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Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer



GOD STILL SPEAKS

The Role of Dreams and Visions

Accelerating Revival | Bedtime Prayers
BROKEN CITIES AND KNEES

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PrayerCONNECT

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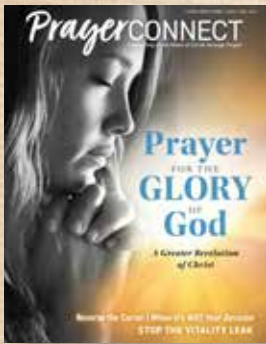
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Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

A number of gifted speakers are 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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The Prayer of Healing

Back in my childhood, I remember that every communion Sunday we had a time when people could come forward for prayer for healing. Following the command in James 5:13–15, elders would ask if they had sin to confess, anoint them with oil, and pray for Christ to heal. I even remember some who were healed instantly!

Somewhere along the line, most churches have stopped that practice in services. A good number, however, will do it privately if a person asks. But people generally do not ask because it is rarely mentioned. It is mostly practiced in Pentecostal churches that believe (per Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Peter 2:24) healing is also included in the Atonement (a belief I personally hold, as do many non-Pentecostal churches as well). Yet, it used to be practiced in many streams of the church. What happened?

In the West, it was probably the explosion of knowledge and availability of services in modern medicine that caused people to ask less and less for the elders to anoint with oil. But skepticism and the lack of churches regularly making prayer for healing available (except for putting the request on a prayer list or chain) have certainly been culprits as well.

The result is that while every believer would likely say they believe God has the power to heal, few think He will heal in most situations. Or if He does, it will primarily be through “God giving knowledge to” doctors and the right medicine.

Revive the Practice

Whatever the reason, we will not see many testimonies of miraculous healing if we give only mild lip service to prayer for healing! We need to make prayer for healing visible again on Sunday mornings. We need to teach on faith (though only a small amount is needed by the asker) and on expectation. If we and our people have no sense of expectation that God will move in a church service or as we pray for healing, He very likely will not move!

Recently, in the church where I am preaching, I did a three-week series on healing. Multiple times I talked about expectation. When we gave people a chance to be anointed and prayed for, I was stunned by the significant response! In the days that followed I received more texts and email comments from people thanking me for the emphasis than I did any other message.

Every Thursday night for the last two years in June and July, events called “Jesus Rallies” have been held in the little town of Ephrata, PA (Lancaster County). Led by Circuit Rider GenZer Joel Bomberger, these worship and preaching events have seen 800–1,000 people every week, dozens saved and baptized each week, and many miraculous, instantaneous healings, including spines straightening and several girls’ cutter scars on arms disappearing as prayer for healing was offered. (Needless to say, the girls surrendered their lives to Jesus and booked it over to the baptismal tank!)

In these days, we need to raise our level of expectation and make the practice of praying for healing both often and visible again!

—Jonathan Graf



Previously in



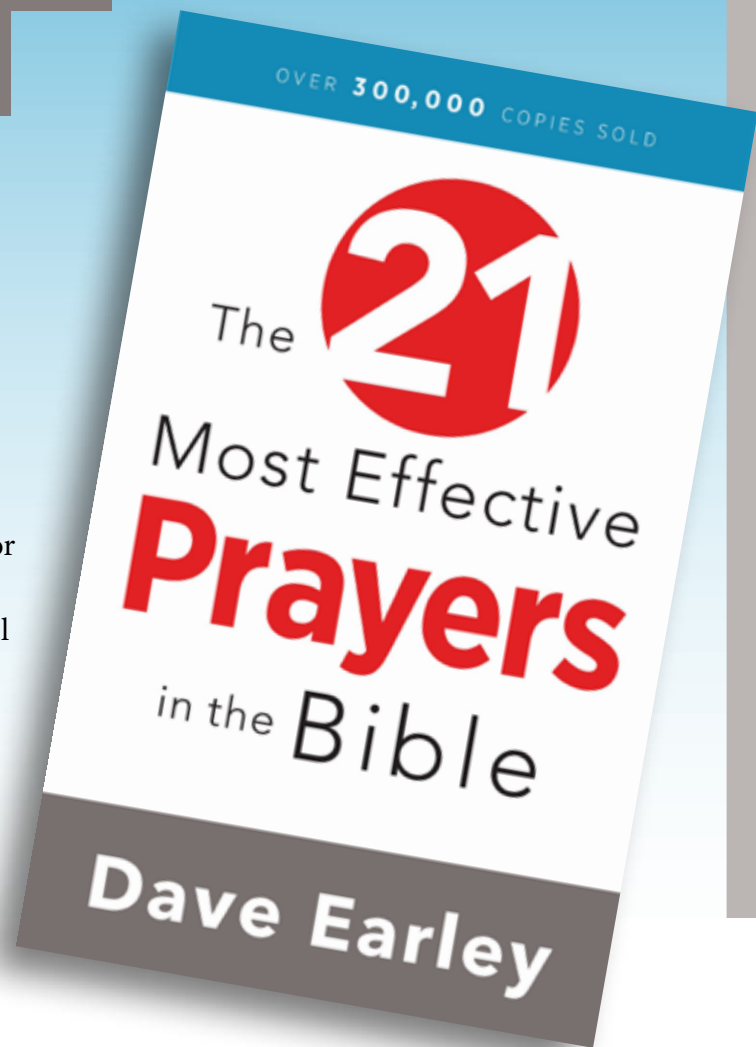
We have focused on revival and spiritual awakening since our inception, but we are still in desperate need for God to move again in our nation. Let's not give up! This issue on “A Fresh Outpouring” and other back issues can be ordered at prayershop.org.

Learn from Prayers in the Bible

That God Said “Yes” To

In *The 21 Most Effective Prayers in the Bible*, author pastor Dave Earley explores 21 prayers in the Scriptures that brought results. He shares personal and modern examples of these prayers in action and offers practical advice and instruction on how you can pray these prayers too . . . and see results!

A great resource for believers who struggle with prayer. Designed for entire congregations to pray through together.



Join the



Days of Prayer

GLOBAL EVENT

Thousands of churches and believers will participate in the 21 Days of Prayer Global event January 1-21, 2024. Entire congregations will develop a culture of prayer in their church as they learn about prayer and pray together. Join them!

Learn more at <https://21daysprayer.org>



Kick Off 2024 with Global 21-Day Prayer Event

“If there were ever a day that the Church globally needs to unite to cry out to God in prayer and seek His face, it is today,” says Darrell Webb, interim executive director, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Prayer Link. “21 Days of Prayer in 2024 is an amazing opportunity for pastors and churches globally to unite our hearts to be a house of prayer for all nations, so that lives will be transformed for His glory.”

Early this year, out of deep concern for the need for revival and a belief in the power of prayer, several pastors and church leaders decided to start 2024 with 21 days of united prayer. As they began to invite their friends to join, they soon realized that this was going to be a global event—and the Global 21 Days of Prayer Event was launched.

21 Days of Prayer GLOBAL EVENT

Using the book *The 21 Most Effective Prayers in the Bible* by Dr. David Earley (one of the founders of event), the Global 21 Days of Prayer Event will include daily emails, short encouraging videos, and online prayer meetings streamed from prayer gatherings all around the globe. Pastors are encouraged to preach on prayer each Sunday during the event. Resources are available to help them do so.

The goal of the event is to help pastors and churches develop a culture of prayer within their churches that moves believers to express their dependency on

God, increase their faith, and impact their families. Event leaders want believers and churches to join in “hammering the throne of heaven” for renewal, restoration, and revival.

“We want to see more people in more churches praying more effectively and with others more often than ever before,” says Earley.

Prayer Connect magazine and the Church Prayer Leaders Network are partnering with Earley and the Global 21 Days of Prayer Event both in promoting the event and by publishing *The 21 Most Effective Prayers in the Bible* through its publishing ministry PrayerShop Publishing.

For more information and to sign yourself or your church up to participate and kick off 2024 with 21 days of prayer, go to 21daysprayer.org.

Sign of Revival with Thousands of Baptisms at Pirates Cove

Inspired by the movie *Jesus Revolution*, thousands of people came from across America and the world to take part in two baptism gatherings at the now-famous Pirates Cove in Newport Beach, CA.

Ocean’s Church organized the first baptism gathering of than 4,000 people on Pentecost Sunday in May, coinciding with a major anniversary of the Christian awakening that saw hundreds of thousands of young people come to Christ in the ‘60s and ‘70s. More than 280 churches and 8,000 attendees witnessed the baptisms from the shore.

The following month, Harvest

Christian Fellowship Senior Pastor Greg Laurie hosted a massive baptism event following his SoCal Harvest Crusade, where 6,794 people made decisions to dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ. Pastor Laurie and other Harvest leaders baptized 4,500 people—considered the largest water baptism in U.S. history.

