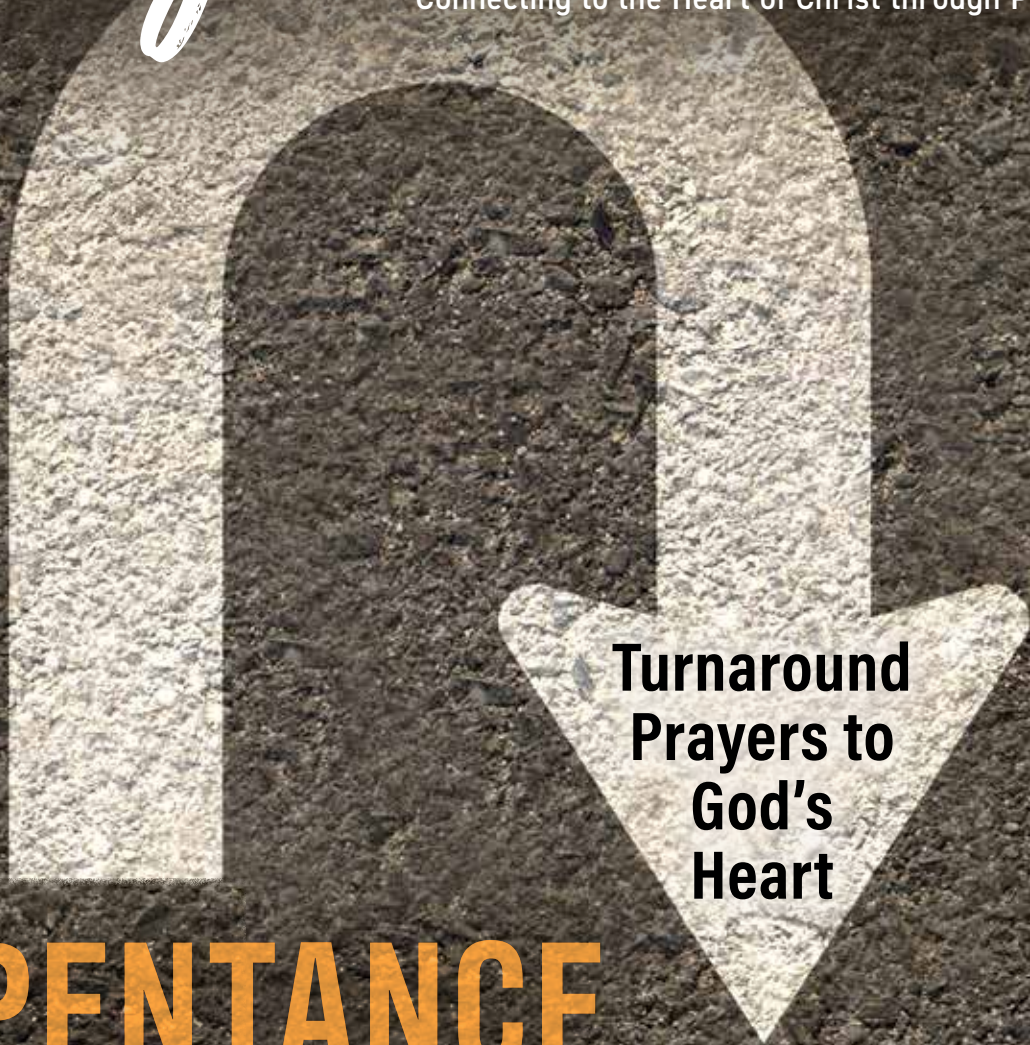


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# PrayerCONNECT

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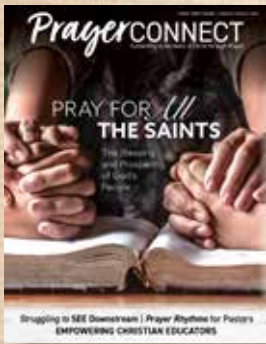
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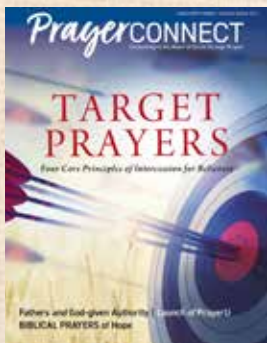
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We are looking for general articles, ideas, and news stories on what God is doing as a result of prayer. We are primarily looking for newly written pieces that have not appeared in other publications. Writer's guidelines are available by emailing Carol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

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### Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

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

**W**e all like good news. Well, *Prayer Connect* has two bits of great news to report to you.

First, this issue of *Prayer Connect* marks our tenth anniversary issue! It is God's grace and provision—and you, our wonderful subscribers—who have made it possible for us to publish for ten years. Many of you even donated funds beyond your subscription fee to keep us going when we needed financial help. I praise God for His blessing. *Thank you* for your support of *Prayer Connect*.

I also praise God for my core staff who have sacrificially worked on the magazine, viewing it as a ministry and an act of serving the Kingdom. Carol Madison, our editor, and Bridget Rennie, our designer, bring excellence to the magazine! *Prayer Connect* would not have gotten off the ground and kept publishing without them. Thank you, Carol and Bridget! Plus, I thank the others who have worked on *Prayer Connect*: Joanne Telle, our order-taker and subscription manager, and editorial assistants Joyce Ellis and Joan Sherman.

I also am very thankful for Dave and Kim Butts. When we launched ten years ago, the Church Prayer Leaders Network (which produces *Prayer Connect*) was a ministry under Harvest Prayer Ministries (HPM), founded by Dave and Kim. So, this is really their baby, too. I am grateful for Dave and the HPM board who value ministry above turning a profit and kept *Prayer Connect* going when it did not make financial sense.

Thank you all. I pray if the Lord tarries, we can publish another ten years.



### Previously in



Blessing prayers call upon God's favor, peace, and increase to rest on others as we intercede for them. This issue explores scriptural blessings that bring healing and convey hope. This issue and other back issues are available at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).

### Welcome Niko

Our second bit of news is that we are pleased to introduce Niko Peele as our new assistant editor. Since the beginning of *Prayer Connect*, I've always desired to add a young prayer leader on our editorial team. It did not happen, partly because of finances and more likely because God's timing wasn't yet right.

A member of America's National Prayer Committee, Niko directs Ignite Movement, whose vision is to see the gospel of Jesus Christ transform college campuses and cities around the world through united movements of prayer and evangelism.

When I worked with Niko last year on the book project, *Make Us One: A 31-Day Journey Toward Racial Healing*, I saw his editorial skill. I also bonded with his heart. Soon after, I began sensing from the Lord that Niko should join our team.

Besides helping Carol edit articles, Niko will be on our editorial advisory team that develops theme ideas and selects writers. I am excited to have a young, ethnic voice on our team. He will help us expand our reach into a younger, more diverse audience.



—Jonathan Graf





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## America's Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening

A passionate plea issued to several national prayer leaders has launched a national virtual prayer meeting called “America Pray.” In January 2021, P. Douglass Small expressed his growing conviction that only a God-sent revival and spiritual awakening can save this nation.

“My intention,” says Small, “is to call the spiritual leaders of the nation, pastors of churches, and believers to prayer. We assert, with unwavering sincerity, that our only hope is a spiritual awakening.”

In a descriptive document, Small and other prayer leaders embrace a

common mission: “We need passionate, humble, travailing prayer until our hearts and homes are transformed—and our churches and communities experience the irresistible convicting grace of God resulting in repentance and the redirection of millions of lives, and as a consequence, a morally and spiritually transformed nation.”

America Pray acknowledges the many prayer efforts on the national and regional levels—a concerted wrestling in prayer about the nation’s destiny and need for revival. But leaders believe “we have not yet reached a level of lament

that is indicative of our plight that might lead to a nation-shaking breakthrough.”

On July 4, America Pray will host a national virtual prayer meeting, launching 21 days of prayer. During this season of prayer, teams will circle the nation and “consecrate” it to God’s original purposes. Then on Friday, July 23, a prayer rally will be hosted near Lebanon, KS—the geographic center and heart of the nation.

