

PrayerCONNECT

Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

3 PURPOSES OF Prayer

*God's Plan for Effective
Intercession*

**Clean the Slate! | LIFE, the First Right
SENSORY OVERLOAD in Prayer**

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**STRATEGIC
PRAYER INITIATIVE**



PrayerCONNECT

JANUARY - MARCH 2025 VOL. 15, NO. 1

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Article Submissions

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

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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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Nothing Excites Me More

For the past 30 years, I have been involved in prayer mobilization and discipleship. Not sure how I got here—only the Lord, for sure.

Though a believer since age six, I was not much into prayer until a painful situation came into my life at age 30. Through absolute desperation and need, I turned to prayer. God used that event, along with a publishing project of writing a study guide to A.W. Tozer's powerful book *The Pursuit of God*, to turn my heart toward Him in a much more significant way—and to turn me on to prayer.

Because prayer so radically changed my walk and passion as a Christian, I soon began wondering why everyone who claimed to be a follower of Jesus did not do this “prayer thing” in a major way.

Mike Jebb of Strategic Prayer Initiative (see ad on page 2) says that in surveys, more than 70 percent of church-going Christians say they have a “poor to no prayer life”! Because I had been one of those strugglers who then grew into a person of prayer, God put within me a heart to help the average person in the pew who struggled with prayer. In 1997, while at NavPress, I launched *Pray!* Magazine as a tool. After seven years of editing *Pray!*, God moved me into focusing more on helping churches grow their people in prayer. Church Prayer Leaders Network (CPLN) became my ministry base.

Over the next 21 years, He empowered us to develop and publish more than 60 books on prayer, develop websites with hundreds of pages of prayer content, send thousands of equipping emails, and launch *Prayer Connect* magazine. God has blessed thousands of churches through CPLN!

The Future

As you may know, after a 13-year run, this is our last issue of *Prayer Connect* magazine. The finances have just made it too expensive to continue publishing issues in this format. However, this issue is not the end of *Prayer Connect* nor of the CPLN's vision to equip and encourage praying churches. If you have an active subscription to either *Prayer Connect* or the full CPLN membership, you will continue to have access to everything at prayerleader.com.

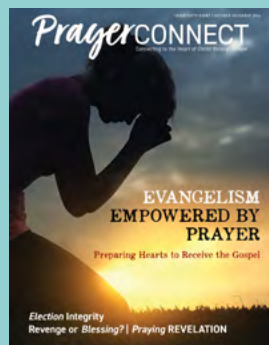
We will continue to deliver fresh content to subscribers via a *Prayer Connect* blog. Watch for a sign-up. Current active subscribers and CPLN members will get this automatically. We will also launch *The Praying Pastor*, a blog for pastors written by pastors!

While *Prayer Connect* is ending as a magazine, the ministry of CPLN is not slowing down. In fact, we just completed our 25th year of ministry! And while I am now 67, I pray God allows me to be a little like Caleb when it comes to extending my heart for growing prayer in churches. Nothing excites me more than continuing to encourage and equip pastors and prayer leaders in the fight for prayer in the church!

—**JONATHAN GRAF** is president of [Church Prayer Leaders Network](http://ChurchPrayerLeadersNetwork.com) and the publisher of [PrayerShop Publishing](http://PrayerShopPublishing.com).



Previously in



Praying for the lost is undoubtedly the most powerful evangelistic strategy we can employ to reach people with the gospel. When we pray, God moves! This issue and other back issues are available at prayershop.org.

Clean the Slate! | By Dana Olson

The young, 20-something recent seminary grad, engaged to be married and pulling a small trailer with all his earthly belongings, pulled into town in Nebraska to take up his first pastorate. After a kind group of church members helped unload the trailer and the very first sermon was prepped, that first weekend an official met with the church board to explain that the deed on the property was being seized due to the church being far behind on its loan payments.

What a way to begin! Quickly, a plan took shape—to pray and communicate a giving opportunity called *Clean the Slate!* By God’s grace, soon not only was the arrears status reversed, but the little church family was ahead on their loan. The church grew, the loan was paid off, and the testimony of the church improved.

That young pastor was me, and my memories of *Clean the Slate!* are precious to me. More than 40 years later, that phrase comes to mind when I think of prayers of confession and repentance. Every believer must make it a regular practice to prayerfully clean the slate of his or her heart of any sin.

It’s dangerous to neglect this practice. We can easily become desensitized to “the sin that so easily entangles” (Heb. 12:1) and even “deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth” (Heb. 10:26).

Instead, let us regularly *clean the slate*.

Scripture Prayer Prompts

How do we keep a clean slate? Pray God’s Word! The Bible confronts our sin, warns us of its dangers, and promises cleansing through the precious blood of

Christ shed on the cross. Scripture guides us into confession and repentance so that our walk with God is not hindered.

For example, pray through Galatians 5. Ask God to help you walk by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the flesh (v. 16). By prayer, step through the works of the flesh (vs. 19–21), asking your heavenly Father, “Do you find this in me, Lord? Do you find sexual sin in my life or in my thoughts? Is my heart free of anger and its companions like strife and dissension? Am I jealous or envious of others, Father? Am I free of things that might control me?”

