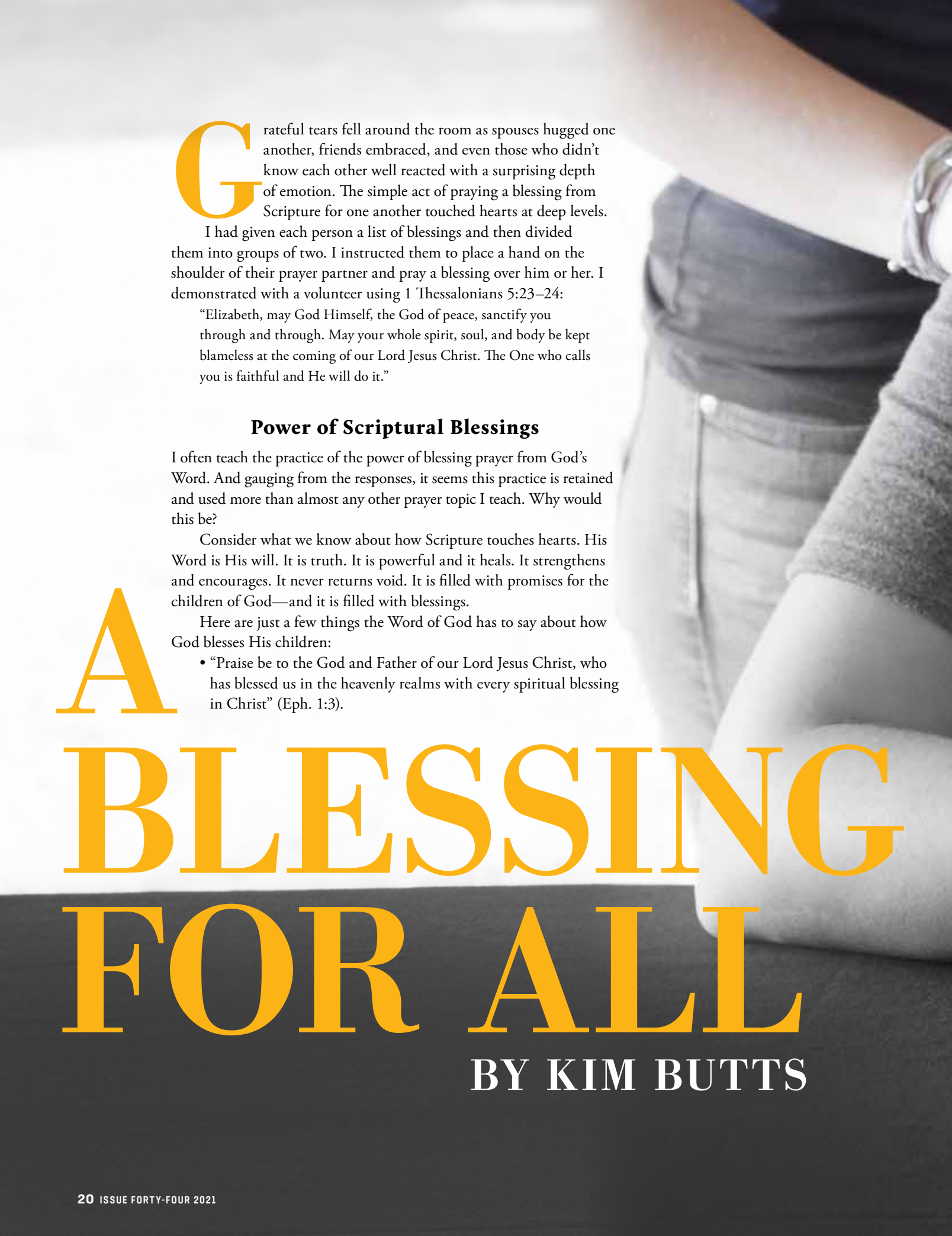
Make Us One is a compilation prayer guide that offers a Christian, biblical response to the racial division in our nation.

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Grateful tears fell around the room as spouses hugged one another, friends embraced, and even those who didn't know each other well reacted with a surprising depth of emotion. The simple act of praying a blessing from Scripture for one another touched hearts at deep levels.

I had given each person a list of blessings and then divided them into groups of two. I instructed them to place a hand on the shoulder of their prayer partner and pray a blessing over him or her. I demonstrated with a volunteer using 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24:

“Elizabeth, may God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”

Power of Scriptural Blessings

I often teach the practice of the power of blessing prayer from God's Word. And gauging from the responses, it seems this practice is retained and used more than almost any other prayer topic I teach. Why would this be?