Laurie, whose salvation story is featured in the *Jesus Revolution* film and who was also baptized at this location 50 years ago with his wife Cathe, commented on the significance in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Jesus Movement. In an interview with Matt Brown, Laurie notes, “There were



never crowds like this 50 years ago in the Jesus Movement. This is new and fresh. What’s happening is clearly inspired by the Jesus People revival. People want to have their own revival today. This *is*

revival-like. No question about it.”

Thousands of people lined the seawall at the iconic Pirates Cove to wait their turn to be baptized.

Newport Beach Mayor pro-tem Will O’Neill calls what’s happening here “incredible.”

“Not only are they baptizing people, but they’re really bringing the community together. And look, we spend a lot of time thinking about water quality here in Newport Beach, but nothing is more pure than what’s happening right now and it’s just a special thing to see today,”

O’Neill says.

A woman named Shelly came from Arizona with her three nieces to be baptized for the first time. “I saw the [*Jesus Revolution*] movie at first and then I realized that we all needed to get baptized,” she explains. “I feel wonderful, it’s a new life.”

Laurie says he’s thrilled to see the impact the movie is having on a new generation, and he’s urging Christians to keep praying for revival so that



what’s happening in Pirates Cove will spread across the nation.

—Adapted from CBN News (*cbn.com*).

Muslims Meeting Jesus at Extraordinary Levels

Two Assembly of God missionaries are sharing multiple firsthand testimonies of Muslims coming to the Christian faith after encountering Jesus Christ in their dreams.

James Bradford, the lead pastor at Central Assembly in Springfield, MO, and missionary Dick Brogden told Assemblies of God News that God is answering the prayers of Christians who are praying for Muslims. They report Muslims are meeting Jesus in their dreams and converting to Christianity at an astounding rate.

“I would even say it’s the normal experience,” Brogden says. “It would be accurate to say that Muslims are responding to Jesus in levels we have never seen, not in 1,400 years!”

“Dreams are contributing to revelation (as in assurance), the process of evangelism, and conversion,” he continues. “So many Muslims reject Islam but know that to follow Jesus will cost them everything. Dreams of Jesus encourage them along the way and give them the comfort that Jesus will be with them—though it cost them everything to follow Him.”

Bradford shares that he was in a Muslim country meeting with church leaders from several Muslim nations. One of the



leaders shared a testimony of a woman who had a dream where she saw Jesus.

“A woman had left the Muslim faith, but she was full of hatred and suspicion of Christians. She didn’t know what to do—she asked God for help,” he explains. “One night she had a dream where she saw a shepherd walking about an empty tomb with a staff. The shepherd walked around it a few times, and then He headed directly toward the woman. He had a loaf of bread in His hands, which He broke and offered to her and as He did, He said, ‘Take, eat, this is My body.’”

He went on to share that the woman, who knew nothing about the Bible, woke up and contacted a person she knew was a Christian.

“He showed her in the Bible where Jesus had said those very words. The woman accepted Jesus as her Savior—

and continues to serve Him to this day,” Bradford says

Bradford and Brogden encourage believers to continue praying because many Muslims still need to encounter Christ.

“There are more unreached people now than in the history of the world,” Brogden says. “In 1982, there were 2.5 billion people in the world classified as ‘lost’ with 1.5 billion classified as unreached. In 2022, the global population reached 8 billion, with 6 billion classified as lost and 3.15 billion being classified as unreached.”

—Taken from CBN News (*cbn.com*).



Prayer Calendar

Day of Prayer for Peace of Jerusalem
Sunday, October 1
daytopray.com

Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church
Sunday, November 5
ldop.ca

Weekend of Prayer to End Slavery and Trafficking
January 13, 2024
facebook.com/weekendofprayer

GOD STILL SPEAKS

The Role of Dreams and Visions

My initial response to the idea of devoting an issue to dreams and visions was simple. *Nab, I think we'll stay away from that. It might be a stretch.*

But then I thought back to the few times in my life when I know God spoke to me through a dream. It doesn't happen often, and I don't typically try to interpret my dreams—even if I can remember them!

However, I recall a dream years ago that led to reconnecting with someone from high school. In my dream, she was in distress. It was so vivid that I woke up alarmed. I didn't know if it was true—and to this day I still don't know. But it prompted me to pray for her.

Shortly after I was surprised to learn that a sports team from my high school

was in the state tournament. On the chance that she might be there, I headed downtown, praying that perhaps we could connect. I sat down in an arena full of thousands of people, looked down the row, and there she was!

We exchanged contact information, which led to a renewed friendship that gave me opportunities to share Christ with her.

On another occasion, I dreamed that I was going to people in my church, grabbing them by their collars, and imploring them to consider a senior pastoral candidate. I said we needed to help him accomplish God's greater calling in his life—advancing the prayer movement. Now, I'm generally not a collar-grabber, but it was so clear in my dream that people needed to wake up to this potential of God's invitation.

At the time, our church was searching for a new senior pastor—and this

man was not in the running. But instead of approaching members of the search team, I just prayed because I believed I was not to unduly influence them.

Eventually, the leadership redirected their efforts and asked this pastor to candidate for the position. On the day that we voted to call him as our pastor, he addressed the congregation and used the same imploring words I used in my dream.

You won't convince me those dreams weren't from God!


IN THIS ISSUE

For some of you, this is an unusual topic. For others, this is a common practice in your stream of prayer. By tackling this theme, we hope you will at least pay attention to different ways God might speak to you. Scripture reveals God speaking through dreams and visions, so we know it is biblical!

But there are also cautions in seeking God through anything other than His Word. You will find in this issue a balance of caution, instruction, and openness to the many ways God speaks.

Joseph Winger outlines how God spoke in unusual ways throughout Scripture. God *wants* to communicate with us—primarily through His Word—but He might use different means. Dick Eastman invites three questions we should ask: is the source from flesh, the enemy, or from God?

Real-life stories of dreams and visions from the 10/40 Window have convinced Fred Markert that God's Kingdom also advances through the supernatural. He encourages an openness beyond our cultural norms.

For the most part, I don't remember my dreams. And I've never had a vision. But I believe that in the days to come, God may surprise all of us with supernatural, Kingdom-advancing strategies—*because He can!* 

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect* and author of *Prayer That's Caught and Taught*.



God's Strategic Communication Tools

DREAMS AND VISIONS IN THE BIBLE

Standing there rather awkwardly, I prayed under my breath, “God, help me with this.”

It was the second time in a week that I had been asked by someone in my church to interpret a dream. As I nervously shifted back and forth on my feet, I recalled the words of Joseph: “Do not interpretations belong to God?” (Gen. 40:8). Whew, am I glad it’s on His shoulders! While some people expect a pastor to have all the answers, I’ve never felt comfortable trying to fill God’s shoes.

I calmly prayed for an interpretation of the dream—and drew a blank. “I haven’t a clue,” I told the person. “But let’s ask the Lord for clarification. I know He will lead you to a Bible verse or someone who can give you insights.”

God did. Later that person told me how the Lord clarified the dream through a certain Bible passage.

GOD STILL SPEAKS

Our God is a remarkable communicator.

He continually gives us feedback, direction, and truth—and one of the ways He does is through dreams and visions. I find that God usually speaks to me through His Word, but on occasion He has guided me by a dream into a clearer example of His will.

For example, 27 years ago I was awakened sobbing from a dream that to this day grips me with an intense passion to fulfill God’s call on my life. The message was simple. The Lord communicated through a dream that He would use me to inspire people to have hearts for Him. Before I share God’s Word publicly, I often recall that dream and ask for His grace to make it so.

Jack Deere, in *Surprised by the Voice of God*, defines dreams as “images—accompanied by thoughts and emotions—we ‘see’ while we are asleep. . . . Visions are dreams we have while we are awake.” In some cases, Deere notes, the Bible uses the terms “dream” and “vision” interchangeably, as in Daniel 7:1–2.

In the Old Testament, God frequently communicated to His people in dreams and visions. In the New Testament, He continued to communicate with His servants through

BY JOSEPH WINGER

**A particularly striking
or vivid dream
may be God's way of
directing you.**

visions, but, interestingly, only six dreams are recorded. These are all found in Matthew, and all are about Jesus. Five were at the beginning of His life and one at the end of His life (Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19–20, 22; 27:19). Four times Joseph received a dream guiding him in caring for the baby Jesus. God warned the wise men by way of a dream not to return to Herod. Then Pilate's wife "suffered a great deal" in a dream about Jesus, and she warned her husband to leave Him alone.

When I look at all the biblical references regarding dreams and visions, I see seven major reasons for this type of special revelation.

- **To expand our understanding of God.**

Isaiah and Ezekiel were two prophets whose lives were changed forever by seeing visions of God's majesty and awesome might: "I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne" (Isa. 6:1) and "The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (Ezek. 1:1).