Take your time. Ponder each word because this list is a gift from God to help you discern the presence of sin and not become desensitized to it. Sin will separate us from fellowship and peace with God.

Continue on by prayerfully working through the fruit of the Spirit, one at a time, asking God to reveal areas of your life that need attention: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (vs. 22–23). After all, the presence of sins from the first list (vs. 19–21) will prevent the fruit listed in the second.

Truly, all of the sins in the first list will keep us from being the people of love and faithfulness that God intends for us to be. Now pray something like this:

Heavenly Father, today I crucify my flesh because I belong to Jesus Christ. I set aside sinful passions and desires, any inclination that is contrary to Your will for me, because I want to keep in step with Your Holy Spirit by living in the Spirit today. Please guide me, Father, in living fruitfully this day, bearing the fruit that is in

keeping with repentance and trusting You for every step.

Clean the slate! What a joyful relief to be free, to be clean, to have nothing hindering your walk by the Spirit today.

Going Deep

Of course, Galatians 5 is not the only Scripture to guide us in prayers of confession. Psalm 51:1–7 uses David’s example to give us words to pray that describe our grief over sin:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

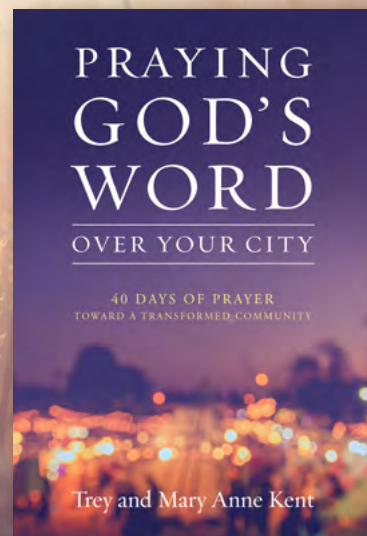
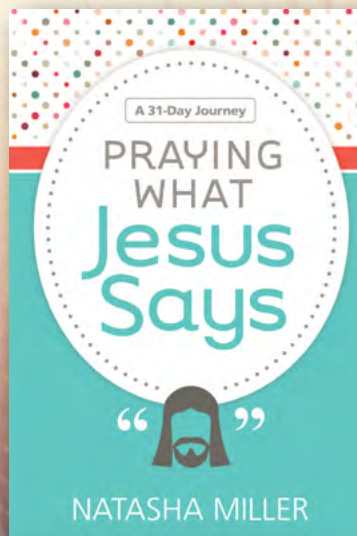
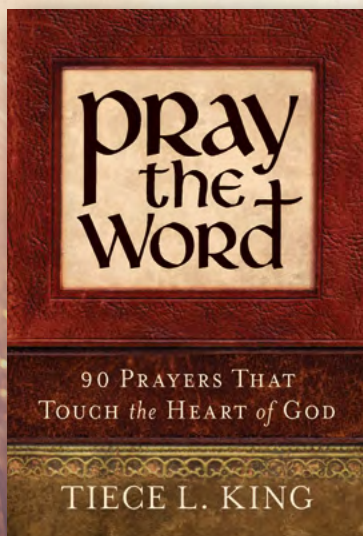
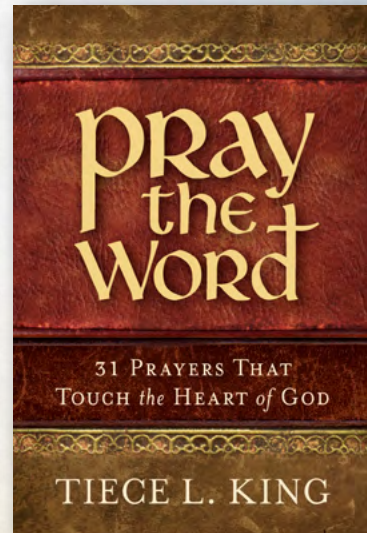
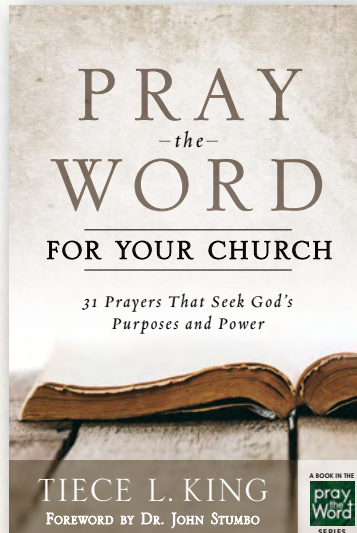
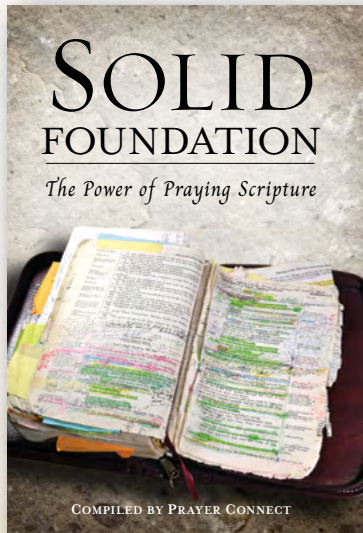
Why not begin right now to clean the slate? 🙏



DANA OLSON, veteran pastor and prayer leader, is director of *Prayer First Heartland*, part of the Converge family of churches (convergeheartland.org).