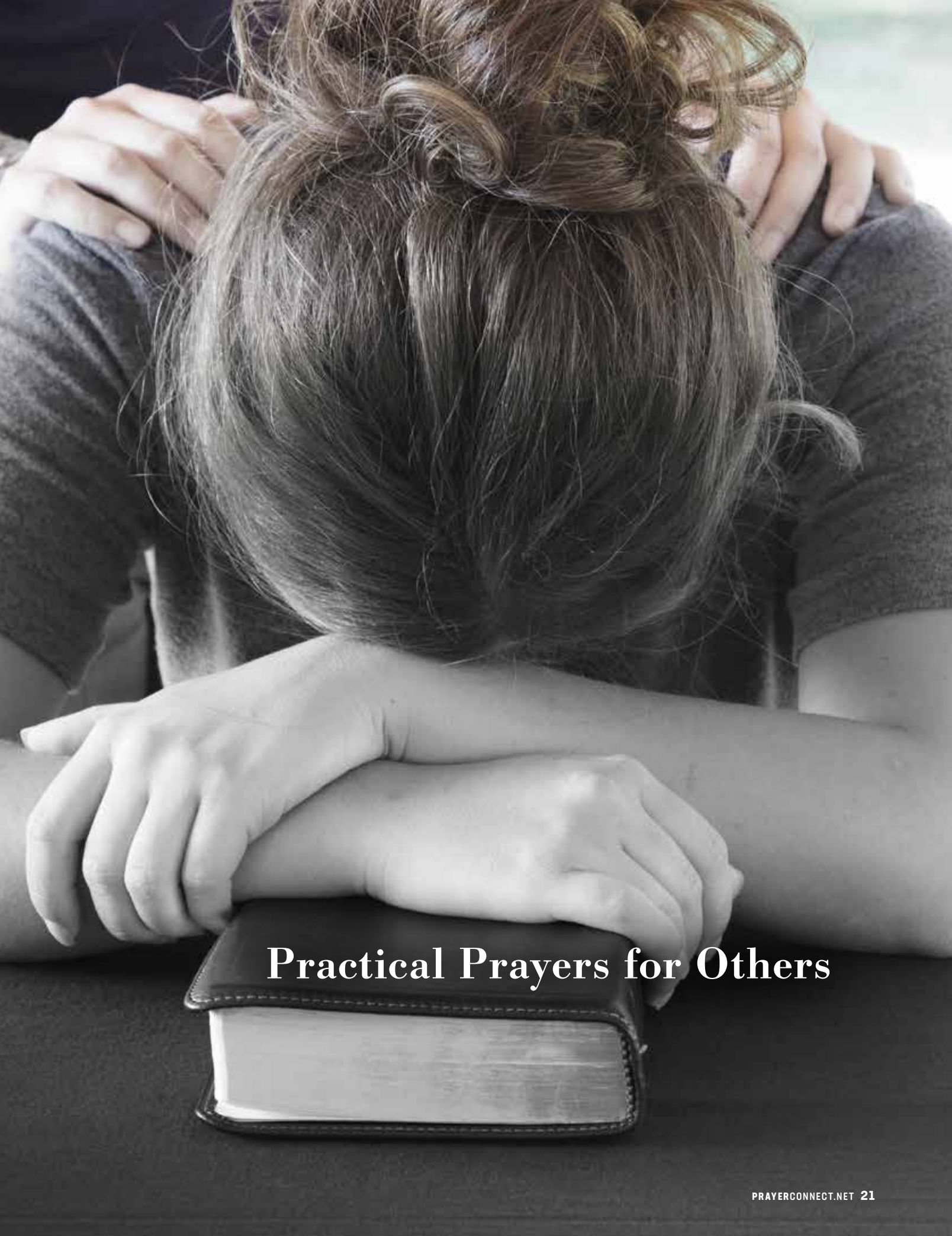
Consider what we know about how Scripture touches hearts. His Word is His will. It is truth. It is powerful and it heals. It strengthens and encourages. It never returns void. It is filled with promises for the children of God—and it is filled with blessings.

Here are just a few things the Word of God has to say about how God blesses His children:

- “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

A BLESSING FOR ALL

BY KIM BUTTS



Practical Prayers for Others

GOD BLESSES US ABUNDANTLY,

and so we know it is His desire
that we also bless others.

- “For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jer. 29:11).
- “We have all benefited from the rich blessings [Jesus] brought to us—blessing upon blessing heaped upon us!” (John 1:16, TLB).