- **To warn us.** If we are not listening to the Lord's warnings in His Word, He sometimes resorts to cautioning us in the night. If we aren't alert enough to discern our errors, He can use a special revelation to get our attention!

"For God does speak. . . . In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber in their beds . . . to turn them from wrongdoing and keep them from pride, to preserve them from the pit" (Job 33:14–18).

- **To build courage and strength.** Both Jacob and Paul needed assurance of God's presence to take the next step in their faith journey. These revelations from the Lord gave them the confidence to go forward boldly.

"[Jacob] had a dream . . . and [the Lord] said: . . . 'I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. . . . I will not leave you

until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen. 28:12–13, 15).

"One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you. . .'" (Acts 18:9–10).

- **To instruct us to go a new direction.** It should bring us great comfort to know that the Lord is faithful to direct us when we need to make a change.

"The angel of God said to [Jacob] in the dream . . . 'Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land'" (Gen. 31:11, 13).

"After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10).

- **To prepare us for something to come.** Just as Joseph's dream kept him persevering through the hard times, a dream or vision can sustain our hope when we are going through the difficult times of waiting for God to fulfill His promise.

"Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, ' . . . We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it'" (Gen. 37:5–8).

- **To give counsel to leaders.** In Genesis and Daniel, we see the Lord frequently using dreams to speak to governmental leaders. Based on these examples, we can pray for God to use dreams to counsel those in authority over us.

"Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do'" (Gen. 41:25).

- **To give us direction and guidance.** Some biblical dreams and visions were very specific and direct. A particularly striking or vivid dream may be God's way of directing you. Here is how the Lord used a vision to tell Ananias about a vision that He was giving to Paul:

"The Lord called to [Ananias] in a vision . . . 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight'" (Acts 9:10–12).

BALANCE AND DISCERNMENT

When it comes to dreams and visions, it seems believers fall into one of two camps. One camp “oohs” and “aahs” each time someone shares a spiritual-sounding experience. The second group thinks anything resembling a supernatural encounter with God indicates either psychosis or demonization. The Bible, however, provides us with a balance: an understanding of three potential sources of dreams:

- **God Himself:** “And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night” (Gen. 46:2; see also Num. 12:6).
- **Subconscious inspiration or human intervention:** “as when a hungry person dreams of eating, but awakens hungry still” (Isa. 29:8). Regarding the message of false prophets, God warns, “They speak visions from their own minds,

not from the mouth of the LORD” (Jer. 23:16).

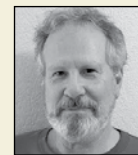
- **Demonic:** “The idols speak deceitfully, diviners see visions that lie; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain” (Zech. 10:2).

Because dreams and visions can come from several different sources, we must not accept everything that seems spiritual as if it comes from God (1 John 4:1–3). On the other hand, we must not categorically reject the possibility that God can speak to us in this way.

Our God is a master communicator. Dreams and visions are about Him longing to speak to us. Maybe He will use a dream because that is the only time we are slowed down long enough to hear Him. Through dreams and visions, God

can speak to a child like Samuel (1 Sam. 3:10, 15), console an old man like Abraham (Gen. 15:1), or express His heart to believers like you and me.


When Peter quoted the prophet Joel, he did not mention a time when God would cease to use these methods to communicate to His people: “Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). Quite the contrary, Peter implied with words like “in the last days” and “before . . . the day of the Lord” that dreams and visions are communication tools that God can use for believers of all ages and in all ages. **PC**



JOSEPH WINGER serves as pastor of strategic prayer and evangelism at Boulder Street Church in Colorado Springs, CO. After 50 years, he is still fascinated with the wonderful adventure of prayer and loves telling others about Jesus.



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 **Love 2 Pray** is a ministry of the Church Prayer Leaders Network and *Prayer Connect* magazine.

A person with short brown hair, wearing a white hooded jacket, is sitting on a large, grey rock. They are viewed from behind, looking up at a vast night sky. The sky is filled with numerous stars of varying brightness and a prominent white crescent moon in the upper left quadrant. Below the dark night sky, there is a layer of soft, white, and light blue clouds. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

How to Know If It's Really from God

SUPERNATURAL | OR | INDIGESTION?

Years ago, I had some bad eating habits that taught me about dreams: not all of them originate from God.

An ill-timed hot fudge sundae (consumed about 10 p.m.), just after four big slices of pepperoni pizza (covered with hot peppers), followed by four Oreo cookies, plus a couple of dill pickles washed down with a glass of chocolate milk can cause the beasts of Revelation to dance at the foot of your bed in some scary dreams.

Since then, I've tried to moderate my eating habits. I'm still aware, however, that most dreams are the result of factors even scientists cannot fully explain and are not necessarily communications of a divine origin.

I recall, with a chuckle, a time early in our marriage when my stomach became upset after a meal. My wife Dee has always been an excellent cook, so I'm sure it wasn't her cooking.

Later that night, I dreamed that Dee placed a large plate of roast beef and potatoes on the table. Beside it, she set a bowl of bright

pink gravy that gave off an unusual aroma.

"Why on earth is the gravy pink, and why does it smell like peppermint?" I asked.

"I'm sorry, honey," she responded, "but the only roast I could buy at the store was spoiled and I knew it would make you sick. So, I'm serving Pepto-Bismol for gravy."

No doubt someone into dream symbolism could come up with an interesting interpretation for that dream. My interpretation, however, is that I had a mild case of food poisoning!

IS IT GOD?

Still, dreams and visions *can* originate from God, and Scripture is replete with examples of how God uses them to caution, correct, convict, confirm, and otherwise guide His children. A vision is generally defined as a picture that unfolds while you're in a conscious, waking state. A dream is something that unfolds in an unconscious, sleeping state.

In either case, how can you be sure it's really a message from God? I believe there are several criteria we can use to help us.

BY DICK EASTMAN

God's Word is our standard in all matters of divine guidance, whether it's an impression, a quiet voice in our heart, or a dream or vision.

First, evaluate the source of a dream or vision in the same way you would evaluate any divine guidance. Years ago, I learned an interesting formula from Joy Dawson, a Bible teacher from New Zealand who profoundly influenced my life in this area. Using James 4:7–8, Joy explained that there are three possible “voices” or sources of guidance: the voice of self, the voice of Satan, and the voice of God.

James wrote, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. . . .” (James 4:7–8). To submit yourself to God is to deal with the voice of self. To resist the devil is to deal with the enemy's voice. To come near to God is to prepare yourself to hear His voice.

Applying this to a dream or vision, we should first ask these three questions: does this have its source in my flesh, does it appear to be inspired by the enemy, or do I have a clear sense that God is truly in it?

Second, examine the possible interpretations or conclusions from this dream or vision in light of God's Word. Will it lead you in any way to violate God's Word?

God's Word is our standard in all matters of divine guidance, whether it's an impression, a quiet voice in our heart, or a dream or vision. For example, a dream in which a married man sees himself leaving his wife to marry another woman is clearly contrary to God's will. It violates Scripture.

Third, expect God to show you, directly and clearly, if a dream or vision is from Him. This takes considerable faith and must be firmly grounded in God's Word. Simply stated, ask God to make it clear to you if this is really from Him.

George Mueller was one of the great men of faith of the past 150 years. He trusted God, by faith alone, to feed thousands of orphans in Bristol,

England, in the last half of the 19th century. His personal formula for determining God's will was to put his mind in “neutral” so that he could truly say he had no will of his own in a given matter. Then he would ask God boldly and directly what His will was for a given situation—and he expected to hear specifically from God.

Fourth, expose any demonic or human sources concerning a dream or vision. We must avoid at all cost any tendency to pursue or adopt New Age or occult interpretations of dreams or visions. Entire sections of secular bookstores are devoted to this subject. To consult such books or online resources leaves us open to demonic influences. Also be wary of believers who claim to have a list of interpretations for various symbols or dreams.

Fifth, exercise caution in sharing your dreams or visions—and any conclusions regarding them—with others. Even if you think your dream is from God, a good rule of thumb is to “sleep on it” (no pun intended). If your impressions from the dream or vision are very strong, and the details seem clearly to convey a message from the Lord, you may want to write them down and take adequate time to pray over it. Ask God to speak to you directly and clearly before you tell others.

Sixth, eliminate any natural (physical, emotional, or circumstantial) causes for your dream. One indication that a dream may be from the Lord (although this is not always the case) is if the exact dream reoccurs and has clear spiritual symbolism or meaning. Generally, a dream caused by what you eat is a one-time occurrence. Ask God if a dream might have been caused by what you ate or other circumstances that may be going on in your life.

Seventh, establish conclusions by seeking other avenues of confirmation. Look again at God's Word and circumstances, and, at the proper time, seek wise counsel from others you know and trust who live deeply in God's Word.