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Life, the First Right | By Dave Kubal

The very first gift God gave us is life. Human history begins with the Lord forming Adam's body and breathing life into it. Then, at the focal point of history—the cross of Christ—God makes a way for our spirits and our bodies to live again: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

Our nation's Founders were right to recognize the fundamental truth that God cherishes human life, which earthly authorities are entrusted with respecting and defending.

Every one of our individual stories—not to mention our collective story as the human race—starts with God forming and breathing life into us.

Dangerous Path

It's no secret that we as individuals and as a nation have made choices that are sending us down a dangerous path.

In 2023, Americans welcomed the births of 3,596,017 babies, according to the Centers for Disease Control. This represents a two percent decrease from the prior year and the lowest number since 1979. In that same year, the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute reports 1,025,690 prenatal lives were terminated, which researchers estimate was the highest number in more than a decade.

Let's tease out this bad news. First, fewer babies are being born. Second, there are more abortions. More than one in five babies was aborted. Twenty-two percent of those who were to be in the graduating class of 2041—gone! When was the last time we grieved together over the loss of so many neighbors and loved ones whom we will never know?

Actually, it is even worse: While we should remember that truly complicated and lose-lose, life-threatening situations do occur in some pregnancies, far too many abortions are the result of an abortion-on-demand culture that preys on fear. It's not that individuals were not *given* the chance to live. It's that their lives were *taken*.

If we embrace human life as a gift and an inalienable right—a human right—given to us by God, then abortion on demand is one of America's most egregious human rights abuses. It is a scourge that has destroyed tens of millions of prenatal lives since the infamous Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling of 1973, and it continues to corrupt hearts, minds, and the very underpinnings of our land.

Battle Remains

Of course, we rejoiced when the Dobbs case overturned Roe after nearly 50 years. But the battle for life is far from over. Just listen to how the news media flood the airwaves and the Internet. More and more, abortion is embraced by “progressive” activists and their political allies as something to celebrate. Further, both major political parties support the abortion pill and laws that allow abortion during part of pregnancy.

Not only that, but the abortion conflict has in effect now shifted from the federal to the state level. Lawmakers in many states have set out to alter their state constitutions to enshrine a so-called “right” to abortion. In a sense, we now face the possibility of 50 Roe v. Wade wars instead of just one.

We must continue to intercede for our land in the face of this horror. Abortion is far more than a political issue. It is a deadly crisis in our communities. But

this is not a hopeless battle—far from it.

Prayer Points

We must both pray and “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.”

- Pray for a generation: Roe v. Wade seemed like an unassailable stronghold for abortion in our land. Thank God for the overturn of that tragic ruling. And let us double down on our prayers for God's victory on the state level.
- Pray for those government and other community leaders who boldly stand up for the sanctity of life. Ask for clear and winsome messages that sway hearts and minds as they try to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.
- Pray for a covering of protection over pro-life pregnancy-care centers in the face of threats from abortion activists. May community members understand the help and services that such centers provide for vulnerable mothers and children.
- Pray that hearts and minds will change on abortion. Pray that Christians will advocate for the value of life from conception to natural death. Then pray that this fundamental truth would take hold in the nation.

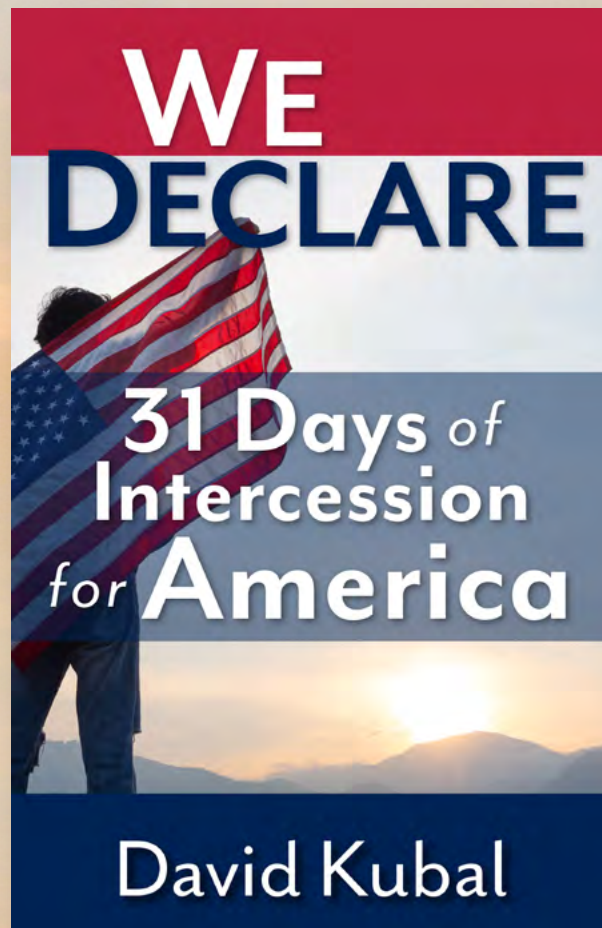
Almighty God cares about human life. He will bring victory as we work to advance a culture that honors the sanctity of human life. 📖



DAVE KUBAL is CEO and president of Intercessors for America (ifapray.org). This article is excerpted from his book [We Declare: 31 Days of Intercession for America](#).