Imagine taking the Word of God and praying it as a blessing into the lives of your spouse, children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends, pastors, leaders, teachers, and even people you barely know or have never met. Imagine these truths prayed over *you*, knowing the blessing of God Himself is impacting your life.

God blesses us abundantly, and so we know it is His desire that we also bless others. We read in 1 Peter 4:10 (TLB), “God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God’s many kinds of blessings.” And Proverbs 11:25 (MSG) says, “The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed. . . .”

Let me share some of the many ways you can bless others with the Word of God and why it is so powerful. As I share these stories, may you be captivated enough to step out in faith to bless others.

Blessing Children

I first discovered the amazing power of praying scriptural blessings as a young mother. My then two-year-old son David was lying on the floor, looking up at me after a diaper change. Suddenly, I felt compelled by the Spirit to pray the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24–26 over him. I simply placed my hand on his head and said, “David, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and give you peace.” It was a bit modified, but what I thought a two-year old could handle. Short and sweet.

I continued this habit every night before bed as the last thing between us before the light went out.

One night, when he was four, he put his little hand on my head and blessed me back! And the night before his wedding, he came into our dark bedroom, whispered my name to see if I was awake—and then knelt by the bed, asking for his blessing one last time while living under our roof.

Even after telling this story many times, I still tear up. As his mama, it blessed me greatly to know that this simple act was so meaningful to him as a young man.

A Canopy of Blessing

Several years ago, our family visited a large Messianic congregation in Texas. During the service, I was especially touched by a powerful practice between the men and the children. The rabbi called the children to the front—and what followed was extraordinary and something I have challenged congregations to do ever since.

Many of the men, I am assuming elders in the church, came forward and surrounded the children, spreading their prayer shawls over their heads to create a canopy. We then listened to a time of these men praying and singing blessings over the children in both English and Hebrew for probably five minutes or so. We sat mesmerized and rejoicing in what we witnessed. When the men finished, the rabbi dismissed the children to their own kids’ church.

Can you imagine being a child who is regularly blessed and prayed over in this way? What a powerful legacy of blessing this church is planting in these young hearts.

Celebration Blessings

I rarely host a wedding, baby shower, birthday, anniversary, graduation, or retirement party without putting the person of honor in a chair in the middle of a room at some point. Then I invite all the guests to place hands on him or her and pray blessings for that person’s life. I have a handout with some blessings from Scripture already written out so that everyone can participate. Of course, lots of other prayer comes too, as the blessings serve as a spark to more intercession.

What a joy to watch how this not only touches the person being blessed, but also those who are giving the blessings. It can be a powerful witness to anyone attending, especially those who have yet to give their lives to Jesus.

More Creative Ways to Bless Others

E.M. Bounds said, “The word of God is the food by which prayer is nourished and made strong.” I believe this to be profoundly true! Using God’s Word to bless people in my life has been such a gift.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you who needs a blessing—and what blessing to give. You will be amazed at how the living and active Word of God ministers to people as you step out in faith to bless others.

Here are some additional ways you can bless people in your life:

- Whenever you send a handwritten note, text, or email to someone, include a blessing as you sign off. For example, maybe you are trying to encourage someone who is going through a difficult time. Romans 15:13 is filled with hope. I like to insert the person’s name to make it more personal: “Mary, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with the hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
- Are there missionaries you pray for regularly? Why not let them know you are praying for them and, as the Spirit guides you, offer a blessing for their family such as, “I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers . . . I always pray with joy . . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:3–6).
- Use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snap Chat, and other social media platforms as an opportunity to bless. A post, meme, or comment can become a blessing to many people. Every word can pack the power of God.
- Perhaps you are involved in ministry to the homeless or at a crisis pregnancy center or a food bank. Take time to bless the people you come into contact with by using some of the blessings from Scripture. If you

are too shy to bless people in person, have some scriptural blessings typed up and ready to hand to people.

- You can bless friends, neighbors, or family by writing a Scripture blessing with sidewalk chalk on their walkway or driveway.
- Have a “blessing-a-day” jar or basket on your dining room table. Take turns pulling out a blessing to pray over family members.

As you read the Bible and notice Scriptures that you can use to bless others, start keeping a list and carry it with you. Some additional passages you can include: Ephesians 1:16–19, 3:14–19; Philippians 1:9–10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13; 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12, 3:5, 16; Philemon 6; Hebrews 13:20–21; 1 Peter 5:10, and 3 John 1:2.