This is not contrary to exercising caution in telling others. We should take the step of telling others only after much prayer over a dream or vision. Seeking wise counsel is recommended as further confirmation.

Finally, endeavor to obey God in carrying out the direction of the dream or vision. In some cases, this may not involve action right now as much as more prayer and preparation to be a

part of the ultimate fulfillment of what God has revealed.

CLARIFYING AND ENCOURAGING

Occasionally, God may give you a mental picture or impression so vivid that you might classify it as a vision. For me, this is sometimes how God clarifies direction for the global ministry I founded, Every Home for Christ. On other occasions, He has used this means to help me carry out a particular assignment.

This was the case when God used just such an experience to help me encourage the family and friends of a close friend who passed away.

Flying into New Mexico late on a Saturday night for the Sunday afternoon memorial service, I reclined my seat, exhausted from a busy week of travel. I felt unprepared to bring the eulogy for this remarkable friend and coworker of more than 20 years.

I wrestled with what I might say to honor Jean's memory. She had touched so many lives in a quiet yet profound way. It was Jean who gave me the idea (and concept) to write my book *The Hour that Changes the World*.

As I pushed my seat back, a sudden mental picture came with such clarity that I have no hesitation describing it as a vision. A hand was painting Jean's life on a brilliant white canvas, and the colors and light were exploding in extraordinary beauty. At first, I thought I was the painter, and I marveled at the fact that although I'm no artist, this was a true "Thomas Kinkade." I quickly realized it was God's hand, not mine, that was painting Jean's life.

Then, something even more amazing happened. The colors in the portrait not only radiated light, but they gave off a fragrance like the aroma of a thousand beautiful perfumes mingled together.

In that moment, God reminded me

of the passage of Scripture that had come to my mind a few days earlier when I first was asked to speak at Jean's memorial: "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Cor. 2:14–15, ESV).

At the memorial I shared this "vision of light," and when I told how the portrait gave forth a fragrance like a thousand perfumes, several people in the congregation gasped noticeably. Later I was told why. On the evening of Jean's homegoing earlier that week, several of her best friends had gathered outside her home just to be close at that difficult time. They knew Jean was not expected to live long, but they had no idea she would enter heaven that very night. They

didn't want to disturb Jean or her family. So, they just stood quietly outside in the shadows of some nearby trees, praying.

It was a calm, mild spring evening without any breeze. One who was there that night told me, "Suddenly, a beautiful breeze began blowing through the trees, though strangely none of the leaves rustled. The breeze carried a fragrance so noticeable and wonderful that we all looked at each other, stunned. We were convinced it was supernatural."

They later learned that at that very moment Jean slipped into God's presence. She had, indeed, been a sweet perfume, a fragrance presented by Christ to God! **PC**



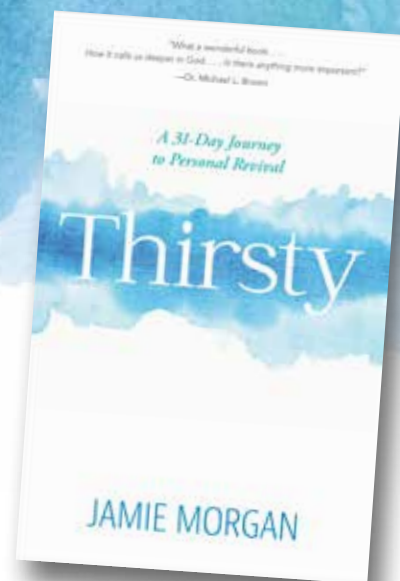
DICK EASTMAN is chief prayer officer of Every Home for Christ, a ministry he founded and served as international president for 34 years. He is also a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

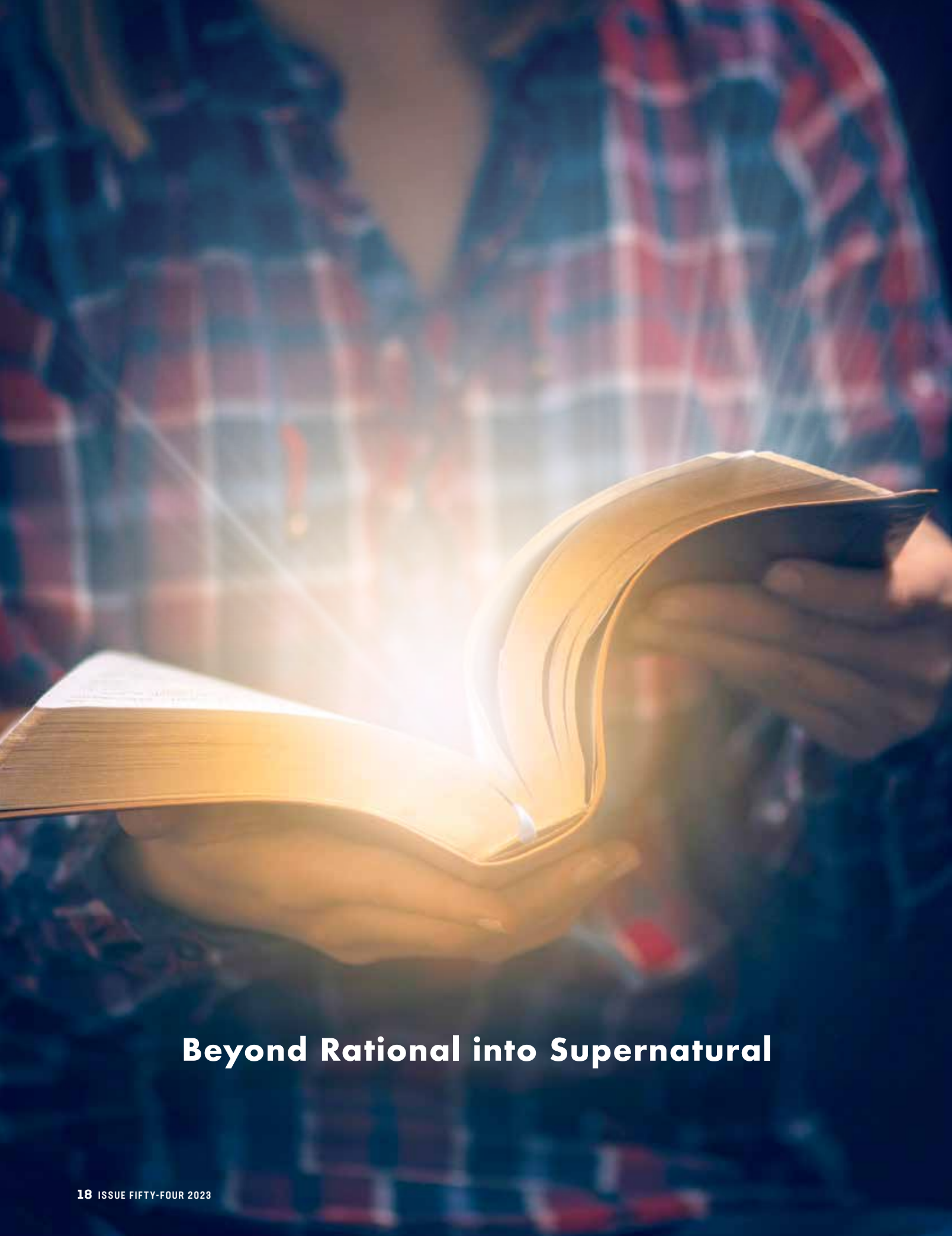
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Beyond Rational into Supernatural

ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM IN OTHER CULTURES

I started to go to sleep and suddenly my bedroom was filled with light. At the foot of my bed stood Jesus, and I knew He had come to kill me.”

This is how a new convert, a university professor, excitedly recounted her conversion experience to one of our Youth With a Mission (YWAM) workers in the 10/40 Window. The day before, she had marched out of his English class after he began to share about Jesus with his students. As she stormed out, she cursed the worker.

“I cursed you all the way home,” she told him. “I went home and I lay in bed and I was praying, ‘Allah, I want you to kill those people because they are not English teachers—they are missionaries and I want them out of my country! Kill them!’”

It was then that she saw the vision of Jesus standing at the foot of her bed.

“I knew He had come to kill me because I was asking Allah to kill His workers. So, I got out of bed on my hands and knees. I was trembling, waiting for Him to slay me.

As I was trembling at His feet, I started to feel love wash over my body—love and mercy.”

“I looked up at Him,” she said. “Jesus was so beautiful, I had to give Him my heart.”

GOD WORKS SUPERNATURALLY

Stories like this are amazing and plentiful. Thousands of documented stories—about real people who need real breakthroughs and real revelation that lead to salvation—have poured out of the 10/40 Window. If you have any doubts God is still using dreams and visions in the lives of unbelievers who need a touch from Him, you won’t have to look far to find proof.