A downloadable prayer guide and other information about upcoming “America Virtual Prayer Meetings” are available at [americapray.net](http://americapray.net).

## Tennessee Revival Steeped in Prayer

The spark that ignites the flame isn’t always all that bright at first. This is true for Robby Gallaty, senior pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, TN, where more than 1,000 people have been baptized since December 2020, following nearly a year of prayer that Gallaty describes as “silence and solitude” in his own life.

The pastor told Faithwire, “I began sitting with the Lord for ten months. Then, finally, Dec. 15, 2020, I’m on the porch, and I hear as clear as day these words in my head, after a season of silence and solitude: ‘Spontaneous baptism.’”

The following Sunday, Gallaty recalls, was the lowest-attended service in his five-year tenure at Long Hollow. He says it felt as if everything was working against what he was confident God had so clearly instructed him to do.

On that Sunday in mid-December, 99 people were baptized.

“I’d never seen anything like this before

in my life,” the pastor says, adding he assumed that must have been the end of the “revival” he sought after, until he returned to his porch once again that night.

“The Lord gave me this visual,” he explains, recalling sitting outside his house that Sunday evening. “He showed me, ‘These are the heavy raindrops, Robby, before the torrential downpour that’s coming.’”

Gallaty then reached out to his fellow ministry leaders at Long Hollow. The following Tuesday, just three days before Christmas, the church hosted a baptism-only service where another 81 people showed up.

Then people who had been watching Long Hollow online began traveling to the church and its two satellite campuses. People coming from out of state said they “felt compelled by the Holy Spirit” to travel to Hendersonville.

Over the course of less than four months, Long Hollow baptized 1,000



people from 15 different states. For context, Long Hollow baptized 162 people in 2018 and 222 in 2019.

“It’s a genuine pulling and tugging of the Holy Spirit,” the pastor states.

The awakening taking place at Long Hollow is only possible, Gallaty admits, because he was convicted to deal with the sin in his own life: pride, jealousy, and arrogance. He says he wasn’t even aware that sin had taken up residence in his heart. God showed him, “The problem is not with your church. It’s not with your staff. The problem is *you*. You’re the problem.”

Gallaty encourages his fellow pastors:

“The reason you’re not seeing a mighty move of God in your church may be because you’re the blood clot,” he says. “And I say that from experience. You may be the problem to why God’s not moving.

“I’m convinced prayer births revival

and revival births prayer,” Gallaty says. He describes prayer as “the wood stacking for the fire that burns on the weekend,” referring to corporate worship on Sundays.

“We need to get out of this Western

reciprocity mindset of, ‘God if I do this, You do this,’” he continues. “That doesn’t work with silence and solitude.”

And it was out of that “silence and solitude” that revival came to Long Hollow.

—Adapted from Faithwire (*faithwire.com*).

## 2021 Report Details Persecution

Christians are being persecuted around the world at a pace not seen since the first century, says Johnnie Moore, one of nine commissioners appointed to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The report on the state of religious freedom around the world is a grim tale of staggering proportions.

The 2021 USCIRF report highlights:

- 50,000 Christians held in North Korean prison camps

- Some 3,000 Yazidi girls and women missing in Iraq
- 130,000 Muslims in internment camps in Burma
- As many as 3 million Uyghur Muslims in Chinese concentration camps.

The report identifies countries of particular concern (CPC) that are the worst offenders: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi

Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. The USCIRF recommends adding India, Russia, Syria, and Vietnam to the list.

The pandemic added to the burden as many religious minorities were blamed for the outbreak.

“It’s time for Christians to do what the Apostle Paul called them to do, which is to pray for those who are in prison as if they were there with them,” Moore says.

—Jennifer Wishon, Faithwire (*faithwire.com*).

## 40 Days for Life Saves Hundreds of Preborn Babies

Organizers of 40 Days for Life report that they know of more than 500 preborn children who were saved from abortion during the spring campaign that ended March 28, 2021.

40 Days for Life began in Texas in 2007, and today reaches 1,000 cities in 63 countries. It is a targeted campaign of prayer, fasting, and an around-the-clock peaceful vigil outside abortion facilities. Throughout the 40-day campaign, organizers shared many success stories.

In Schenectady, NY, a woman in her third trimester was intent on aborting her baby, but she changed her mind after hearing a speaker at a pro-life rally in front of the city’s Planned Parenthood. The woman received assistance at the on-site ultrasound van.

A desperate young mother in Colorado Springs, CO, took the first drug of the abortion pill regimen (mifepristone) because she was afraid she would be un-



able to financially care for another child. Soon after taking the pill, she felt horrible and regretful. After approaching vigil participants, she was given an emergency appointment with a local pro-life physician who administered the abortion pill reversal protocol. She and her husband were also given a cash gift card to help them through their difficult time.

In Chula Vista, CA, two women approached prayer warriors on different days, each tearfully admitting they had changed their minds about getting an abortion after seeing the signs and the people praying.

“When we are seen holding our signs in prayer, it can be a sign from God that

changes a woman’s heart,” says the local campaign leader.

While praying and offering a witness to life outside an abortion facility can seem daunting, success stories underscore how powerful that witness can be.

—Taken from Life Action (*lifeaction.org*).



### Prayer Calendar

**Cry Out America**  
**Saturday, September 11**  
 (20th anniversary of 9/11)  
[facebook.com/cryoutamerica](https://facebook.com/cryoutamerica)

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**See You at the Pole**  
**Wednesday, September 22**  
[syatp.com](https://syatp.com)

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**Day of Prayer for Peace of Jerusalem**  
**Sunday, October 3**  
[daytopray.com](https://daytopray.com)



# Repentance

**PAUSE WITH ME FOR A** moment and celebrate a special anniversary for *Prayer Connect* magazine. This issue marks our tenth year of publishing!

Jonathan Graf, our publisher, sensed a great loss to the prayer movement when NavPress stopped producing *Pray!* magazine several years ago. He was part of that staff at one time, and he never lost his passion to print quality prayer resources. He longed to see another prayer magazine raised up—and God birthed in his heart the vision for *Prayer Connect*.

I had recently transitioned out of a prayer ministry in the Twin Cities to start my own editorial business. Although I love the prayer component of ministry life, I missed writing, editing, and magazine publishing (having previously edited two magazines). I started with no clients, but I knew God was leading me to something new.

About that time, Jon and I had a “chance encounter” in a hotel lobby while attending a conference in Hollywood, CA. He was looking for an editor with a heart for prayer and magazine experience—and I was waiting on the Lord for direction.

There was no formal interview.

“Are you in?” asked Jon.

“Yes,” I replied, without hesitation.

Jon had already invited Bridget Rennie (a former graphic designer at *Pray!*) to join him as art director of *Prayer Connect*. We instantly bonded because of our love for prayer and publishing.

And here we are—the three of us—ten years later! We added wonderful people to offer editorial consulting (Dave and

# AND Turnaround Prayers to God’s Heart CONFESSION

Kim Butts), as well as editorial assistants to help with the proofing and fine-tuning (Joan Sherman and Joyce Ellis). And now Niko Peele joins us as assistant editor.

We’ve also been blessed with the prayer expertise of many national prayer leaders who graciously give their time to write for us. Forty-five issues later, we’ve covered more prayer topics than I thought possible.

It’s the best “quick decision” I think I’ve ever made. So please, pause and celebrate with us!

## In this Issue

Revival is a favorite topic because we cling to the hope of a sweeping spiritual awakening that will transform our nation. In fact, my hope has never waned. I pray with belief that revival is just on the horizon!

But at times we need to return to the basics of creating a welcoming atmosphere for revival in the Church. That means “turnaround prayers” that come back to the simplicity of repentance and confession. God draws near to the humble and brokenhearted. Confessing and repenting of our sin aligns with

God’s grace and favor in pouring out the Holy Spirit with fresh power.