As you can see, the possibilities for ministering to people using the blessings

of God are endless. As you seek the heart of God, He will continue to expand your ministry and teach you new ways to be an instrument of blessing for others. **PO**



KIM BUTTS is cofounder and vice president of Harvest Prayer Ministries (*harvest-prayer.com*). She is the author of several books, including *The Praying Family: Creative Ways to Pray Together*, available at *prayershop.org*.

For Further Reading

Check out some additional articles on blogs and websites related to “Blessing Prayer” at *prayerleader.com/issue-44-extras*.

- “A Prayer for God’s Blessing: 21 Bible Verses of His Favor,” by Debbie McDaniel
- “10 Bible Blessings to Pray over Those You Love,” by Bob Hostetler
- “3 Prayers of Blessing from the Bible,” by Jenn Arman

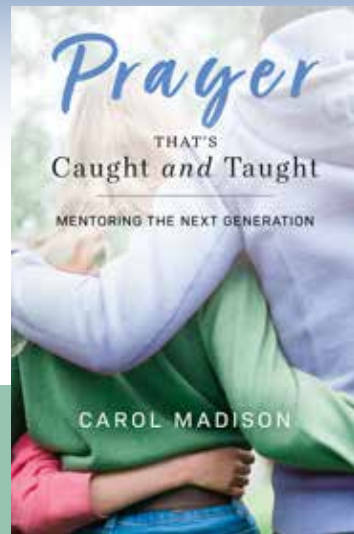
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The Kisses

In September 2008, I attended three days of continuous worship and prayer in Colorado Springs, CO. From the moment I walked in the door of the church, the tangible, sacred presence of God was distinguishable. The atmosphere was electric.

After two days of engaging in this heavenly atmosphere of worship, I began to hear the Spirit of the Lord speak to me about what He was doing. I carefully made notes. My heart stirred with anticipation as I sensed God's Spirit say to me, "If you kiss Me with your worship, I will kiss you with My presence."

At the time, I did not know what God was saying to me; I didn't even know if what

I heard Him say about "kissing Him with worship" could be found in the Scriptures. But, following my return home, I found myself mysteriously drawn into a renewed pursuit of God's presence and a deep hunger for intimacy with my Heavenly Father.

I felt compelled every evening to spend anywhere from one to three hours walking and communing with the Lord. During these times, my heart came alive with renewed passion and strength. He spoke His Word to me in a fresh and renewed way.

The words I believe I'd heard kept gnawing at me: "If you kiss Me with your worship, I will kiss you with My presence."

Was it even a biblical concept? This



Coming Back to the Heart of Worship

By Dr. Hal Sacks

question drove me into the Scriptures to search out what it meant. I didn't know that this Word of God about worship was going to alter my life.

A New Understanding of Worship

I read everything I could on the topic. While exploring the roots of "worship" in the original languages of Scripture, I discovered profound insights into this beautiful entry point to a divine relationship. I found there are 13 words translated "worship." The most prominent word for worship in the Old Testament is *sha'chab* and the same in the Greek word

pros'kuneo; both of which mean the same thing: "to kiss" or "adore," "bow down" and "show great respect," or "to fall." In a literal sense, it means "to bow low and throw a kiss."

It gets really interesting when you look at the word "presence." In the original Hebrew (*pa'niym*) and Greek (*pros'opon*) both words meaning "presence" also mean "face." This begins to sound like an irresistible invitation from my Father God to enter into intimacy with Him.

It is amazing what the Lord was saying: "If you kiss Me with your kiss, I will kiss you with My face." It doesn't get more intimate than that!

Coming from an Orthodox Jewish upbringing, I understand about the ancient Eastern custom of bowing, kneeling, or throwing a kiss as a form of greeting, especially to royalty. In both modern and religious “worship,” the outward physical act reveals the inner heart of respect and honor.

Becoming a True Worshiper

I’m not a musician, nor have I ever considered myself a worship leader. Like many people, I used to have a fairly one-dimensional view of worship: basically, that worship is the musical and spiritual “warm-up” to the message in a church service!

But I’ve since discovered that worship is not simply an *activity*; it’s all about my *proximity* to my Heavenly Father. Worship is a matter of my heart, not something

I do or attend. True worship is all about my heart’s focus on *Him*.

Christian songwriter and worship leader Matt Redman experienced this revelation, and it led to his writing his now-famous worship song about “coming back to the heart of worship.” It was in the late 1990s, and the pastor of the church Redman attended in Watford, England, sensed that his congregation’s gatherings were spiritually flat. People were simply going through the motions. Worship just wasn’t flowing from the heart.