YWAM shares the gospel in 10/40 Window nations (which includes Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African countries). In just one of those countries alone, experiences of supernatural dreams and visions occur about twice a year. Converts are mostly brought to Christ through blood, sweat, and tears: hours and hours of witnessing.

BY FRED MARKERT

The rest of the world
is more open to
the supernatural,
and God meets people
where they are.

But there are times when God uses the supernatural to break through. God wants to support His people who are doing His Kingdom work, and He sometimes does that through dreams and visions.

One worker, an engineer who felt ill-equipped when recruited to teach English in a Muslim country, witnessed such an experience of God's power and support. One of his students, a 19-year-old woman, asked him if he had any American movies that she could take home to practice her English. He used the opportunity to give her a copy of the *Jesus* video.

When she returned the next day, she told him, "My heart was warmed to learn about Jesus! But my English was not good enough—I couldn't understand it all. I wish I could understand more."

So, he sent her home with the *Jesus* film in her own language. She was back in class the next day with a huge grin on her face. She did not talk through the whole class but continued to grin until the worker finally stopped the class and took her out in the hallway to ask if she was all right.

"Oh, yes!" she replied. "I was watching the *Jesus* video last night and Jesus stepped right off the television screen into my living room. He was so beautiful, I got down on my knees in front of Him and I gave Him my life."

GOD'S UNCONVENTIONAL WAYS

You may be wondering why God would use these unconventional methods in other cultures. He does it primarily to get their attention. He does it so they'll be able to say, "This happened to me."

The cultures of the 10/40 Window are mostly storytelling cultures. They have a strong oral

tradition. They sit around dinner tables and chai (tea) shops and share what happened to them with others.

But God also uses dreams and visions to link the supernatural with the practical or natural. Jesus said, "... true worshipers will worship the Father in *Spirit* and in *truth*" (John 4:23, emphasis added). The Spirit side pertains to the supernatural things that are outside of our "normal" experience—the unexplainable things that only God can do. The truth side deals with God's practical work and revelation that are part of our everyday journey with Him. Spirit, for example, would be when Peter stood up and spoke extemporaneously on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Truth would be to study to show yourself approved (2 Tim. 2:15).

In western culture, our worldview shuts out the spirit side of things. Our rationalistic, linear way of thinking keeps us operating in the natural realm rather than the supernatural. But the rest of the world is more open to the supernatural, and God meets people where they are. He will use whatever avenues people are predisposed toward to reveal Himself.

Islam is a religion with animistic leanings. Trying to appease the Jinn (bad spirits, from which we get our word "genie") so that they won't mess up your life is commonplace for the Muslim. So YWAMers in the radically Muslim countries typically ask God to use dreams, visions, and revelations to communicate God's truth to the people.

One of the first YWAM converts from Islam was a university professor. YWAM workers developed a relationship with him, and he was given a copy of the New Testament. He took the copy home and was reading it in bed. He got very angry because it declared that Jesus was God. In his anger, he threw the New Testament against the wall. He reported later that the Jinn showed up and kept him awake all night by jumping on his bed.

The Jinn are keeping me awake because I threw a holy book against the wall, he thought. (The New Testament is considered a holy book by Muslims, even though they believe it is corrupted.) This happened every night for two weeks. The professor finally went to the Muslim holy men and asked for prayer. Nothing changed. After two exhausting weeks, he turned to the ones who gave him the New Testament. He asked for and received a deliverance prayer from the workers.

That night the Jinn showed up, jumping on the professor's bed as usual. But an angel appeared and the Jinn fled. The angel continued to stand guard until the man was able to go to sleep. The Jinn never came back, and the professor became a convert.

In all these instances where we see God using dreams and visions, it is *always to advance the purposes of God's Kingdom on the planet*. There is always a practical application of the supernatural spirit side to a real-world situation.

Paul's vision of a man calling him to Macedonia (Acts 16:6–10), for instance, changed the direction of the gospel. Paul was about to take the gospel eastward when that vision caused one of the biggest shifts in spiritual history. From that point on, the gospel moved westward toward Greece, Europe, and then the United States, only later moving into Asia. If Paul hadn't had that vision, we would be the equivalent of the 10/40 Window! The people from India and China would be coming to share the gospel with us.

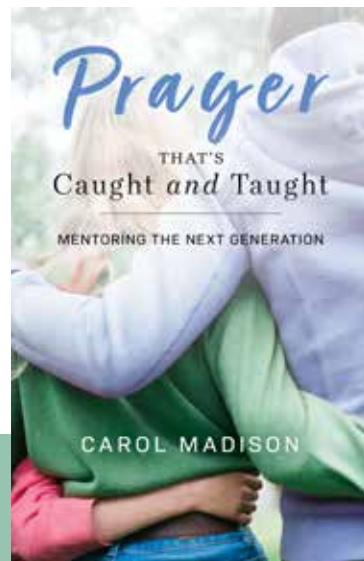
KINGDOM EXPANSION

As our post-modern culture looks more to imagery and the power of story, God will undoubtedly begin to use supernatural channels in our society as well. He makes the gospel "user-friendly," and this generation is ripe for these kinds of experiences. Today's society has an increasing hunger for the supernatural, which is evident even at the box office. The influx and incorporation of foreign religions and world views into our society has left our country looking for—desperate for—supernatural things. It has brought an unhealthy interest in the "magical" side of the supernatural that is devoid of morality. But it has also opened an avenue for God to begin speaking powerfully through dreams and visions.

God will do this—not for the "chills

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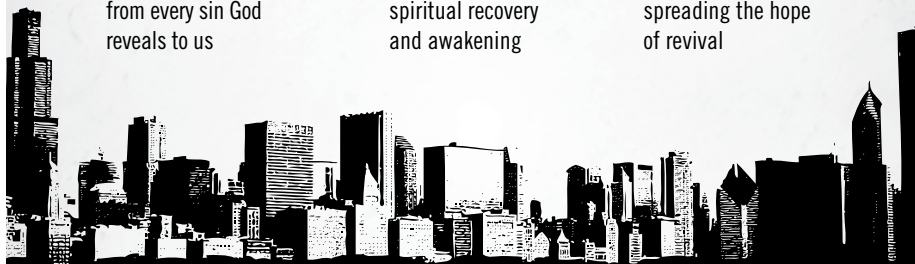
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and thrills” of subjective experience, but for the expansion of His Kingdom. He will supernaturally inject the Kingdom into everyday life to move the world closer to His purposes.

I ask God continually for spiritual gifts—for spiritual expression in my own life. I pray for supernatural direction in my ministry. Every night I ask the Lord to give me dreams of things that will be significant for the ministry. As many as two or three times a week I see people in my dreams. The content of the dream is usually inconsequential, but I clearly see faces of people I have never met before. Because I travel so frequently, I spend a great deal of time in airplanes and airports. Invariably I recognize people from my dreams on a plane or in an airport terminal. When I see these people, I know they are people God has been preparing. When I share my faith with them, nine times out of

ten they are ripe to hear the gospel. This happens so regularly that I have come to expect it. It is a supernatural experience that I have prayed for, but it’s used solely to extend the Kingdom in people’s lives and hearts.

God wants to awaken His Church to become the place where the world can find the supernatural solutions it is looking for. We need to begin to seek the spiritual gifts in earnest, praying for a powerful release of dreams, visions, and revelations to our society—just as has been prayed for years for the 10/40 Window.

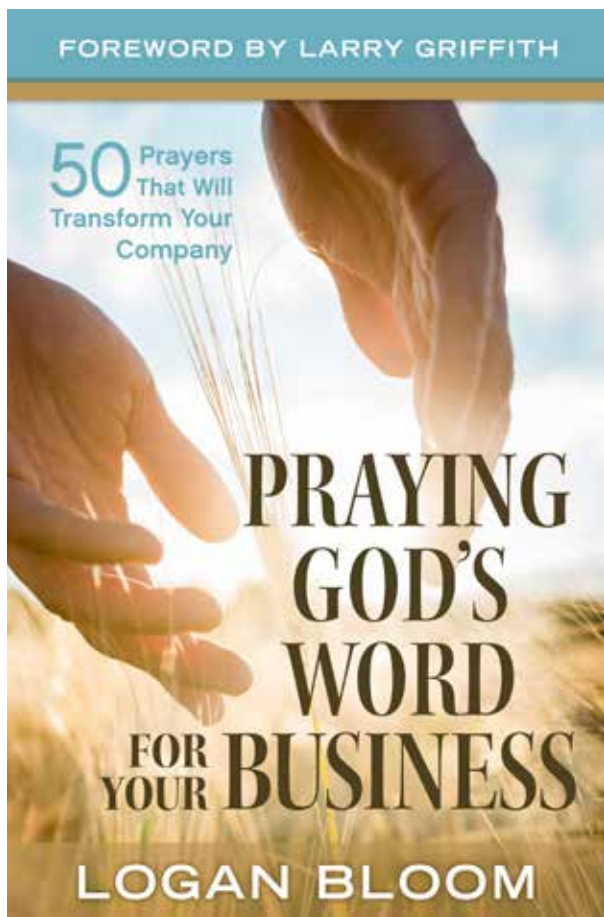
Some of the best advice I ever got was from a Bayou priest in Louisiana with an eighth-grade education: “Fred, if you keep doin’ what yer doin’, yer gonna get what you got.” What we “got” in our country today

is a result of how we’ve lived and prayed. If we keep doing the same things, we are just going to get the same results. If we want to see greater breakthroughs, however, especially as we move into a future where we are facing some of the greatest challenges our country has faced in any generation, we need to start living and praying in very different ways. We need to ask God to do here what He is doing in the 10/40 Window.