AMERICA NEEDS PRAYER!

It's time to pray **bold, biblical prayers** over the issues that face our nation.



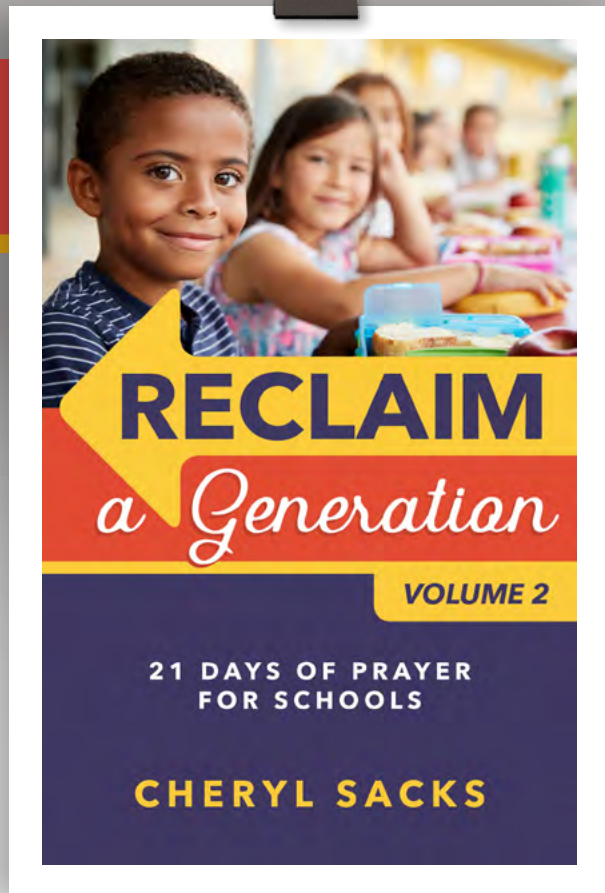
WE DECLARE: 31 DAYS OF INTERCESSION FOR AMERICA is a devotional prayer guide for Christians who want to be part of God's rescue plan for America—through their prayers and engagement in society.

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3 Purposes of Prayer

God's Plan for Effective Intercession

"**Y**ou're the one."
I wasn't sure why I was the one when he pointed at me in the lobby of a hotel. But Jon Graf had been dreaming about starting a new magazine on prayer. He needed someone with editorial experience who also intersected with the prayer world. So, when he spotted me lingering in the lobby, he realized I might just be the answer to his prayer.

Jon and I already knew each other because we had previously intersected at Evangelical Press Association meetings. He was an editor with another magazine, and I was the editor of two magazines at the time.

Now, several years later, we crossed paths again in Hollywood, CA, where we were both attending the National Prayer Committee meetings. I was no longer editing magazines but had launched my own editorial business after working several years with a prayer ministry in the Minneapolis area.

Two people who love writing, editing, magazine publishing, and prayer—meeting in the most unlikely place. Soon after, we became the founding publisher and founding editor of a magazine that has lasted 13 years and 59 issues. It *was* an answer to prayer—for both of us!

Jon pulled in his friend Bridget Rennie, a freelance graphic designer who worked with Jon on previous magazines. Bridget and I quickly became long-distance friends as we passed electronic files back and forth between Minneapolis and Fort Collins, CO. In fact, Bridget and I have met in person only twice in the 13 years! But we like to chat about current events while we navigate the magazine through all the production stages.

I added a couple of friends—Joyce Ellis and Joan Sherman—to help find nasty typos in our proofing stages. They enhanced the quality of the magazine with their editorial expertise.

And, of course, many wonderful prayer friends—I like to call them “prayer practitioners”—provided wonderful content. It was rare that a national prayer leader declined when I pitched an article idea to him or her. These leaders, with all their expertise, are part of the *Prayer Connect* family. I am especially thankful for Dave and Kim Butts, who served us well as prayer partners and editorial advisors.

Jon, Bridget, and I stayed together as the founding team through all the struggles and joys of magazine publishing. And as a credit to Jon's faith and belief in our work, we lasted much longer than most magazines with financial challenges. I love print magazines, but the industry has taken a hit with rising costs and changing reading habits. Jon held out as long as possible—and I will always be grateful.

A Great Run

And so now, we come to the final issue of *Prayer Connect*. I have loved this project more than any other in my editorial career.

In this issue, we close out by highlighting three wonderful prayer purposes: a personal and intimate prayer relationship with God, the power of agreeing in prayer with others, and an invitation to pray fervently for others in a world charged with spiritual warfare. Kim Butts, Jon Graf, and I are honored to contribute the final theme articles.

I don't think any of us dreamed that *Prayer Connect* would last this long. I'm so grateful God directed Jon to ask me to be “the one” to serve as editor. It's been a great run with a great team and an even greater God.

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*. She is also the author of [Prayer That's Caught and Taught](#) and editor of [Do It Again, Lord](#).