“There was a dynamic missing,” says Redman, “so the pastor did a pretty brave thing. He decided to get rid of the sound system and band for a season, and we gathered together with just our voices. His point was that we’d lost our way in worship, and the way to get back to the heart would be to strip everything away. The heart of worship is not music

and song, but heads and hearts in joyful awe of the real Jesus.”¹

A true worshiper is most concerned about the emotional and spiritual connection with the heart of God; it’s not just about the music. A true worshiper is one who is intimately acquainted with God and lives in a daily relationship with Him. And, the fruit of the life of a true worshiper is a deeper connection with God—hearing His voice more clearly while walking in greater levels of His favor, joy, peace, and authority.

Inviting God’s Presence

As I continued to prayerwalk, night after night, I kept asking the Lord, “Why are You calling me to spend this time with You?” I was enjoying these times with the Lord, but I sensed there was something more He wanted to do.

On those walks, the Father taught me about “vertical worship”—worship not just *about* God, but *to* Him. This intense prayer and vertical worship became a part of my spiritual core, reminiscent of my Jesus movement days.

Worship had always been a trademark of our ministry conferences. Now it was about to become an important key to inviting God’s presence to our community.

One day we received a letter from the pastors of Mexicali, asking for our help. Violent crime was increasing on our Southwest border. These pastors wanted our help and asked us to come alongside them in building a wall of prayer and worship along our border. Then, one night while prayerwalking and asking the Lord about what to do, I heard Him say, “I want you to invite My presence back to the border!”

We worked with pastors to raise up a wall of prayer and worship “to invite God’s presence” to the 2,000-mile border from San Diego, CA, to Brownsville, TX. We saw immediate and measurable results, with crime dropping dramatically, including the capture of the FBI’s

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37 of the most-wanted cartel leaders.

This was just the beginning. It was evident that my face-to-face time every night with the Lord was not only drawing me closer to Him, but that He had plans to use me and others to carry His presence into our community. Our team rented high school auditoriums and prayed and worshiped all night to invite God's presence to our problem-ridden campuses. We saw academic scores go up and suicides and drugs go down. We held all-night prayer and worship at City Hall for our governmental leaders and law enforcement. Crime was diverted and our police experienced divine protection in life-threatening situations.

I've learned that if we invite the transforming presence of the Lord into every area of our daily lives, into every location we travel to, and into every sphere we touch, He will come! When we invite His transforming, glorious

presence into situations, miraculous changes can take place.

The Lord promises that if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. This can happen corporately as well as individually. When we invite Him into difficult situations in our families, schools, and workplaces through our intimate worship, He will "kiss" our community with His presence.

Positioning Ourselves for the "Kiss"

In our pursuit of God's presence and in following Christ, worship will always, ultimately, be the act of attributing reverent honor and awe to God. We do not need to be a worship leader or musician to express our worship. We worship God because He is God, and because we have an extravagant love for Him.

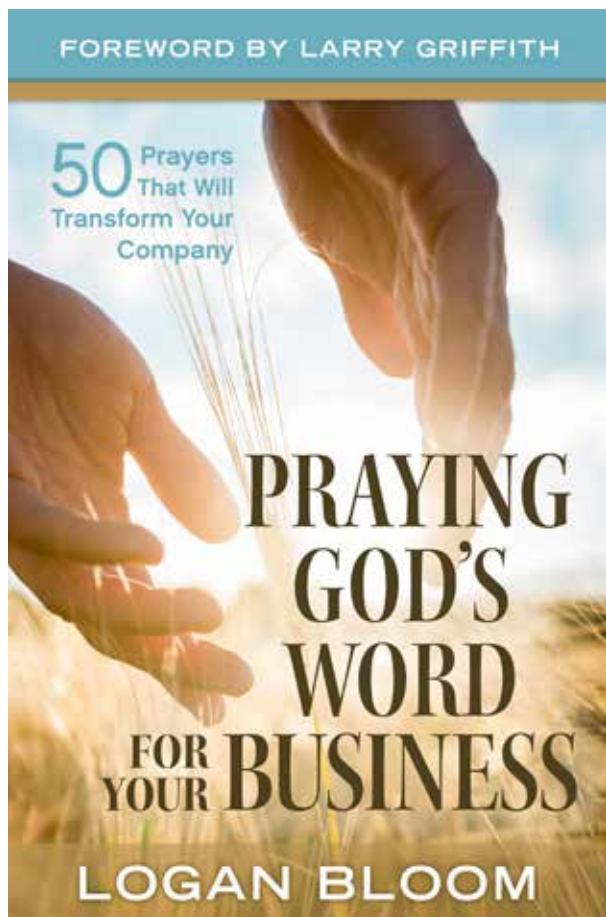
Intimate worship is rooted in our

relationship and intimacy with God—our proximity to Him. I am more intimate with someone I'm close to than someone I do not know well. I'll kiss my wife on the lips, but in a European style, I may kiss my friend on the cheek. A kiss always comes from the heart. And a loving Heavenly Father will always embrace "the kiss" of His child—His arms always open, reciprocating with a tangible "kiss from His lips." **PC**

¹David Matthis, "Back to the Heart of Worship," <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/back-to-the-heart-of-worship>.