In this issue, Byron Paulus writes about the gift of repentance and how our lack of willingness to examine our hearts can be the greatest deterrent to revival. Jason Hubbard adds a critical component by describing true confession—when repentance goes beyond saying, “I’m sorry.”

We’ve also resurrected an article by Will Ford and Matt Lockett describing their incredible personal journey of racial reconciliation. We believe their story is so transformational that we all need to read it again! It’s the pathway forward in our nation because it is about both repentance and the often-missing response of forgiveness.

Our first *Prayer Connect* issue ten years ago was on the theme, “Can Prayer Save America?” We believed then—and we believe now—that God is inviting us to continue crying out to Him for another great Christ-awakening. It’s the only hope for our nation! **PC**

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



*Its*



The Pathway to Revival





# Time

## FOR REPENTERS TO REPENT

**I HAD JUST LEFT A PROMISING** business career to join the staff of Life Action Ministries, a band of brothers and sisters committed to seeking a move of God in revival. We were in our first week of staff training when one of the speakers challenged us to examine our hearts to see if we really had a spirit of repentance.

I remember his definition of repentance as the heart attitude that says to God, “Everything I now know to be sin, and everything that You show me in the future to be sin, I am willing to give it all up for Your sake.”

I had grown up in a Christian home, made a profession of faith as a child, graduated from a Christian university, and was active in leadership in my church. But deep in my heart, I knew I had never been born

again. For years, I tried to escape the Spirit’s conviction over my lost condition.

Now, I was faced with the real issue in my life. I had never been willing to repent of going my own way, and to let God have the reins in my life. I had wanted to run my own life.

For the next 24 hours, the heavy hand of God’s conviction weighed down upon my heart. I simply could not escape the realization of my desperate need for repentance. Finally, knowing I had no other hope, I slipped out of a service and stepped outside. Under a tree at our camp, I repented and met God on His terms.

### **Genuine Repentance**

That night was the beginning of a new life for me. I embarked on a whole new walk of ongoing repentance, marked by unconditional surrender to the Lordship of Christ in my life.

Oswald Chambers has called repentance “the bedrock of Christianity.” I believe the failure of the Church to understand and embrace the biblical concept of repentance has robbed us of the glory of God in our midst. The revival for which we are believing God to grant us must be birthed in genuine repentance.

*By Byron Paulus*



*Forgiveness, freedom, joy and power come from living a lifestyle of repentance.*

Chambers was not alone in his belief that repentance is central to Christianity. General William Booth, the founder of Salvation Army, listed six chief dangers that would confront the church and culture as the 20<sup>th</sup> century was on the horizon:

- Religion without the Holy Spirit

- Christianity without Christ
- Forgiveness without repentance
- Salvation without regeneration
- Politics without God
- Heaven without hell.

And further, one of the most respected 20<sup>th</sup> century preachers, A.W.

Tozer, declared, “The curse of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that because *we know* something, we think *we have* something.”

Not much has changed now that we are well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We live in a generation that knows *about* repentance. But, like my story, many professing Christians have not experienced it—and are actually lost.

I know. I was one of them.

### **Greatest Deterrent to Revival**

What about those who experienced repentance at conversion? Many think it is a one-time experience and do not understand the forgiveness, freedom, joy, and power that come from living a *lifestyle* of repentance.

To some reading this article, it may seem simplistic to say, “Repentance is for believers, not just unbelievers.” But knowing it and experiencing it are not synonymous. When was the last time *you* genuinely repented of your sin? Not just asked forgiveness but consciously repented? Or at least recognized the necessity of a heart attitude of repentance?

**C**ould it be that the single greatest deterrent to revival in our day is that Christians have stopped repenting?

Some years ago, I heard Josef Tson, then in exile from Romania, relate the events that led up to the revival that swept through his homeland in the 1970s. In Romania, evangelical believers of various denominations are known as “repenters.” This designation is commonly used because of the emphasis placed on repentance at the time of conversion.

At the Second Baptist Church in

## DECLARATION OF NATIONAL SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY

### *An Appeal for Urgent Prayer*

With heavy hearts, we recognize that the Church in America is in a state of spiritual emergency. Like the churches warned in Revelation, we have become lukewarm and compromised, and the light of our witness has grown dim.

We confess that despite access to more resources and biblical teaching than any other group of believers in history, we are not characterized by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. And we acknowledge our lack of widespread impact for Christ on our lost and disintegrating culture.

But God is waking us up from our slumber and mobilizing us to pray earnestly for revival. Together, we desire to travel the narrow road of brokenness, humility, and repentance.

In desperation for God, we cry out for the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit in our day. We believe that true revival is the only hope to reverse our spiritual recession and enable us once again to display the beauty of Jesus Christ and His gospel throughout the world.

Because we believe that only Christ can save, heal, and revive, we pledge to:

- TURN—in humble repentance from every sin God reveals to us
- PRAY—with urgency for spiritual recovery and awakening
- UNITE—with other believers in spreading the hope of Christ-centered revival.

Reprinted with permission. To join the OneCry movement, go to [onecry.com](http://onecry.com)



Oradea, where the revival began, God placed a pastor who challenged his people regarding their need for repentance. For six months, his message was, "It is time for the 'repenters' to repent!"

**H**e called them to repent in several specific matters; among them, the fact that many of the believers in that area (known for its wine vineyards) were themselves indulging.

Furthermore, many Christians were involved in the commonly accepted practice of stealing from the lands that the Communists had confiscated from the people. This pastor called for his people to repent of these and other practices, and to enter into a covenant not to be conformed to the world around them.

The "repenters" repented. And when they did, God began to unleash the power of His Spirit in an extraordinary way that has continued to this day. Ultimately, God used the revived Church in Romania to provide the spiritual and moral impetus for the Revolution that released that country from the tyranny of Communist oppression.

And so, as always, repentance gave birth to freedom.

### **New Cry for Repenters**

The starting place for the revival in Romania will also be the starting place for the revival so desperately needed in North America. Over a decade ago, pollster George Gallup, Jr. observed that most Americans who profess Christianity don't act significantly different from non-Christians in their daily lives. What would a similar survey reveal today?

**T**his indictment only underscores the need for a new cry to be heard

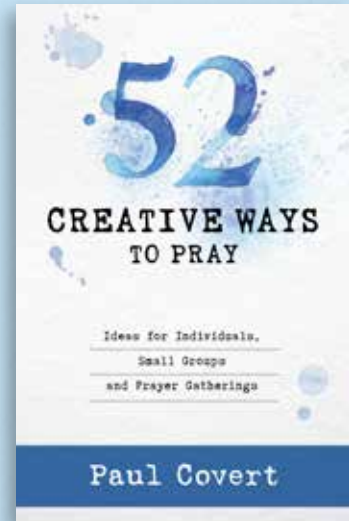
# Need a spark in your prayer life?

**Too much of a sameness to the prayer  
time in your small group?**

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52 CREATIVE WAYS  
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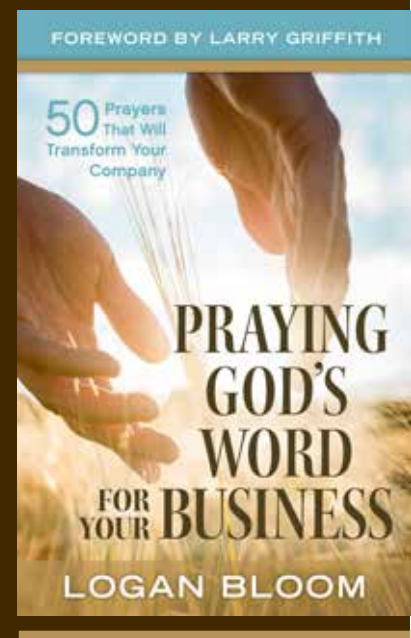
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throughout the Church of our land: “It is time for the repenters to repent!”

Of course, the call to repentance must be heard by those in our midst whose sin is blatant and known to all. But the first to respond to this message ought to be those of us in positions of spiritual leadership and influence. We are the ones who must lead the way in

repentance, brokenness, and humility. Then we must lead those who follow us into a lifestyle of continuous repentance.