Presence-Infused Living

Prayer as Relationship with God

The life God intends each of us to live can only be fully experienced in Him, with Him, by Him, and through Him.

This is the deepest possible relational intimacy that can ever be attained by a human on this earth.

How do believers grow towards such an amazing life with God on this side of heaven? By emulating the presence-infused life of Jesus. Even though Jesus was and is and always will be God, He walked out the life of God in the flesh so that we can do the same.

How did He know how to live an obedient life, and to say and do only what His Father taught Him?

Prayer! Even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ prayed to align Himself perfectly with the heart of His Father.

God-Directed Obedience

There are so many examples in Scripture of Jesus in prayer—whether by Himself early in the morning, late at night in the Garden

By Kim Butts

Prayer is longing for Him, seeking Him, being silent before Him, and waiting on Him.

of Gethsemane as He poured out His heartfelt sorrow, or in community with others as He blessed the loaves and fish so that His Father would receive the glory for multiplying them.

Jesus lived a life of God-directed obedience. Even the interruptions were holy and focused on the presence and glory of God. He knew that apart from His Father He could do nothing.

We should know that as well. And yet, the prayer lives of many of God's own are not following His Son's example.

If prayer was the relational connection of Jesus to His Father, how can we think we should do anything else to fully embrace and experience that same purpose-filled, powerful, and sweet presence? There is no other way to build an intimate relationship with God apart from communicating our deepest thoughts, desires, and needs for ourselves, other people, situations, and nations.

Prayer is developing an intimate rhythm of worship, opening our hearts to the Father, and learning to hear and recognize His voice as we listen to what He wants to say to us. Prayer is longing for Him, seeking Him, being silent before Him, and waiting on Him. It's whispering, shouting, bowing, lifting our eyes and hands to Him.

In short, prayer is the deepest possible connection for intimacy with God in order to grow faith and build trust in His ability "to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us. . ." (Eph. 3:20).

Devil's Derailment

The devil knows this well. He has and continues

to do everything in his inferior power to damage, thwart, discourage, distract, and weaken the prayer lives of every believer from the beginning of time. He knows that prayer from the lips of believers defeats his evil plans. He knows that prayer strengthens and allows God's people to bond with Him so that our hearts can become impenetrable to his schemes.

Therefore, he also knows that if he can derail our prayer lives, he can certainly take everything else—our joy, our peace, our strength, and our Kingdom purpose. In essence, he steals our life with God.

Because the devil has been quite successful in sidelining the prayer lives of God's people, the current reality for many believers is often a distant or casual relationship rather a passionately committed intimacy.

Perhaps the very best way to keep our focus on God's presence is through His Word! Because Jesus *is* the Word (John 1:1–2), we will grow and develop the deepest possible relationship with Jesus through praying His Word.

Cultivating Presence

Scripture tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 to "rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." If the Father tells us that something is His will for us, we should obey!

In Psalm 46:10, the psalmist says, "Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Word doesn't say, "Be still and know, but only if you feel like it." This is a direct command in Scripture! Cultivating His presence through prayer is how we grow our relationship with Jesus, who was and is and is to come.

What does it mean to live in His presence in a prayer-infused, Word-centered way? You can practice His presence by praying Scripture, listening to the Spirit, and then responding to His invitation. I've chosen some Scripture passages and prayers to help you practice cultivating presence with these simple instructions:

- Consider each of the statements and Scriptures about the presence of God and spend

some time praying through each one. Thank the Father for His indwelling presence, using the Scriptures and written prayers to guide you. Ask Him to help you build a committed, presence-filled life!

- Spend time in quiet after each prayer, listening to the voice of the Spirit as God speaks in response. Consider having a pen and paper at the ready to write down what you sense He is saying to you. Don't worry if you don't "hear" anything specific. He is speaking through His Word directly to you.

Now practice saturating yourself with His presence through His Word by walking through each of the "presence principles."

1. His presence guides our lives and gives us fullness of joy. "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Ps. 16:11).

Father, this is such an amazing promise! As I press into You, You will guide my life's path. I can be filled with joy in Your presence and enjoy all the pleasures that come from Your hand.

Help me to be a good listener so that You can make the way ahead known to me. Help my heart be open to receiving Your joy!

2. His presence gives us rest. "And He said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest'" (Ex. 33:14, NKJV).

Lord Jesus, as I lean into Your presence, Your Word says You will give me rest. Please help me to allow Your rest to give fresh life to our relationship through prayer. Help me to soak in the peace You provide when I slow down long enough to hear from Your heart.

Show me how to be still and quiet so that You can bring healing, change my trajectory, or just allow me to hear Your

beautiful voice telling me how much You love me.

3. His presence is always with us. "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

Thank You, Father, for this incredible promise that Your presence is continually with me all the days of my life. This gives me confidence to live each day growing closer to Your heart and deepening my love for You.

4. His presence is forever and keeps us from fear and discouragement. "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deut. 31:8).

Father, it's so easy in this culture to be afraid, anxious, and discouraged. Yet, Your Word says that You will go before us and be with us—always! May I be continually aware of Your presence so that whenever I struggle, I will remember that You are in control of my circumstances.