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Give God Time

Three months, 15 days, and counting. My husband is about to retire. And he's looking forward to the two of us spending more time at our hunting camp—his “happy place.” It is not, however, my happy place. So I began praying about this some time ago.

At first nothing seemed to change. Then, gradually, some extended overtime at Dave's job provided funds for updates, among them fresh curtains (including cheerful buffalo checks in the kitchen) and a bedroom getaway corner for quiet time and reading. In time I found myself actually looking forward to returning to camp. *In time.*

Whether praying about hunting camps or prodigal sons or spiritual formation or national crises, I find that God is a God of process. Yes, God occasionally answers immediately. But more often He asks us to wait with confidence that He's at work.

Abraham didn't wait, but instead took Hagar as his wife (Gen. 16). The Israelites didn't wait. In Moses' absence, they fashioned a golden calf to worship (Ex. 32). Instead of waiting, King Saul offered unauthorized sacrifice (1 Sam. 13:8–14).

But Habakkuk prayed and waited!

“I will stand at my watch . . . I will look to see what he will say to me. . .” (Hab. 2:1). God warned that His answer would take time: “Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay” (2:3).

Habakkuk's response? “Yet I will wait patiently . . . Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines . . . yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior” (3:16–18).

That's waiting well.

So how can we wait well? We can:

1. Expect the answer to unfold over time, expressing to God, “Take as much time as You need.”
2. Avoid telling Him what the answer should be or how it should come.
3. Remember the Holy Spirit is helping you by lifting your desires to the Father in perfect accord with His will (Rom. 8:26–27).
4. Take notes and praise God for every incremental answer.
5. Keep affirming trust in Him throughout the waiting.
6. Bring every impatience and discouragement quickly to the Lord and to His Word.



7. Soak in verses that encourage waiting and trust:

- “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD” (Ps. 27:14).
- “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him” (Ps. 37:7).
- “I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry” (Ps. 40:1).
- “Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him” (Is. 64:4).

If I become impatient with God's seeming slowness, the little camp with the checkered curtains is a visual reminder of what happens when I wait for His answer to unfold.

SANDY MAYLE is a freelance writer from Erie, PA.

The Red Plate Tradition

When our family gets together, one of our favorite traditions is a time of blessing and prayer. This dates back to when our children were young—and it still carries on today.

When one of our three children exemplified a positive attitude, did his or her best in school, played well in a

game, helped someone, or demonstrated another Christ-like quality, we honored that child. I put a special plate called “The Red Plate” at his or her seat for dinner. After dinner we each blessed that individual by sharing three things we appreciated about him or her.

Today our children are married and living in other states. They are starting their own Red Plate traditions with their

families. But no one wants to miss out on our years-long tradition when we are together, so The Red Plate lives on for birthdays, graduations, or anniversaries.

Often people don't hear words of affirmation or blessing from their family members. This is an excellent way to build blessing into the fabric of our family. We keep the focus on internal qualities such as generosity, loyalty, integrity,

joy, wisdom, or hard work. We avoid comments relating to “externals” such as a person’s hairstyle or clothing.

After everyone shares, we take prayer requests from the celebrated family member. Often the prayer requests center around decisions, jobs, personal struggles, finances, marriage, unsaved friends, or a request for God’s favor. Each individual or husband/wife team receives a prayer request. Then we gather around The Red Plate recipient(s) and lay hands on them. Each family member prays out loud for one of the requests.

As a family, the blessings we’ve experi-

enced from praying together are enormous. Praying as a family does these things:

- **Creates spiritual “oneness” and a bond.** As family members we bring prayer requests to God together. We’re praying for the same results. We are unified in prayer.
- **Increases our intimacy with God and each other.** Our family knows each other’s hopes and challenges. For weeks or months, we continue to pray for each other even when we’re not together. We ask about those prayer requests and stay connected spiritually.

- **Allows us to experience God’s answers to our prayers.** As a family we’ve celebrated answered prayers while demonstrating faith and trust in God when His response isn’t the one we originally desired.
- **Establishes a foundation for spiritually training the next generation.** Our desire is that as our family witnesses the power of prayer, we grow closer to each other and to Jesus Christ.