That is the pathway of continuous revival.

Consider this eternal reality. When the God of this universe determined to introduce the physical ministry of

His Son Jesus here on earth, He chose John the Baptist as the messenger—and repentance as the message. Why? As the psalmist said, “Righteousness goes as a herald before him, preparing the way for his steps” (Ps. 85:13, NLT).

Should it be any different today? As we seek God for His manifest presence by way of His Spirit in revival, could it be the only reason God has not chosen to descend is because we have not chosen to repent?

### The Gift of Repentance

In the deepest parts of my heart, I long for the day when God shows up, when “the earth [is] filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). What an amazing gift that will be!

But should we not view repentance as an amazing gift as well? Is the means to the end not also glorious? Should we not ask God to express His kindness (Rom. 2:4) by giving a spirit of repentance?

God delights in giving repentance, but do I delight in asking Him for it?

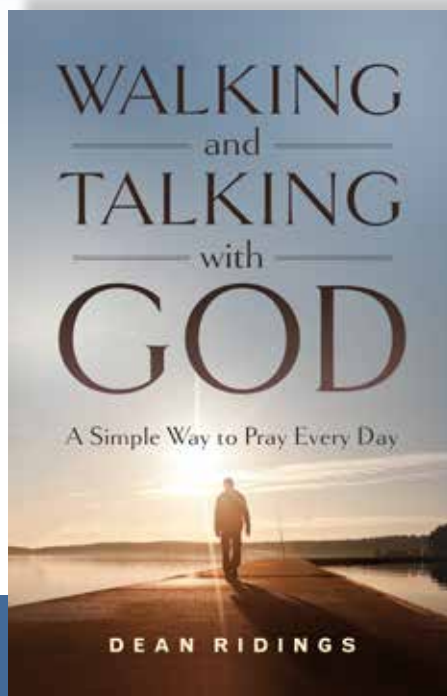
*A*s you read this issue on repentance and confession, I appeal to you not to view this material merely as a source of new or fresh information. Rather, allow God to examine *your own heart* in relation to this matter. Ask Him to personalize these truths to *your life*, and to enable *you* to enter into a richer, deeper level of personal repentance.

Then ask God to grant His Church the gift of repentance. A repenting Church will be a revived Church. And only a revived Church can reveal the glory of God to a darkened world. **PC**

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**BYRON PAULUS** serves at Life Action Ministries (parent organization of Revive Our Hearts, Life Action, and One-Cry). After 30 years as president/CEO, he now focuses on speaking and writing while remaining on the board and senior leadership team.



# PRAY FOR YOUR COMMUNITY!

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## RAISE UP OTHERS TO PRAY WITH YOU!

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***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.

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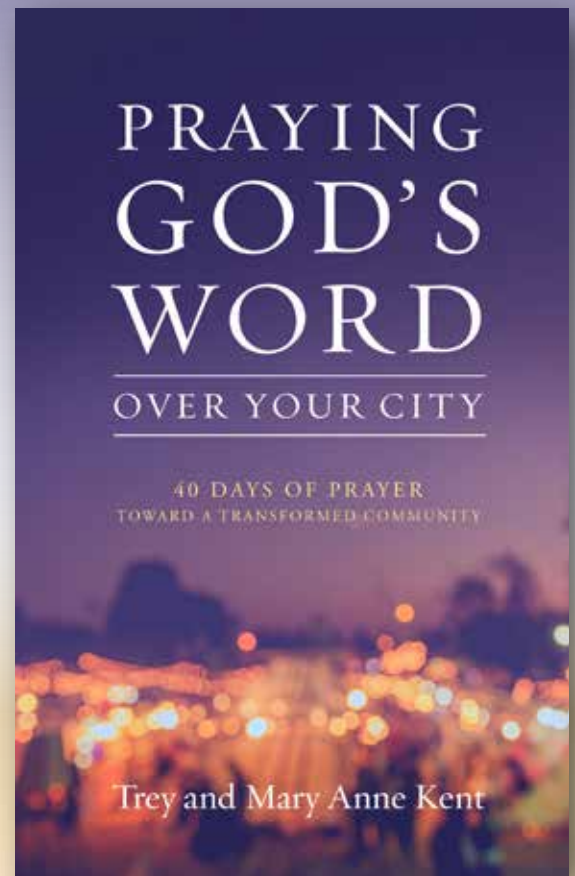
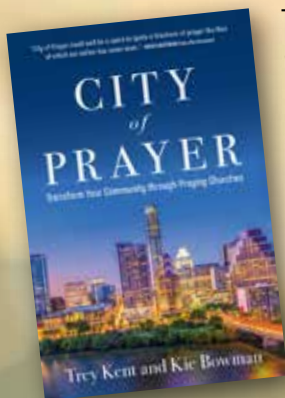
Use it to pray for your community and you will both come to understand God's heart for your city and learn to pray His Word over it!

*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.

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*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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# When

## The Prayer of Confession



# “Sorry”

## DOESN'T CUT IT

**I REMEMBER ONE NIGHT** agonizing over stealing some nails from a local hardware store. I was ten years old, and I knew it was wrong. My dad got a call from the owner, proceeded downstairs to my room, and asked if I needed to tell him anything. I finally mustered up the courage to confess. He was gracious.

When we went to the store to return the nails, I vividly remember the relief I felt when I “came clean” and told the store manager I was sorry. He was so kind to forgive me—and thanked me for telling the truth.

David understood the power of confession when he wrote a psalm exposing the depth of his grief over his sin, the impact it had on him physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and the relief in knowing God as the One who forgives and restores.

He writes in Psalm 32:1–7:

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.  
Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does

not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

One of the things I admire about David is his confidence in God’s relentless mercy! After much weakness and failure, he continues to come before God and declare, “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.”

To be “blessed” is a promise of complete wellness of being and profound fulfillment. The most fulfilled life belongs to those who have been forgiven!

David sees himself as one who is blessed because he learned the discipline of “confession.” He acknowledged his sin and did not hide from the iniquity of it. He says, “I

*By Jason Hubbard*



The most blessed, compassionate, fulfilled, and happiest people are those who know they are forgiven.

will confess my transgression to the Lord.” David understands that when he confesses his sins, God covers them and forgives him. Why? Because He doesn’t count his sin against him.

For instance, let’s say I got a D on a test in class. The next day the professor says, “I am not going to count that test toward your final grade.” David is saying when he confesses his sin, God doesn’t count it against him.

### Pathway to Forgiveness

So, what does it really mean to confess? When you know you have failed and have acknowledged it’s your fault, how do you get up again like David in such a way that you have more joy and peace than before?

This psalm reminds me of Luke 7 where Jesus meets a woman of the street, most likely a prostitute. She anoints His feet with her ointment and her tears, and then wipes them with her hair. Jesus declares to Simon, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little” (vs. 47).

Jesus says those who understand the depth of their sin and have accepted God’s gracious gift of forgiveness demonstrate that they love well! Both David and this woman of the street help us understand that the most blessed, compassionate, fulfilled, and happiest people are those who know they are forgiven.

When it comes to forgiveness, there are often three types of people:

- those who have too high a view of themselves and don’t see their real need of forgiveness
- those who have too low of view of themselves and believe they are too bad to be forgiven
- those who know they need to be

forgiven much and yet have by faith accepted and received the work of Christ done on their behalf.

As Tim Keller says, The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself nor less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less.<sup>1</sup>

To be sure, confession is not a popular discipline in the Church today. Many of us shrink from sincere confession. We minimize sin, calling it a mistake or a blunder. It is easy to condemn the world’s sin more than our own. We tend to judge based on externals and blame others when we do sin, rather than owning our sin. We can easily put sins in a hierarchy, and therefore tolerate some sins (especially our own) more than others.