As we move into a season of history in which we need supernatural guidance more than ever, we need the power of God beyond the natural realm to help us live out His purposes. **PC**



FRED MARKERT is the international director of Youth With a Mission’s Strategic Frontiers. In this capacity, he focuses on planting churches that will disciple nations among the unreached people groups of the 10/40 Window.



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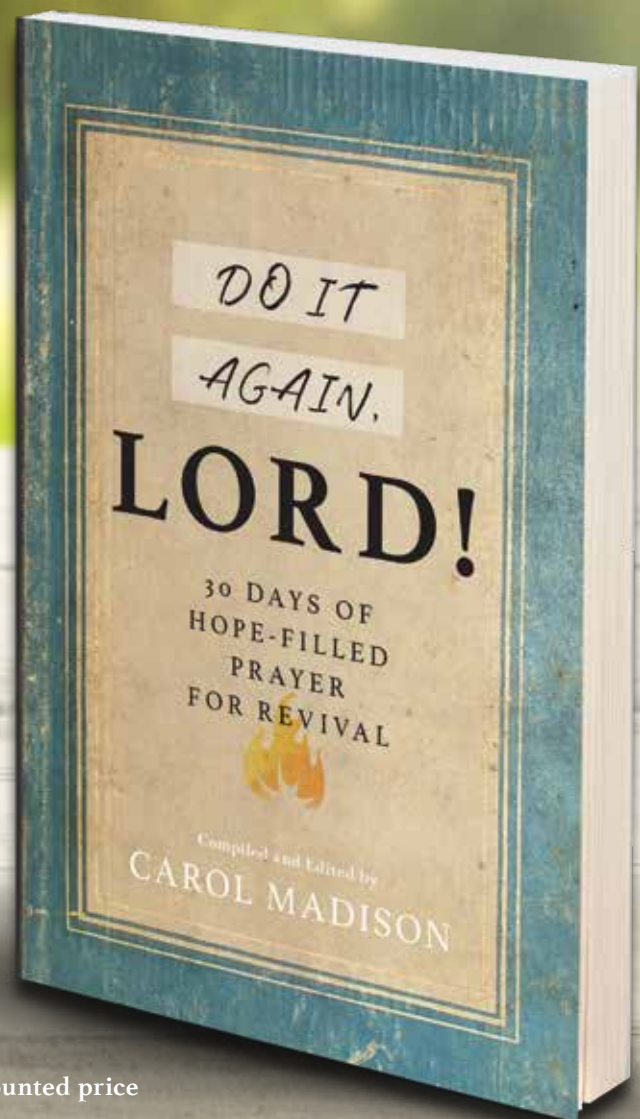
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A person is sitting on a ledge, their back to the camera, looking out over a city skyline. The scene is viewed through a chain-link fence that occupies the foreground. The person is wearing a red hoodie and blue jeans. The city skyline in the background includes several tall buildings, with the Transamerica Pyramid being a prominent feature. The overall tone is somewhat somber and contemplative.

RECLA

Meeting the
Challenge on
Your Knees

BROKEN CITIES



The relationship between prayer and cities has been etched in my mind and my ministry from the earliest years. My wife Donna and I married at a young age, while we were still in college between our junior and senior years. Soon after, we both began to sense the Lord calling us to plant a church somewhere. As we prayed about where to go, we saw the connection between prayer and cities as the Lord guided us to Buffalo, NY.

Believe it or not, when we moved to Buffalo, it was the fastest-shrinking city in America. It was also in the middle of the crack epidemic of the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The entire city was struggling, and we experienced it firsthand with drive-by shootings on our very street.

However, we felt the Lord's call to be there and knew that prayer was essential.

How did we know? We asked the Lord, "What is Your plan for our lives?"

MAKE US SURE

I graduated from college and started seminary when I got to Buffalo, so I had a lot to learn. But we knew enough to know that prayer was vital, and we began to pray. I remember hearing a pastor say, "Don't go somewhere, don't do something until you are sure God called you to do it."

We prayed, "Lord, how would You make us sure?"

I went to visit Buffalo. Donna was working at the time and couldn't go on the pre-visit trip. I prayed a lot. I remember praying at a certain intersection on Prospect Avenue where it crosses right in the inner city of Buffalo. I said, "Lord, is this what You have in mind for us?"

The Lord led us clearly.

Back then we didn't have cell phones—or at least, I didn't have one. I got into the car and began to drive home. We had been praying and fasting for over a week at that time, saying, "Lord, we can't do anything without the clarity that You give us. We look to what You did in the Book of Acts. And we look for You to do it in our hearts today."

When I arrived at home, Donna said right away, "I've been praying. God wants us to go to Buffalo."

And I said, "Yes, God wants us to go to Buffalo."

God called us. He called us as we prayed.

By Dr. Ed Stetzer

TO THIS DAY

pastors come together to pray for their cities, following the example of Acts to start with prayer.

PRAYER IS NATURAL FOUNDATION

When you know the Lord has led you to do something, you step out in obedience to what the Lord has in mind for you. Just as in the early Church in the Book of Acts, we went to the Lord in prayer. He gave us His direction.

Two thousand years ago in another city, Jerusalem, they went to the Lord in prayer—and they got God’s direction. What does Acts say to us about prayer and cities? As Trey Kent and Kie Bowman show in *City of Prayer: Transform Your Community through Praying Churches*, prayer is central to any city movement.

We can look to the Church in Acts for wisdom. One thing is clear: they met the challenge of their time on their knees. Prayer serves as the natural foundation of the Spirit’s work in Acts. There are at least four ways that the Book of Acts reminds us of these truths.

First, the church was birthed in prayer. Acts 1:14 tells us, “They all joined together constantly in prayer.” Following the Lord’s instruction to His followers after His resurrection, these believers gathered for prayer. Before anything else took place, they prayed together. To this day pastors come together to pray for their cities, following the example of Acts to start with prayer.

In Acts 1 we read how the leaders had to replace Judas, and their initial response was to pray for wisdom for Judas’ successor. In Acts 2:42, Luke says when the church was born: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and

to prayer.” In fact, both Acts 3:1 and Acts 16:16 show how daily prayer marked their routine.

Second, the early Church turned first to prayer in times of difficulty. The believers’ devotion to prayer in Acts speaks directly to where we are today. In Acts 4, the early Church faced not a global pandemic but growing persecution. The band of believers faced oppression for their faith in Jesus first by religious authorities and later by Rome. A lame man was healed (Acts 3:1–10) and thousands more were converted, but the religious leaders only saw this as a negative circumstance.

Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin and their threats (Acts 4:18). They were basically told, “No, you can’t speak about Jesus anymore.” It only got worse: threats started and beatings began in Acts 5, until people started dying for the faith, beginning in Acts 7—starting first with Stephen. After that, a general persecution began (Acts 8:1–4).

When Peter and John were released, they gathered to pray with the believers. Cities today are broken in so many ways. The first corporate prayer recorded in Acts is in chapter 4, and it’s in response to difficult times. They prayed to God as Creator and sovereign, acknowledging how broken their world was (vs. 23–26).

As we pray for our cities, we can’t ignore the brokenness as we seek the Lord on their behalf. But just like Peter and John, we also proclaim God’s work in redemption (vs. 27–28) and seek the

Lord for boldness and power to witness (vs. 28–31).

City prayer leads churches to God’s mission. When we start with prayer, focus on a sovereign God, and understand that sin cannot stop God’s plan, we turn to the mission.

The passage goes on to describe actual ways they helped the broken and needy (Acts 4:32–37). Like them, our witness brings with the verbal proclamation the implications of serving and standing with those in need. Times of difficulty can either turn us inward (focusing on ourselves and our discomfort), or they can turn us upward then outward, renewing our devotion to the mission, led by the Spirit.