HEIDI MITCHELL and her husband Brad are the founders of Build Your Marriage (buildyour-marriage.org).

Get in the Prayer Zone

Take normally “wasted” moments of life and turn them into powerful prayer opportunities for others by establishing a prayer zone around yourself. Here are some examples:

1 EARLY ARRIVAL AT AN EVENT: Imagine sitting in a half-empty stadium or concert venue with lots of time on your hands before the event begins. Instead of checking news and social media on your phone, set up a prayer zone and begin praying for those sitting around you, as well as others as they find their seats. Bring the power and presence of God into the lives of people you might otherwise never notice. Some might be hurting, others confused or lonely—and many are lost without the hope of Christ.

James 4:2 says, “You do not have because you do not ask God.” Imagine the spiritual impact you can have on people simply by paying attention and setting up a prayer zone to invite the Spirit to move in their lives. Perhaps you are the only person who will ever ask on behalf of another person!

2 SITTING IN A WAITING ROOM: While you are held captive in a waiting room at

a hospital or in a doctor’s office, pray for those around you. Ask God, through His Spirit, to show you how to pray for each person. This place of waiting has now become a prayer zone!

3 STANDING IN LINE: Instead of feeling exasperated or frustrated by your wait, pray for persons in the line ahead of you and behind you. Ask God to meet these people. Pray blessing over each person. Take a chance and speak to them, even inviting them to give you a prayer request.

4 A CHILD’S SPORTS PRACTICE: Sometimes endless practices can wear on a parent or grandparent. Set up a prayer zone around you and pray for the other parents, grandparents, the kids, and coaches. You can create a sanctuary for God to move in the midst of soccer balls or baseballs flying around!

God can transform any season of waiting into a sacred space. Invite Him to move in the lives of people around you. Pray that people are filled with joy they can’t explain, or feel comfort, peace, and strength growing in them. Perhaps your prayer zone will help you intercede

for the very thing he or she needs in the moment.

KIM BUTTS is cofounder of Harvest Prayer Ministries (harvestprayer.com).

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Praying for Unbelievers Out of Genesis 1 | By Sandra Higley

Genesis 1 is the marvelous creation story of how God breathed life into nothing and formed the world and all its inhabitants. It speaks of God's tender communion with man and woman—and their destiny to rule with Him in this newly formed habitat.

We see God's attention to detail in this first book of the Bible as He brings forth light, water, living creatures, and seed-bearing plants. Everything was created in perfect order—and chapter 1 closes with God declaring it to be good.

Genesis 1 is about life. Beyond life in this physical realm, we also find life in the spiritual sense. Genesis is a powerful prayer pattern for breathing life into those whose hearts are still far from God. As you pray for unbelievers, let Genesis 1 guide you in praying for them to be new creations in Christ!

Genesis 1 Prayer Pattern

Creator, God: *Let it begin.*

Let Your Spirit hover over the formless, empty lives of those still in darkness. We join You in speaking light into the darkness: *Let light burst forth in their hearts!* Lead each one of them into the day and away from the night (Gen. 1:1–5).

Father, we all come to the water to quench our thirst. Divide the waters—holy from unholy. Separate the waters below from the water above. Cause the water below—the things of the world—to no longer satisfy. Let there be a longing in their hearts for the water above. Let there be dry ground—a place of dryness and panting after You that can only be satisfied by Your Living Water. Let them see the goodness of Your creation and let it come forth in them (Gen. 1:6–10).

Let those who love You produce

fruit of the Spirit that is winsome and attractive to these loved ones who are without You. Let it be evident that those qualities come only from You—fruit born after its own kind. Let that abundant growth in love draw others to You. Let Your goodness increase in Your followers so that Your name is acknowl-

Genesis is a powerful prayer pattern for breathing life into others.

edged and lifted up (Gen. 1:11–13).


Let these Christ-followers shine their light in ways that clearly separate them from the darkness surrounding them. Let each of Your children's lives be marked by signs of Your Holy Spirit so that nonbelievers see and recognize Your goodness all around them. Let the light of Your gospel shine out of those who trust in You. May it affect every situation so that light rules the darkness. Let Your goodness overflow from them to others (Gen. 1:14–19).

Let there be such a revival in the land that it teems with alive-in-Christ new believers. Let there be an overflow of new believers from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Let Your goodness burst forth in these new believers! Bless them so that they multiply. Let them be fruitful and increase in number as they, in turn, share their newly found faith with others.