Thank You for promising to never leave nor forsake Your people!

5. Being in His presence means dwelling with Him. "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

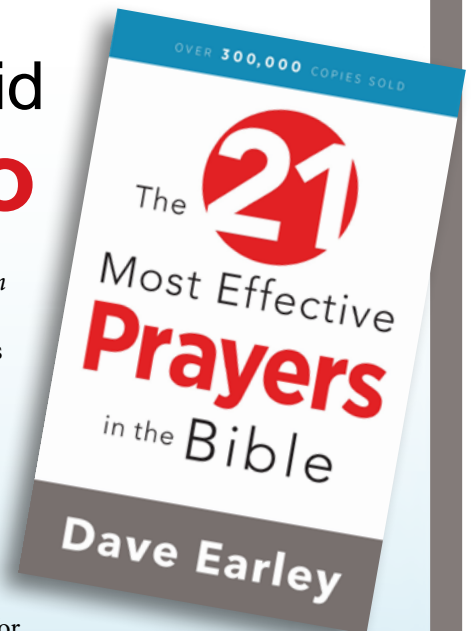
Beautiful Lord, my heart's true home is in Your presence! Just as King David expressed that his greatest desire was a

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deeper relationship with You, I also long to see You with all that is in me.

Teach me how to dwell continually with You, worshipping You and beholding Your beauty and glory. May I seek You in all Your holiness every moment of every day.

6. Being in His presence means He is dwelling with me and with His people. “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God’” (Rev. 21:3).

“For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Cor. 6:16, NKJV).

Living God, how I love Your Word! It amazes me that I am Your temple and that You dwell in me, and all Your people, through Your Holy Spirit. Your presence is always with me. Help me to become more aware of this incredible reality.

Entering the Throne Room

Imagine yourself in the throne room of heaven, standing before the Father and Son. Read Revelation 4, out loud if you can. Next, soak in the reality that every time you pray, you enter that throne room.


This knowledge alone will change the way you pray. You may find that you toss your prayer list to the side and simply spend time in worship before the One who is worthy.

Bill Elliff, a pastor and national prayer leader, recently hosted a podcast about “The Presence-Centered Life” (onecry.com/podcast). He says, “Everything flows from the presence of God.”

Seeking and pressing into His presence will grow your love relationship with Him and change everything about your life of prayer. It will move your

connection with God from the realm of intellectual knowledge (what you know about Him) to a deeply spiritual communion (what you experience with Him). Coming into His presence continually will become a delight rather than a duty to check off a list each day.

May presence-infused living become the reality of your relationship with God

as You prayerfully seek to know Him more deeply. 



KIM BUTTS is the cofounder of Harvest Prayer Ministries and now serves as the prayer director for OneCry (onecry.com). She is also the author of several books available through prayershop.org.

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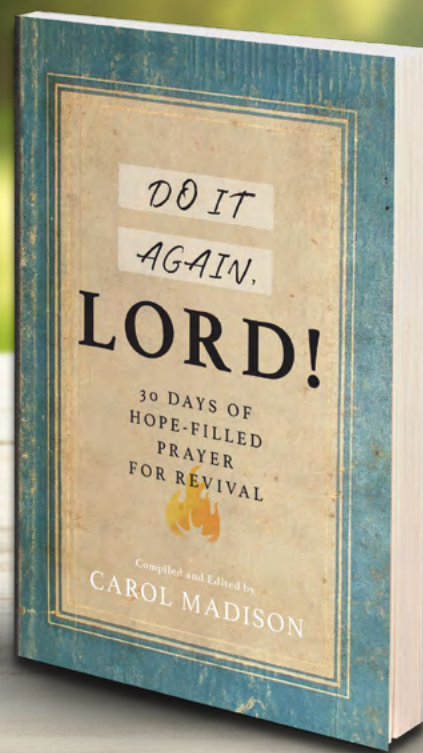
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Praying in Sync

Steve was a new believer who attended our singles ministry at Immanuel Alliance Church in Mechanicsburg, PA. Steve's wife had recently left him, and due to some medical issues and medication he was taking that impaired his senses, he had lost his job as a truck driver. He was clearly in need of prayer.

During prayer time at our Thursday night Bible study, I began to pray aloud for Steve. My prayer started out normal. I simply lifted up Steve's needs to the Lord. To be honest, I wasn't particularly close to Steve, so my prayers were not born out of deep love or concern. Rather, I thought to myself, *Uh oh, someone better pray for Steve's need.*

Sometime during the prayer, passion took over.

It was decades ago now, so I don't remember any specifics of what I prayed. But because it was such a profound and rare experience for me, I can remember clearly what I was thinking and feeling throughout the prayer.

By Jonathan Graf

How Our Prayers Move God's Hand

I'm not praying; the Holy Spirit is praying within me.

I recall that my spirit got so caught up in praying for Steve that I didn't even know *what* I was praying. I remember a strange but pleasant sensation within my body. My mind was so riveted on the prayer that I felt like I was staring at the situation and couldn't pull away. I remember others pitching in comments of agreement as I prayed. About halfway through my prayer, an unusual thought entered my head: *I'm not praying; the Holy Spirit is praying within me.*

Releasing God's Will

Our lead theme article in this issue describes the first purpose of prayer as relationship with the Lord. I describe the second major purpose for prayer this way: *Prayer releases God's will on earth.* While I cannot explain how it works, somehow, in God's sovereign plan, He has chosen to accomplish certain aspects of His will only if people pray.