Third, prayer was as important to the leadership of the early Church as preaching. If you are a preacher reading this, I don’t need to convince you of the importance of preaching. When we read Acts, we see constant references to prayer. We can think of prayer and preaching separately and not bring them together adequately. Sometimes, we may think the most important thing we do is preaching. But if you read Acts closely, you see that prayer is mentioned far more frequently.

How did the apostles deal with issues that came up in the church? They had the issue of widows being neglected (Acts 6). This was a real problem that needed a good solution. The early Church gave priority to caring for the most vulnerable; we should as well.

But how did the apostles respond? First, *they didn’t stop doing what God called them to do* because there was a need. Every need is not a calling. They didn’t overreact, stop everything, and physically meet the need themselves. There is a time to do that, but most of the time this is an opportunity to involve others in ministry as we see in Acts 6.

On the other hand, *they didn’t ignore the real need* as an inconvenience or as unimportant. These widows weren’t

whiners; they had a real need. Peter and John reminded the church of their calling and then sought the Lord for a solution, noting: “and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (vs. 4).

Prayer and the ministry of the Word. Both matter a great deal. But it’s too easy today to focus on the ministry of the Word and neglect prayer. Could the issues of our time serve as an indictment of our prayerlessness? Do you see prayer as important for impacting your city as you value the ministry of the Word? When we say things like, “Well, there’s nothing we can do but pray,” what does that really say about what we believe regarding prayer’s power?

Finally, the Book of Acts is largely a series of answered prayers. Imagine if this is how your city is described: “What we see happening in our city is largely the result of a series of answered prayers.”

Peter prayed for Dorcas [Tabitha] in Acts 9:40 and she was revived. In fact, it was while praying that Peter began to see God showed no partiality. It surprised Peter in the way God answered: “The grace of Christ was available to all.”

At the same time, God heard the prayers of Cornelius and sent him to Peter to hear the gospel in Acts 10. In Acts 12 the church prayed for Peter’s deliverance, and it happened even though they were surprised God answered it. The church prayed and sent out missionaries in Acts 13:2–3: “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

INFLUENCE YOUR CITY

It is worth remembering what S.D. Gordon observed, “You can do more than

pray after you pray, but you cannot do more than pray until you pray.”

When we begin with prayer, we follow the example of the Church in Acts, and we take the most powerful step to influence our cities. They faced a variety of crises of their own: persecution, being misunderstood, the weighty task of taking the gospel to the whole world, the needs of people in the churches, and more.

We have our own challenges today, but the solution in each case is the same. We begin with concerted, unified, and burdened prayer. ☞

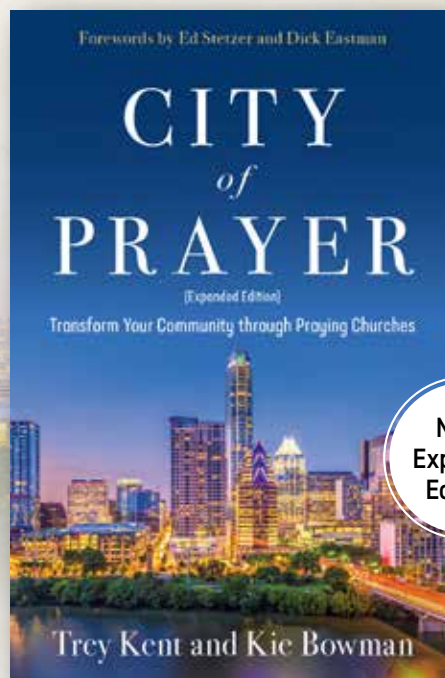


ED Stetzer is the dean of the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University. He was formerly executive director of The Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College.

“When we begin with prayer, we follow the example of the church in Acts, and we take the most powerful step to influence our cities.”

—Dr Ed Stetzer from the Foreword of the new *City of Prayer (Expanded Edition)*

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How to Pray through the News

In the past, we had limited access to information about events that were happening outside of our own community. But with social media and mass communication, we now know what's happening—anywhere in the world—from our computer, tablet, or phone.

Being so connected to events around the world can feel emotionally exhausting. Fear, grief, and even anger can quickly fill our hearts as we see stories of violence, hatred, sickness, and disaster flash across our screens.

As believers, what are we to do when the weight of this sinful world seems to

pummel us on all sides? How can we use the news to be a light to the world around us?

Praying through the news is one easy habit that allows us to surrender our worries to God while also intentionally lifting up communities that need to experience His healing and love in tangible ways.

Here are some tips on how to pray through the news:

1. Pray for the victims. Whether you're reading about a hurricane that has ravaged a town, a city that has suffered a mass shooting, or a country that is facing high crime levels, stop and pray for those immediately affected by the event.

2. Pray for the community. When a significant event happens, the whole local community is impacted. Pray that local churches, schools, businesses, and more will rally together and support each other. Ask God to make people sensitive to His hand at work in the midst of it all.

3. Pray for local believers to be Jesus' hands and feet. We're all called to be Jesus' hands and feet to the world. One way we can do that is by reaching out to our own communities in moments of crisis. Pray that local believers will be equipped and willing to shine God's light, helping to bring healing and restoration to their community in the days and weeks following an event.

4. Pray for God to be glorified. The news is full of stories of hurting, broken people and communities. But we serve a loving God who can redeem any situation and ultimately glorify Himself. Pray that God will do just that, and that people will be sensitive to His hand at



work—whether they have an intimate relationship with Him or learn about Him for the first time.

5. Pray for God to make us brave. With access to so much news, we might be tempted to shut out the world's brokenness and hurt to protect ourselves. But 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." Pray that God will make us brave and will equip us to shine His light to the world around us in the midst of pain and suffering.

Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Nothing is outside of God's control—even the most heart-wrenching, unimaginable events that we encounter in the news.

As believers in Christ, we have the assurance that God has already overcome the world. It may feel like He's not in control, but He is. And as we pray for His will to be done and His glory to be made known, we can live with the knowledge that He is victorious and will ultimately bring complete healing to this world.

– Taken from the Wycliffe Bible Translators prayer team (wycliffe.org/prayer), which supports Bible translation around the world.

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Five Bedtime Prayers for Children

A child's prayers are simple, yet so powerful. Jesus spoke on earth about how people must be like children in their innocence and faith to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:2–5).

Teaching your children to pray helps them build a habit of prayer that will follow them right into their adulthood. There's no better way of parenting or planting good seeds for your child's future than teaching him or her to rely on God in prayer.

If you want to help your little ones build a habit of talking to God, then daily prayer at bedtime is a good place to start. The following short bedtime prayers can help you practice prayer with your kids.

1. Gratitude Prayer

• Thank You, Lord, that I can breathe and smell all the beautiful flowers. I can walk, run in a race, and see all the trees and clouds. Thank You for Mommy, Daddy, my sisters, and my brothers too. Thank You for loving me so dearly and sending Your Son Jesus to die on a cross for me—and then come back to life.

Thank You because I can go to school and learn with all my friends. Thank You also for all the yummy food I get to eat. Thank You for this warm bed, for the moon shining on me, and that You are with me. Amen.

2. Prayer for Help

• Father, thank You for loving me so much. I know that I can talk to You about anything—and You listen to me. Thank You for helping me when I get in trouble too. I pray that You will help me be a good child who listens to You and tells others about You.

I also pray tonight that You keep me safe. Watch over me so that I can sleep soundly. Amen.

3. Blessing Prayer

• Lord, thank You for everything I have. Mommy and Daddy say it all comes from You. Please bless my parents and all my uncles and aunties. Bless my teachers and all my friends at school. Bless the pastor and everyone at church. Bless the poor and those who don't have a place to sleep tonight. Amen.

4. Prayer for a Peaceful Sleep

• Dear Lord, sometimes when Mom and Dad go to sleep, I get really scared and have some scary dreams too. I know You are the most powerful One in the world, so please help me feel safe. Help me to remember that You are always with me in the dark—and I don't have to be afraid. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

5. Prayer for Family

• Dear Lord, thank You for my parents who love me so much and my siblings who care for me. I know we fight sometimes, but we actually love each other so dearly. Help us to forgive each other when we argue. I pray that You protect them even when we go to different places every morning. Bless them and keep them safe from trouble.

Bless my Mommy and Daddy so that they can keep providing everything that we need. Help us to grow closer to You and love each other better. Help us to be good children, to obey what the Bible says, and what Daddy and Mommy tell us to do. Let us be happy as a family. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

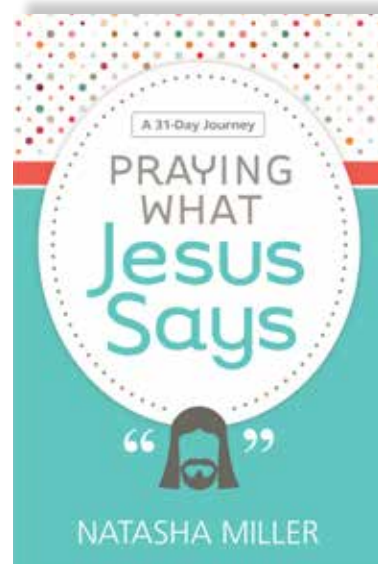
Learning Early On

Teaching your children the concepts of these simple bedtime prayers helps them understand early in life that they can talk to God about anything and everything. They can build a beautiful friendship with the Lord even at a young age.