Let these new creations in You be so appealing that they produce the kind of Christlike followers that worship in Spirit and in truth (Gen. 1:20–25).

Let every one of these new believers be image-bearers of You, Lord God. As they are joyfully created in Your image I pray that each male and female represent their Father well, causing others to recognize You. Let fruitful, Christian marriages abound with offspring who bless Your name. Set them in their proper place to take dominion over what You have purposed for them to do from before the foundation of the world (Gen. 1:26–28).

Let these new believers feast on Your Word. May they have an all-consuming desire and hunger for Your written and spoken Word. Open their minds to it—give them eyes to see and ears to hear. Help them rightly divide Your Word. Let Your very goodness overwhelm them with a sense of satisfaction and may they find their delight in You as they enter into Your rest (Gen. 1:29–31).

Let your prayers help bring forth life in everyone—as God intends it! 



SANDRA HIGLEY lives in Colorado Springs, CO, and is a contributor to *Prayer Connect*. Her book *A Year of Prayer Events for Your Church* is available at prayershop.org.

Persuading Cold People to Pray | By Kyle Davison Bair

How do we persuade people to pray?

The best prayer warriors typically enjoy a warm, personal relationship with God. Yet when we try to teach others to pray, we often resort to the “how to” of prayer—techniques, tips, and tricks. These can indeed be helpful, but they’re secondary, not primary.

As prayer leaders, we must draw our people into warm, personal relationships with God. They can know every innovative prayer technique, but if they feel like God is distant and cold, that emotion will inevitably dampen any desire for prayer.

The key principle of effective persuasion is this: *persuasion is about emotion, not information.*

Raw Emotion of Prayer

You can possess all the information in the world about a given topic. But if you don’t feel the emotional draw of it, you won’t act on it.

Jesus understood this principle well. Read this familiar passage, but don’t look for the theology. Look instead for the emotion, the way Jesus hopes these words make you feel:

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”
(Matt. 7:9–11).

At this moment, Jesus bypasses the “how to” of prayer entirely. He focuses on the heart—the raw emotion of prayer. If you care for your own children in this way, *how much more* does your Father in

heaven long to give good things to you!

If we really believed this—if our people really *felt* this—we would run to the Throne of God. Nothing could keep us away from His presence.

Why then do so many Christians avoid the Throne? Why is it such a chore to get people to pray?

We feel like God doesn’t want us. We feel like God is stingy. We feel like prayer won’t accomplish much. We feel like God is cold toward us, or judging us, or disappointed in us. We may believe He exists, yet still feel indifferent instead of intimate.

Lead to the Heart of God

Prayer is nothing without relationship. Prayer is personal communication with a Father who loves you: the comfortable chit-chat of life in a loving home, the cry for help to someone who knows immediately what you need, the continual questions probing the depths of a loved one’s soul. Cold repetition and stoic chants create lifeless prayer just as cold conversation and stoic answers create lifeless homes.

To lead people in prayer, we must lead them to the heart of God. If we get that right, the “how to” will take care of itself. We can strive to get the words right yet end up with the driest prayers. How often have congregants recited scriptural prayers word-for-word yet lacked the faintest trickle of affection for the God they’re addressing?

Jesus taught us how to get the words right with examples like the Lord’s Prayer. Yet He began with the heart necessary for good prayer: raw emotion. Everything that follows flows from that love.

The great irony in the Lord’s Prayer is how Jesus commands us: “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father. . .’”

(Matt. 6:9). Jesus invites us to pray like a child addressing a loving Daddy full of affection. Yet we recite His words lacking any sense of it.

But if we draw near to God—not merely knowing about God’s love but truly feeling it—the content Jesus teaches us to pray flows effortlessly, whether or not we remember the words. If we truly love our Father, we’ll naturally praise His name. Who doesn’t love to talk about the people they admire?

A Daddy to Adore

Few people want to obey a cruel tyrant, but a loving Daddy is another matter entirely. Watch a father in an ice cream parlor who delights to buy each child exactly what they want. They are eager for his will to be done in their lives.

If we believe—not merely know, but *feel*—the truth that God is eager to give us good things, we will joyfully bring our daily requests to Him. If we have disappointed this Father, but He has forgiven us fully, we’ll want to extend that same relationship-healing power to others. Love breeds love.

When we believe that this Father adores us—that He truly cherishes us more than life—we will trust Him for our protection from every kind of evil. When we *feel* how awesome and loving our God really is, everything else falls into place. Prayer flows from love.

Teach the heart of God and people will gallop to prayer. Nothing can keep a child away from the Daddy they adore. 📖



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