Some believers cringe at this teaching. "What do you mean prayer releases God's will?" they say. "God's will is God's will. He's going to do it whether we pray or not."

But Scripture, history, and our experience all tell us otherwise. I once had a good Calvinist pastor friend explain what happens using this illustration:

Imagine your hand opening represents God's will being released. And the muscles and tendons of your arm are your prayers. But God is the brain. So, what is opening your hand? God is! When we pray, God takes those prayers and moves the "muscles and tendons" to release His will! It is one of the mar-

velous ways God uses us to move and shape His Kingdom on earth and thus allows us to partner with Him. We are not telling God what to do, we are getting in sync with what God desires to do—His will—and praying that.

Support from Scripture

Look at Elijah. James tells us, "Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops" (James 5:17–18).

In 1 Kings 17 and 18, we read the background story of these two verses. God apparently put in Elijah's heart to pray that it wouldn't rain. The prophet went to King Ahab and declared it wouldn't rain for three years—and it didn't. "After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: 'Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land'" (1 Kings 18:1).

What follows is the incredible showdown between Elijah and the true God and the false prophets of Baal. Following a decisive victory, Elijah said to the king, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain" (18:41). Then Scripture tells us that Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground, and put his face between his knees (signifying intense prayer).

"Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked.

"There is nothing there," he said. Seven times Elijah said, "Go back." The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'"

Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, [and] a heavy rain started falling. . . (1 Kings 18:42–45).

Did you notice the sequence? God planted a thought in Elijah—*pray for no rain*—then His will was released. He sent word again: *I'm going to send rain*. Yet, somehow Elijah knew to pray fervently for it to happen. Again, God's will was released.

Many spiritual giants of the past firmly believed this principle. John Wesley once said, "God does nothing on the earth save in answer to believing prayer." E.M. Bounds commented, "The prayers of God's saints are the capital stock in heaven by which Christ carries on His great work upon earth."

Two Purposes in Sync

My point? If you want to grow in your personal prayer life, then I encourage you to pay attention to both purposes of prayer when you pray—prayer as relationship and intimacy, and prayer that releases God's will. Yes, we pray to develop our relationship with God, but we also release God's will in our sphere of influence as we pray what is on His heart for people and situations around us.

How do the two work together?

John 15: 1–7 shows us:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown

away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

Jesus' words in John 15:7 reveal a powerful promise. But it clearly has conditions. We see those in verses 1–6. Our primary purpose as believers, as followers of Jesus, is for our lives to bear fruit. To do that, we need to stay connected to the Vine (Jesus) and draw our sustenance from Him. We take in His Word (Bible) and stay in relationship with Him through prayer.

As we grow in relationship with God, our hearts more and more desire His will over our desires. So, when I pray over a situation—a personal need or something in our sphere of influence—if I am con-

nected to Jesus and I know I am supposed to bear fruit as His follower, rather than pray the obvious answer, I am going to think before I pray. "What's the fruit-bearing thing in this situation? How might God want to grow His Kingdom through it? What is the Holy Spirit telling me to pray?"

When we ask these questions, we start to see the truth of verse 7: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

That makes all the difference. **PC**



JONATHAN GRAF is the president of Church Prayer Leaders Network (prayerleader.com) and the publisher of PrayerShop Publishing (prayershop.org). He has authored multiple books on prayer, including *The Power of Personal Prayer*, from which this article is adapted.

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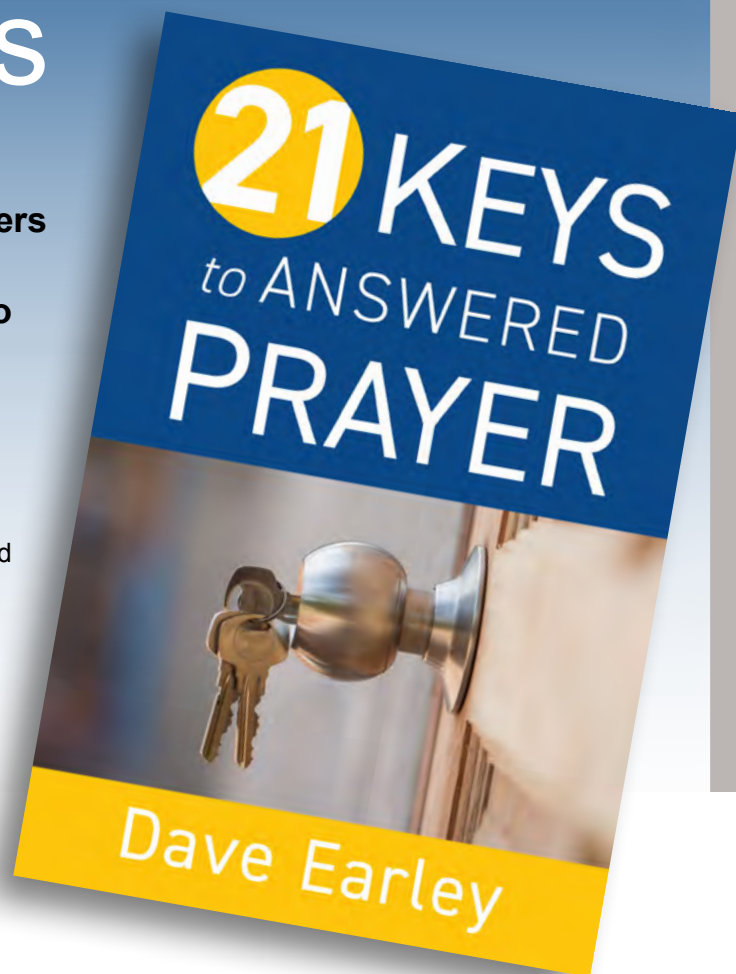
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Persistent Prayer for All the Saints