To confess means to see our sins as God sees them, to hate them as God hates them, and oppose them as God in His wrath opposes them. For the believer, sin leads to uncomfortable feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety. It disrupts our relationship with God. As Alvin VanderGriend writes, “Sin affects our intimacy with God, confession restores it.”<sup>2</sup>

### Practice of Confession

Confession does not resolve our sin. Admitting our sin is an important part of the process, but words do not resolve sin. We can be sorry for something we

have done wrong and even confess it, yet still desire to continue doing it. Agreeing that we have done something wrong is not the same thing as trusting God with what we have done. Confession is not the same as truly needing God to free us of the sin we have done.

In confession, we need to practice three things on a regular basis:

**1. Decide what's true or false according to God's Word and His ways.** In Psalm 32, David admits his sin is sin because of the mind and heart of God disclosed in Scripture. The Bible determines the truth about one’s sin. David doesn’t hide or conceal his sin before God, but declares, “Against you, you only, have I sinned. . . .” (Ps. 51:4).

Scripture is the plumbline. It doesn’t matter what I feel, what my friends think, what the media says, or what my spouse tells me. Scripture is the straightedge of truth about what is right and wrong.

**2. Understand the sinfulness of our sin.** There is a difference between self-pity and godly sorrow. David not only confesses his sin, but the *iniquity* of his sin—the “sinfulness of his sin.”

One of the keys to confession is getting in the shoes, so to speak, of the one you sinned against. Ask God to help you understand what he or she feels—and give you empathy that leads to godly sorrow and grief rather than self-pity. Many will confess their sin, but then just days later—sometime even hours later—end up repeating the same sin again.

True biblical confession must involve understanding the depth of the sin against others. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, defending ourselves, or hiding from the truth of how we have wounded and wronged another, let’s walk in the shoes of the person we have wronged.

Have you ever heard someone say, “Well, if I have offended you, I am sorry”? Excuse me! What they are really saying is, “I don’t want to go to the trouble of admitting that I have hurt you.”

Biblical confession says something like



this: “I can hardly imagine, though I have tried, how you must have felt because of what I did. Therefore, I am truly sorry.” To the Lord you might confess, “Oh, Lord, I can hardly imagine what it is like for You to give everything to me and to die for me, and then have me break Your heart when I sin like this. Please forgive me and give me a clean slate.”

True repentance and confession begin when blame-shifting, self-pity, and self-centeredness end.

**3 Take full responsibility.** You can say you’re sorry, but do you mean it? Does it bring about change? True prayers of confession are the expression of your repentance.

When you are truly broken and recognize your need to repent and turn, your prayers of confession will bring your heart change into alignment with God’s heart. True confession with your mouth must be connected to your heart. James 5:16 points to confession of sins that leads to healing. Until we both repent and confess, we cannot live fully in the Kingdom of God.

David’s confession in Psalm 32 came out of deep brokenness—and his belief that God is a good and loving God. David knew the good news that as we confess sin—and accept God’s forgiveness—we are no longer headed to despair. We must pray for power to overcome sin and for God to reveal our next practical action step in moving toward change.

I remember a season in our marriage when I was struggling with lust. I couldn’t just confess and say “sorry” to my wife. She certainly forgave me, but I had to take steps to put protection on my computer to block pornography, commit to a men’s accountability group, and do some pastoral counseling sessions to uncover places of wounding that needed healing.

### Preach the Gospel to Yourself Every Day!

Most of us want to hide from our sin rather than take full responsibility. As David says, the key is to hide in the

Lord and allow Him to be our covering. I don’t have to cover or defend myself anymore. Why? Because in the gospel God covers me and accepts me, not because I deserve it but because of His work on my behalf at the cross!

**C**rucifixion was the worst kind of execution. A criminal was stripped naked, exposed, and mocked—the ultimate dehumanization. Jesus was crucified on your behalf. He was stripped so you can be clothed, exposed so you can be covered! Because of the work of Christ on our behalf, we can declare with the apostle Paul, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1, emphasis added). We say to Jesus, “You are my hiding place, You surround me, You cover me, and You are my real security!”

In light of God’s holiness and my sinfulness, I run to the cross of Christ, knowing the “blessedness” of being forgiven! Grateful joy erupts in my life

when I preach the gospel to myself every day—and believe this great good news! I remember His relentless mercy. God doesn’t give me what I deserve because of my sin, including punishment, wrath, and eternal separation in hell.

The amazing grace of Jesus gives me what I don’t deserve—things like forgiveness of sin, eternal life, adoption into a new family, a future, and a hope. All satisfying joy is found in Jesus!

What a glorious gospel. Confess and be blessed! **PC**

<sup>1</sup>Tim Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, Riverhead Books, 2008), 181.

<sup>2</sup>Alvin VanderGriend, *The Joy of Prayer* (Terre Haute: PrayerShop Publishing, 2007), 16.



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# Prayer

An Unexpected Story of Love

By Matt



# Praying

## FOR YOUR ENEMIES

**Editor's Note:** We previously ran this article in our April—June 2019 issue. It's the remarkable story of how God forged the friendship of Will Ford and Matt Lockett as an answer to the prophetic vision of racial reconciliation declared by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his famous "I Have a Dream" address in 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial.

In a recent message to America's National Prayer Committee members, Matt Lockett shared his hope to counter racial division in our nation. "You have seen the counterfeited," he says. "But God is at work. . . . The enemy is raging with the riots. There is a war in this nation over the narrative. But God's got a different story to tell."

In this issue about repentance and confession, we believe it is critical and timely to tell Matt and Will's story again. You will read about how God miraculously connected them, revealed unknown family histories, and showed them a way forward in repentance and forgiveness.

It's a story that needs to become the narrative of our nation in restoring hope, love, and unity. It's a way forward that only God can orchestrate.

**CAN PRAYER AFFECT THE** current division in the nation, or are we doomed to eat the fruit of historical offenses? Slavery ended and segregation is no more. However, old wounds remain unhealed, racism is alive and well, and class division and systemic inequality persist. From past experience, we (Matt and Will) can testify that God still has an alternate ending in mind.

In 2003, Will was reading and praying aloud from the "I Have a Dream" speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during a prayer gathering at Dr. King's historic church in Montgomery, AL. Toward the end of the speech, Will read the words, "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."<sup>1</sup>

What an inspiring vision of a great reversal, changing former enemies into brothers!

While praying, Will—an African American and son of former slaves—remembered a curious artifact passed down in their family: a 200-year-old cast iron kettle used by his Christian slave ancestors. The pot was used for cooking and washing clothes, but it was also used in an unexpected way. In the secrecy of night, slaves would sneak into the barn and turn that huge kettle upside down. With its edge propped up on rocks, they would lay prostrate on the ground,

*Lockett and Will Ford*



# Jesus carefully linked the call to love our enemies with the activity of praying for them.

tucking their lips under its edge, and pray. The kettle would muffle their voices as they prayed through the night, and their master couldn't hear them as they prayed for slavery to end and for the freedom of the next generation.

Mindful of that story, Will wondered whatever happened to those slave owners. For the first time, he began to pray for the family who once owned his family. Instead of expressing anger for their oppression in the past, he prayed for the next generation, as his ancestors had so long ago. The twist was that he found himself praying for the spiritual freedom and blessing of the generation descended from those slave owners.

Two years later we (Will and Matt) providentially met in a prayer gathering at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. It happened to be Martin Luther King Day, and we stood on the very spot where Dr. King had spoken the historic words, "I have a dream." A surprising friendship began, and together we started to lead prayer gatherings for unity and racial healing around the country.

A decade later, some unknown family history emerged. Matt learned that the final battle of the American Civil War—the Battle of Lockett's Farm—was fought in the front yard of his ancestors. *What a strange coincidence*, we thought. Will's family has a kettle that has been handed down along with the story of the slaves who prayed for freedom. And Matt's family owns the land where the Civil War ended. More dots connected, which led to a far more profound discovery.

## Unforgettable Shock

That more profound discovery we made came as quite a shock. Imagine our amazement when we learned that *it was*

*actually Matt's family who had owned Will's family as slaves!* The rich details of our story are carefully laid out in our book *The Dream King*.

But consider what that revelation meant for us. Even though our families had been enemies in the past, prayer brought us together and made us brothers. Surely Dr. King's words were more than poetry. Perhaps they were prophecy.