MYRA HENNING is a professional content writer.

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Prayers to Accelerate Revival | By Byron Paulus

The rapidity with which the world is changing, both for bad *and* for good, is startling. The voices and forces of evil keep getting stronger while simultaneously the refreshing light of revival keeps spreading hope and faith in the hearts of thousands.

The battle rages in the heavenlies. But the encouraging news is that victory anthems are being sung enthusiastically on college campuses and in churches that are experiencing fresh outpourings of the Spirit of God.

Humanly speaking, this is a season we did not anticipate, even though we have been asking God for decades to put His glory on display through revival. I believe He is now responding in direct answer to those prayers. Yet, what if it is just the beginning? What if the drops of mercy surrounding us are a precursor to the showers not far behind?

I am blessed to interact with leaders from across the nation and world. While attending this year's National Day of Prayer events in Washington, D.C., I noticed a dramatic shift from offering "prayers that birth revival" to "prayers that *accelerate* revival."

Time to Ask for More

But I have a fear. I fear we will be satisfied with too little. That's why we must pray those prayers that will accelerate revival.

Here is a sample of powerful prayers from our OneCry bookmark:

If My people will humble themselves . . .

- Pray that we as Christians will bow before the Lord each day, so we may receive His grace daily to live as we should.
- Pray that times of crisis will be

tangible reminders of what we deserve apart from the mercy of God.

- Pray that God's people will assume responsibility for the moral and spiritual erosion of our nation and our world.

and pray . . .

- Pray that urgency and fervency will characterize our prayers.
- Pray that our first response as Christians will be to pray when we become anxious about any circumstance.
- Pray that God will raise up an army of prayer warriors who are willing to persevere in prayer and wage war on their knees.
- Pray for a spirit of prayer to spread like wildfire across our land and world until every church becomes a house of prayer.

and seek My face . . .

- Pray that God will increase our belief in His ability to intervene supernaturally and do the impossible. Pray for a desire to fast as we seek the face of God.
- Pray that God's people will not be self-sufficient. May we see our dire need for help from God and others.
- Pray that God's people will lay aside differences and unite behind the desperate need for an outpouring of God's Spirit in revival.
- Pray that a healthy fear of God will permeate our hearts and minds. Ask God to deliver us from the fear of man.

and turn from their wicked ways . . .

- Pray that God's people will honestly acknowledge our sins, seek God's

forgiveness, and expose all sin appropriately.

- Pray that believers will accept accountability from godly people.
- Pray that genuine repentance will characterize our response to sin, and that the Lordship of Jesus Christ will rule our lives.

then I will hear from heaven . . .

- Praise God that His hand is not too short to save. Claim the promise that the Lord draws near to those who call upon Him in truth.


and will forgive their sin . . .

- Thank the Lord that He promises to extend mercy when we confess and forsake our sins, and that He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

and will heal their land.

- Praise the Lord that He promises to heal those who have fallen away, bind up the wounds of the torn and bruised, and restore the years the locusts have eaten.

We need a nationwide move. We need a move that reflects the magnificence of our awe-inspiring God. A move of historic proportion.

Will you join us in praying that God will *accelerate* what He has begun? 



BYRON PAULUS is the founder and president of OneCry. This "Prayers that Accelerate Revival" bookmark can be purchased in quantity from onecry.com/store. Order enough for everyone in your church to pray in agreement for revival!

Unity Around a Yearly Prayer Theme

By Carol Madison

Our prayer team didn't hesitate when I proposed our 2023 prayer theme. Normally we take a few months to pray, look at Scripture, and determine a yearly theme that rallies our church to pray in unity. We pray, banter around ideas, see what seems to resonate, pray some more, and then come to agreement before we introduce our theme in January.

But this time I felt such strong conviction from the Spirit that I boldly presented my thoughts to our team.

"We need to rally prayer around 'Reclaim a Generation,'" I implored. "And we can base it on Psalm 78:4 (ESV): ' . . . tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.'"

I was partly inspired by Cheryl Sacks' prayer guide by that name; partly inspired by an urgency to raise up protection over our children.

The response was immediate and unanimous. *Yes!*

Even as we agreed on that theme, we had no idea how rapidly our society would continue to deteriorate in ungodly ideologies directed at children. We didn't anticipate the movie *Sound of Freedom* that would sweep the nation with alarming truths about sex trafficking of children. We had only an inkling of the dark and demonic strategies facing us. But we knew it was critical to call our church to prayer on behalf of our next generation.

Prayer Themes Unite

Our yearly prayer themes are rallying cries that inspire hope in our people. Some of our past themes include "Steadfast Love," "Yet, I Will Rejoice," and "Cry Out to the God Who Hears." We

always add a Scripture passage to tie with the theme.

Our congregation anticipates the revealing of the prayer theme each year. We introduce it in advance of our annual week of prayer in January. We include graphics—and it almost becomes a "drumroll moment." People often express how the theme resonates with what they sense will be important in the coming year.

During our January week of prayer, we develop daily prayer points around that theme and invite our church to pray in unity. We keep the theme before our weekly House of Prayer throughout the year. We develop a month of theme-related prayer points for our July prayer and fasting.

By keeping the prayer theme before our congregation, we create a common vision for prayer that can be revisited many times. Praying in agreement is powerful (Matt. 18:19).

Takes Advanced Planning

Here are some suggestions in planning a yearly theme:

- Pray and invite the Spirit to give insight about what the coming year might bring. You may not know specifics, but you can get a sense of the spiritual temperature of your church or our nation.
- Ask your prayer team about the passages of Scripture they have been drawn to in their quiet times. Our "Yet, I Will Rejoice" theme came into focus because one of our team members was spending quite a bit of time in the Book of Habakkuk. As we each read and prayed through the three chapters, we quickly landed on

the hope of Habakkuk 3:18.

- Pay attention to the news. I've heard it said that we should "pray with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other." Or for me, "news" means to pray with my Twitter [X] app in one hand! What's happening in our world matters to your congregation—and it matters to God.
- If an idea doesn't resonate with your team, keep praying and processing. We find that God often redirects us toward a theme that everyone embraces with enthusiasm.
- Include your pastor in the discussions of the theme. Your pastor may embrace whatever you as a prayer leader determine, but you want to be sure that your leadership is also enthusiastic about the theme and will call the congregation to pray in unity.
- Explain the theme to your congregation as you introduce it. Let them know that you believe it represents what God wants to do in answer to their prayers.

Repeat, Repeat

Bring up the theme in a variety of venues and prayer opportunities. If, by the end of the year, most of your congregation have no idea what the prayer theme is, you didn't talk about it enough!

Inspire your people with ways to pray into that theme—and watch the unity grow in hopeful prayer. 🙏



CAROL MADISON is director of prayer ministries at Hillside Church in Bloomington, MN. She is also editor of *Prayer Connect*.

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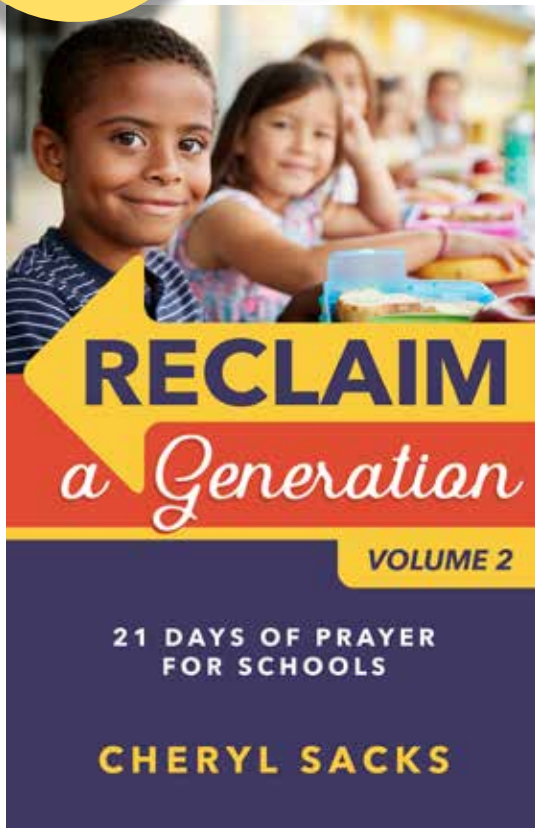
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