Today, here we sit, looking at each other across the table of brotherhood, forgetting the other was ever our enemy. We believe this is the story God wants to tell throughout the nation.

## Jesus' Great Challenge

Some say loving our enemies is the most difficult challenge Jesus issued: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:43–45).

Are we quick to label someone as an enemy? By definition, an enemy is "one who is antagonistic to another, especially one seeking to injure, overthrow, or confound an opponent."<sup>2</sup> With that measuring line, we all could make a sizable list of people or groups who seem to fit that description.

And so it begins. We make our lists, taking account of all the wrongs and abuses we have suffered. The lists grow, and the painful memories harden like names etched into drying concrete that will be readable for centuries.

To identify someone as an enemy seems to demand a response. If it does not lead to aggressive actions toward the

foe, it often produces bitterness toward the adversary in our hearts. What can disrupt this process of pain and retaliation? Who has the necessary willpower to resist becoming exactly like our abuser after hate has run its course?

The answer is hidden in plain sight.

## Prayer That Changes the Story

Apart from prayer, our painful experiences freeze people in a timeframe of offense. It's as though the end of the story comes immediately after the tragedy and ruin. However, prayer makes a better ending possible.

Jesus carefully linked the call to love our enemies with the activity of praying for them. Prayer is not the passive response of the weak and timid. It is arguably the believer's greatest form of direct action and activism.

Prayer for our enemies creates an opportunity for an alternate ending to an otherwise tragic storyline. Through prayer, we can wage a strategic attack against the darkness that has overwhelmed our abusers—and thus liberate them from their own oppression. Prayer carves out the space in which our enemies may change.

Needless to say, it changes us as well. Wounds receive their divine healing balm, and the heart softens in the process. The chasm of division can narrow, new bridges can be built, and a story can end with the embrace of a former enemy.

Jesus had the authority to call us to this unexpected and difficult command because He demonstrated it in its highest form. As He hung on the cross, bleeding from the wounds of His abusers, He knew humanity would not be His enemy forever. With His final gasping breaths, He uttered prayers that opened a new way to restore our relationship with Him.

The words, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," give us a guide for our own prayers for anyone attacking us. The laying down of His own life meant that humanity's



enemy status would not be the end of the story. God calls us to live our lives by that extraordinary example.

Jesus was and is the ultimate Peacemaker. When we react in the opposite spirit of our enemies, we follow in the footsteps of the Righteous One. Instead of taking revenge, He prayed for His torturers' forgiveness. When retaliation was within His power, He instead showed mercy.

This radical change in the posture of our hearts is the key that unlocks redemptive storylines. Individuals will be set free when we pray for them with restoration in mind instead of judgment. Families will experience generational blessings when we pray to heal wounds that have festered year after year. Let's dare to believe that a nation will alter its course toward righteousness when we pray for light and truth to shine on those leading multitudes down a dark path. The Son of God led us into this redemptive work, saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matt. 5:9).


### Prayer Is the Key

It's no accident that we met in a prayer meeting. We believe we will all truly find each other in the prayer meetings, where God will give us His heart for each other and end the division that once defined us as enemies.

God intends to answer the prayer of His Son Jesus, who prayed in John 17 that we would be one so that the world would believe. Glory comes when division ends and former enemies embrace. That kind of supernatural work gets the attention of the world and leads to a saving belief in Him.

The hidden hand of God is hard at work, weaving our lives together in ways we could never have imagined. The one who looks like our enemy today could become our closest friend tomorrow, and God gets the glory when that happens.

Retaliation against enemies will cement the divisions that exist, but God

has a divine remedy to turn the conflicts into a blessing. Pray for your enemies, and usher in God's alternate ending to an otherwise tragic storyline. 

<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream," <https://www.archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enemy>.



**MATT LOCKETT** and **WILL FORD** are the founders of Dream Stream Company ([dreamstreamcompany.com](http://dreamstreamcompany.com)).

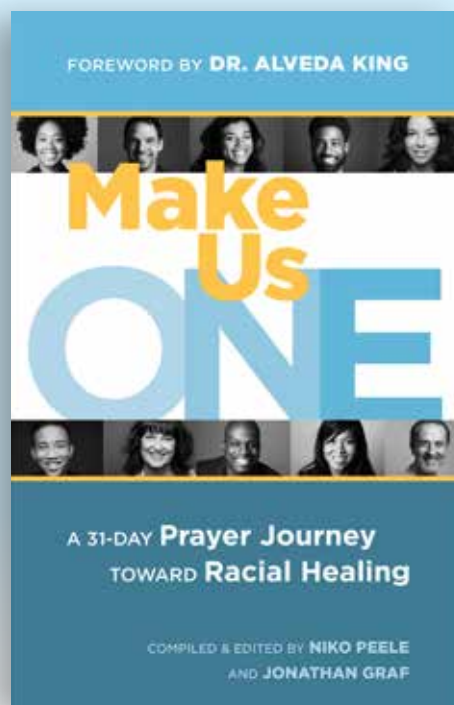
Their book *The Dream King* tells the true story of the way their lives are woven together by history and the hidden hand of God. It exposes systemic injustice and delivers new keys for understanding the nation's past, present, and future.

# 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.

We encourage and challenge you and your church to pray through *Make Us One*. Be part of seeing Jesus' prayer to make us one answered!



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*End*—

By Sandy Mayle

*ing*

the  
Filibuster





# Packing Power into Your Prayers

**ON AUGUST 28, 1957, SENATOR STROM**

Thurmond took the floor of the U.S. Senate to express, regrettably, his opposition to the Civil Rights Act under consideration. His filibuster, the longest in U.S. history, lasted 24 hours and 18 minutes.

How in the world did he fill the time?

He read aloud, word for word, the voting laws for each of the 48 states. He read the entire United States criminal code, the Declaration of Independence, George Washington's farewell address, and a Supreme Court decision. By some accounts he even read from the phone book and discussed his grandmother's biscuit recipe.

In the end, it didn't change a single vote for the bill, which passed.

## **Another Kind of Filibuster**

I've filibustered God.

I've monopolized long devotional times with my own concerns and agendas. I've wandered to topics having little to do with the subject at hand, and to trivia that likely was completely irrelevant.

Those long prayer times made the "legalistic me" feel like I'd really prayed and earned a response from God. I thought the time expended demonstrated my sincerity, was more persuasive, and set a better prayer example.

But all too often, in the end, those lengthy prayers don't seem to change a single thing.





# Crafting a Non-Filibuster PRAYER

Direct and specific prayers pack power. Here is a quick guide to forming a concise prayer:

- 1. Ask:** What exactly is God leading me to ask for now?
- 2. Consider:** According to 1 John 5:14, how can I weight this petition:
  - with confidence: “This is the confidence we have”
  - with intent: “if we ask anything”
  - with self-abandon: “according to his will”
  - with faith: “he hears us.”
- 3. Take action:** Compact your prayer into one concise paragraph, then into one sentence—even try trimming it to just a few words. Offer it up to God regularly, earnestly, and intentionally.  
No filibustering!

## A Time for Long

There’s definitely a time for extended seasons of prayer, all-night intercession, and 24/7 vigils to persistently knock on heaven’s door. Prolonged prayer initiatives are vital efforts and often the Lord is looking for our wholehearted participation.

God’s Word confirms this:

- Jesus spent an entire night (perhaps one of many) in prayer (Luke 6:12).
- From prison, Paul urged the church at Ephesus, “. . . prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. . . . And don’t forget to pray for me” (Eph. 6:18–19, MSG).
- The psalmist David invited God’s people to pour out the pent-up burdens of their hearts: “Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (Ps. 62:8). Take your time, he was saying. Pour and keep on pouring, however long it takes, until the heart-pitcher is emptied of its anguish and filled with His comfort.

Our Lord welcomes these prolonged prayers. But He also cautioned His followers about babbling on and on.

## Four Sentences

Jesus instructs in Matthew 6: “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words” (vs. 7). He is addressing interminable, mindlessly repetitive prayers.

He continues, “Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (v. 8). And then in verses 9–13, He teaches believers how they should instead pray, providing the prayer-prototype we call “The Lord’s Prayer.”

They are four simple, but profound, sentences:

- “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
- “Give us today our daily bread.”
- “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”
- “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

These four sentences model concise, intentional petitions. But we face real opposition to this kind of prayer:

- *The world* preaches, “More is better!” When this mindset influences our prayer life, we become convinced that longer prayers inherently carry more power, give God more glory, and produce greater measures of success. More words equal more answers.
- *The flesh* (the carnal human nature) believes God values and rewards sweat equity. He isn’t glorified by short petitions; rather, He is hindered by their brevity. If we believe this, we become formula-driven, time-sensitive, and effort-conscious. Our words become filler that multiplies to meet expectations.
- *The enemy* accuses and shames: “You’re a failure as a prayer warrior. Those few words won’t accomplish anything. Look around you. Those who put in the time are the true prayer warriors. You need to become like them.”

When we embrace the world’s mindset, when we succumb to the flesh, and when we listen to the enemy, something sinister and sapping happens. Big shouts down brief. Shame prompts wordiness. Legalism flourishes.

And before we know it, we’re filibustering in the throne room of God.



## Two Sentences

The writer of Ecclesiastes warned, “Don’t shoot off your mouth, or speak before you think. Don’t be too quick to tell God what you think he wants to hear. God’s in charge, not you—the less you speak, the better” (Eccl. 5:2, MSG). No rambling, run-on requests that monopolize the conversation. No Thurmond-like “holding the floor” before our Heavenly Father.

In 1 Kings 18:16–39, the prophet Elijah challenged the people of Israel to a contest: Baal vs. God. An offering was prepared and placed on an altar. Whichever deity answered by fire, the Israelites would worship.

The prophets of Baal called on their god from morning until noon, but of course there was no answer. At noon Elijah began taunting them, so they shouted louder and longer, and kept it up until evening came—but still no response. No god answered; no fire appeared.

Morning until evening they prayed, for nothing.

And then, “at the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: ‘LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again’” (vv. 36–37).

Two sentences.

And the fire fell. And the people fell too, crying, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”

There is great power in simple, sincere, and straightforward petition.

## One Sentence

Several years ago, one of our children, like the prodigal, “journeyed to a far country.” Though I already prayed regularly for our son, the crisis initiated

prolonged intercession and seasons of prayer in the night when I poured out my heart to God.

But during this time God also put one particular request on my heart. It was a short prayer, often expressed in a handful of words. Yet it came with a unique yearning, as though God Himself had birthed it (as I believe He had): “Please, God, bring him back home.”

One sentence.

There were many other aspects of the tragic circumstances I could have zeroed in on, but this was the one God initiated and kept calling forth from my heart: “Bring him home.” I prayed it every night before drifting off to sleep. Night after night.

And one night, that concise prayer was suddenly and dramatically answered. The very next day, our prodigal was home.


There is great value in petitions distilled to their essence.

## The Condensed Prayer

When wordiness and mind-wandering and misgivings are removed, our prayers become solid. Focused. Intense. Those prayers pack power.

The goal isn’t to spend less time with the Lord. It’s to wait on Him receptively, talk less and say more, as we pray in God-confidence those prayers that originate in His heart.

Let’s lay aside mind-numbing repetition and legalistic lobbying. Let’s rediscover the power of the condensed prayer—the prayer packed with faith, weighted with purpose, and dense with earnest desire.

Let’s end the filibuster. 



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## Four Scriptures to Pray When You Are Tempted

Consider a temptation you struggle with—or one that someone else you know has difficulty overcoming. Imagine yourself (or this person) out in the wilderness, just as Jesus was when the devil confronted Him with temptation. Using Jesus' example, how do you fight back?

Temptation will undoubtedly strike you again, so prepare yourself by reading and soaking in the account of the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1–11. Note that when the devil tried to tempt Jesus, He both resisted and fought back using the Word of God: “It is written. . . .”

Praying Scripture is a powerful way to pray. As we do, we submit to God. James 4:7 says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Whenever struggles with temptation seem overwhelming, prayer can be difficult—unless you wield the sword, which is the Word of God!

Remind yourself how Jesus insulated Himself from attack and resisted the devil. These four Scriptures and suggested prayers can help you resist and fight off the enemy's attacks. You can continually remind the devil, “It is written . . .”:

• **Isaiah 40:31:** “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings

like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

*Lord, I am facing temptation today. Your Word says that if I wait for You, You will renew my strength so that I can face the challenge and win the battle. Your Word says I can face this temptation without growing weary or faint. Help me to stand in the power of Your Word and face down what is tempting me right now!*

• **2 Corinthians 12:10:** “That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

*Grace-filled Father, Your Word calls me to be content even as I struggle with temptation. Because of Jesus Christ, when I am the weakest, I am the strongest! By the power of Your Spirit, I will stand up to my weakness, knowing that You are working on my behalf to strengthen me in the middle of it!*

• **Hebrews 2:18:** “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

*Lord Jesus, You completely understand the power of temptation,*

*and yet, You resisted it—every time! Because You know what it's like, I have the faith to believe You will help me in my suffering and struggle.*

• **Philippians 4:13:** “I can do all this through [Christ] who gives me strength.”

*Light of the World, I know that because of You I can do all things. Thank You for the strength to withstand the assault of the enemy who wants to destroy me just as He desired to destroy You. I believe I can do all things through Your powerful Name.*

Praying Scripture gives you the truth of God's Word to help you withstand and guard against temptation. The experiences of Jesus to endure temptation in the desert and resist the desire to save Himself from the cross, give us the authority to do the same. So, when you are tempted, reach out to Him in prayer. It is Your best defense against the devil, who would like nothing better than to defeat you over and over again.

Praying the Word of God into your situation, as Jesus did, is using the Truth to overcome whatever obstacle or temptation you may face in this life.

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## Marriage Repair with Hedge Prayer

Some time ago, my husband Hugh and I led a small Bible study in our home. We met to pray and study the Word with the intent of inviting neighbors and friends to our small group.

God did several great things during that time, including a “marriage repair” story involving a young man named Sam (not his real name)—and his desire to reconcile with his wife.

Sam had recently walked through a divorce when he joined our group. He and his former wife had two elementary-age children. But she chose to frequent bars and engage in relationships with other





men. Sam began expressing his desire to have his wife come back to the marriage.

Hugh explained to him the “hedge prayer” and our willingness to employ it on his behalf. Hugh also asked Sam, “Are you sure you can forgive her? Because if you can’t truly forgive her when she comes back, it will not work.” Sam was willing to forgive.

After that, each week Sam, Hugh, and I prayed this prayer around his wife. Sam prayed it himself during the week. Week after week we prayed. She would often come by our house to leave the children with Sam. Then she was off to the bars or wild parties.

Our hedge prayer times involved asking God to put a hedge around her and bring her to her senses. We prayed she would lose her desire for the bars and other men. We also asked that people who were bad influences over her would lose the desire to be with her. We even prayed that she would have the desire for her husband—and want to be the wife and mother God intended her to be. Every Monday night for about a year we prayed a hedge about Sam and his family.

Then suddenly one weekend, Sam called Hugh and said, “We’re getting married again! Will you do the ceremony?” We were out of town, so Hugh was not able to marry them. But they found someone else—and this family was reunited!

The following weekend, Sam, his wife, and their children came to our home for dinner. She did not even look the same! She looked peaceful, dressed as a mom and a wife would dress.

As we sat around the table eating together, I asked her, “What happened to you? How did you come back?”

She explained, “One night I was in a bar, on the dance floor with some guy, and boom—like a ton of bricks—it hit me: ‘This is not what I want. I want to be with Sam and our children!’ So, I left and went back home to see if my ex-husband would take me back!”

### Surrounded with Protection

In the first few chapters of Job, we are told about a man who feared God and lived a blameless life. God greatly prospered him, but then Satan came calling. Satan accused God of protecting Job by placing a hedge around him. Satan was convinced that if God removed the hedge, Satan could so torment Job that he would eventually end up cursing God. The idea of hedge prayer is that God will surround someone with protection and keep that person from succumbing to Satan’s attacks. Here is the outline of the hedge prayer that we used on Sam and his family’s behalf:

- Heavenly Father, I ask you, Lord, to rebuke and bind Satan in the name and through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 9).
- I ask you to build a “hedge of thorns” around my husband/wife, so that anyone with wrong influence will lose interest in him/her and leave (Hosea 2:5–7; Job 1–3).
- I base this prayer on the command of Your Word, which states, “Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matt. 19:6).
- Father God, Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer (1 John 5:15; John 14:13–14).

We witnessed the repair of a marriage and the restoration of a family when we pursued the hedge prayer in agreement with Sam. If God willingly placed a hedge around Job, why wouldn’t we ask the same for those we love?

**JO GOWER** and her husband Hugh have served in fulltime ministry since 1973. Since retiring, Jo is a freelance writer from Searcy, AR. She blogs at [jogoprayer.blogspot.com](http://jogoprayer.blogspot.com).

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## Prayers for Your City

**T**rey and Mary Anne Kent have written a Scripture-based, 40-day prayer guide, *Praying God's Word Over Your City*, to equip believers to pray regularly for their community. Trey is the founder and a leader in the Unceasing Prayer Movement in Austin, TX, which has rallied more than 100 churches to cover Austin in 24-7 prayer. The story of this movement and how this could happen in any city, is told in *City of Prayer*, by Trey Kent and Kie Bowman.

Each day in *Praying God's Word Over Your City* has a Scripture passage, a brief thought, a written prayer, and prayer points. Here are samples:

### Pray for Laborers for the Harvest

“Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” (Matt. 9:37–38, *ESV*).

The greatest need in our community is not only for the lost to be saved, but for the saved to become harvesters. Jesus taught His disciples to cry out to the Lord of the harvest, asking Him to ignite in us the passion and give us the power we desperately need to reach the lost.

*Prayer: Lord of the harvest, I cry out to You today in joyful obedience to Your Word. Give me Your passionate desire and love to see the lost come to know Christ Jesus. I ask for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit to empower me to be an effective and loving evangelist in my family, workplace, and community.*

*Make me a passionate harvester like the disciples. Do miracles, convict hearts, and empower believers to make much of Jesus in my city. Use me in a way that causes those in need of Christ to look to Him as Savior and Lord. Jesus, convince*

*me and fellow believers that this is the greatest work of the Church—to seek and save the lost. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Prayer Points:

- Ask forgiveness for letting fear and the world stifle your evangelistic fervor.
- Seek God for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit to empower you with boldness.
- Intercede for fellow believers to be mobilized as harvesters.
- Pray specifically for lost family, friends, work associates, and neighbors.

### Pray for Personal and Corporate Revival

“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:13–14, *ESV*).

God places the responsibility for revival upon His children. He gives us a strategy to compel us to remedy tragedies in our society and to be a part of seeing true and lasting revival in our land. All the promises of God are ours to

claim and embrace as we trust God for a new work of grace in our communities.


*Prayer: Father, I pray today, in keeping with Your ancient remedy for the ills of society and Your benevolent promise for a healed land, that You would send revival—and start with me! Do a work of grace in me that causes me to humble myself; pray, seek Your face, and turn from my wicked ways. Gracious Father, as You revive me, cause passion for Jesus to be the norm in our family line. Let no one go to hell who is a part of my family.*

*May this revival spread to my church! Cause holy fire for Your name to consume our church family. Please revive our state, making each city a place where Jesus is treasured and exalted.*

*And, may our nation be a tool in Your hand to spread a hunger and thirst for Jesus to the nations of the world. I ask that the knowledge of God would cover the earth like water covers the sea. Let me see this in my lifetime! In Jesus' name, amen.*

Prayer Points:

- Seek Jesus for a personal revival in keeping with 2 Chronicles 7:14.
- Ask God to send revival to your local church.
- Believe God for the Church in your state to be ignited with holy fire for God.
- Pray for a national spiritual awakening.

Ask God to give you a heart to raise up 24-7 prayer over your own city. Cry out to God to send historic awakening to your city and our nation! 

–Taken from *Praying God's Word Over Your City* by Trey and Mary Anne Kent ([prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org)).



## More than Occasional Prayer | By Dennis Fuqua

There are many markers mentioned in Ephesians 6:18 to determine if a congregation is becoming a “house of prayer.” One of them is that people are praying “on all occasions.”

What might “all-occasion” prayer look like on a typical Sunday? Envision this: more prayer happening than just during planned times in the service, more than only leadership providing the prayers, and prayer breaking out all over—not just up front!

Take that vision further. What if:

- all-occasion prayer involved everyone, took place in many places, and happened on “all occasions”?
- everyone came with the anticipation to pray for someone and be prayed for by someone else?
- it was unusual that people came to your service and did not receive prayer?
- it was normal to look around the sanctuary or a hallway after a service and see several people engaged in both conversation and brief prayers?

### Listen Carefully

Recently, I began encouraging a few people in our congregation to engage in conversations before, during, and after church services with a listening ear as to how they could turn that conversation into a prayer. I encouraged them to listen both to the person who is speaking and to the Lord. I asked them to anticipate and initiate a prayer opportunity based upon a natural conversation.

This could include people who have long-standing relationships and who know many specifics of the other person’s life. You may know what Pete and his family have been through, so you can

greet them, give them a hug—and also offer to pray with them.

It also could include people you don’t know. As you ask general questions to get to know them, you are listening for an opportunity to pray with them. It may be that they are looking for a house to rent or just got established in a new job or neighborhood. Those are opportunities to pray!

It could include touching base with someone you prayed for last week. You check in with him or her and either thank the Lord for what He has done or pray for the same topic again.

### Cast Vision with Training

This could be a significant culture shift, so it takes a while for people to see the value of it and train themselves to do it. It takes casting the vision. It takes gentle reminders. It takes patience and persistence.

Our prayer team has been encouraged to come with an anticipation to initiate prayer in this manner. The elders also have been challenged to be intentional. It does not come naturally even for me as a prayer leader and “encourager.” I have prayed with many people on a Sunday, but I still need to do it on purpose.

I’ve noticed several barriers that keep us from engaging in this:

- We have not caught a vision for the power of all-occasion prayer and decided to give ourselves to it.
- It is different. It requires change. It means we have to plan ahead. It means we are not simply spectators but participants, ministers.
- Even if we determine we will initiate prayer, we don’t engage in conversations with an ear to hear how we can pray.
- Even after we see the opportunity to pray, we don’t know how to transition

from hearing to praying. We miss the simple question—“May I pray with you about that?”—or don’t make the simple statement, “Wow, let’s pray about that right now.”

- We are not sure how to pray. We view prayer only as a lengthy conversation rather than a simple, heartfelt, brief prayer on a single topic.

### All-Occasion Solutions

So, what do we do? How do we transition our churches into all-occasion houses of prayer?

First, ask the Lord to assist you in casting vision. Share it with a few people who are comfortable in prayer. And then begin—even if it’s just you—taking prayer initiative with people.

As you gain traction, share the vision with the congregational leaders and other prayer team members. Ask them to join you. Keep in touch with them and share stories of how this is working for you. Most importantly, keep at it.

Remember Luke 18:1 about Jesus teaching the disciples how they should always pray and never give up. Remember Ephesians 6:18 about praying in the Spirit on all occasions, in every possible way, for all the saints.

We want our congregation to move closer to what Jesus had in mind about becoming a house of prayer. “Occasional prayer” (anticipating and looking for an occasion to pray for and with another attendee) will help us get there. **PC**



**DENNIS FUQUA** pastored for many years before becoming the director of International Renewal Ministries and Clark County Prayer Connect in Vancouver, WA. His writings can be found at [lppress.net](http://lppress.net).

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