My friend Jean will tell you—no matter what the circumstance, no matter how impossible it may seem, regardless of how much Satan has done to destroy your child's life—never give up

praying for God's glorious work. I must admit I wasn't always hopeful for her daughter Joey, but Jean never stopped rallying intercessors to pray for a miracle.

Although Joey grew up in the church, attended a Christian high school, and knew the promise of Jeremiah 29:11 (God has plans for her future), Joey chose a hard life—rebellion, addiction, prostitution. She knew the darkest of spiritually dark places.

It wasn't until after years of her mom's faithful prayers (and nine stints in treatment centers) that Joey found her freedom in Christ. God turned Joey's life around in a dramatic way.

Jean recounted the many times of assurance of faithful prayers from friends in her church. On one occasion, when she walked into a children's Sunday school classroom, she saw her daughter's name written on the whiteboard.

By Carol Madison

*Watching Each Other's
Backs in Spiritually
Dark Days*

We may not have perfect insights in the spiritual battles raging around us, but the **Spirit has perfect knowledge to guide us.**

Suddenly she realized all the children were praying for Joey.

Another time, a volunteer firefighter, tragically paralyzed in an accident during a fire, asked about Joey from his hospital room. He had been praying for her despite his own traumatic injuries.

Jean's little church recognized that spiritual warfare exists and Satan intends to consume believers and families. But these Christians committed to praying persistently. As fellow soldiers, they knew how to "watch each other's backs."

Warfare Prayer Mode

The apostle Paul closed his letter to the Ephesians with a dire warning and a plea for his fellow believers to "stand firm" against the devil's schemes. He didn't paint a picture of Utopia for the Church; rather, with sobering language, he described the darkness churning around them. And he urged them—and us—to take both defensive and offensive battle postures (Eph. 6:10–17).

Paul then told them how to pray. His instructions, loaded with wise exhortations, came from the experience of this man who knew how to battle "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (v. 12).

Paul knew how to approach battles with the strongest arsenal possible—prayer in the Spirit always, without giving up, and for every believer. He knew that all believers, the "saints," are engaged in a serious battle for the sake of the gospel:

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every

occasion. *Stay alert and be persistent* in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. *So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should* (Eph. 6:18–20, NLT, emphasis added).

Paul did not instruct people to pray quick "fix-it" prayers to get themselves out of a jam or make their lives more comfortable. If that were the case, he might have said, "Please pray that I'm not beaten or stoned today. And pray that I won't be shipwrecked *again*. And one more thing—prison is getting old. Please pray I am found innocent immediately."

Instead, Paul pursued greater purposes in prayer—that God might equip all the saints to know and share the love of Christ, while at the same time destroying the works and arguments of Satan (Col. 2:2–3; 2 Cor. 10:4).

So how can we pray effectively for each other with this warfare mindset?

1. Pray in the Spirit for one another—always. Seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers. Tune in to the urgency of the day and the seriousness of Satan's prowling around us (1 Peter 5:8–9). The Holy Spirit knows all things and helps us to pray even when we don't know how.

Paul gave us a wonderful truth and prayer tip in Romans 8:26–27:

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Partnering with the Holy Spirit will open our hearts to "prayer prompts" *aligned with God's purposes*. We may not have perfect insights in the spiritual battles raging around us, but the Spirit has perfect knowledge to guide us.

One early morning while on a walk, I asked

the Spirit to guide me in how to pray for a friend. I sensed the Spirit directing me to pray for her relationship with her teenage daughter. I knew of no struggles or issues between them, but I prayed anyway. I later emailed her, telling her how I felt led to pray—and she responded in tearful amazement. A spiritual struggle was indeed going on, and that prayer echoed the cry of her heart exactly.

Several months later, she called me to say that God had answered those prayers in a profound and restoring way.

2. Stay alert in prayer for one another. When Jesus asked the three disciples to stay awake and watch with Him in the hours before His death, Peter, James, and John discovered that good intentions to stay alert on behalf of their friend were not enough. Jesus returned to them three times, and three times He found them in a sleepy stupor.

He warned them to step up their prayer efforts: “Keep alert and pray. Otherwise, temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak” (Mark 14:38, NLT).

We cannot take anything for granted regarding the spiritual lives of our fellow believers. When we are tired, overwhelmed, or just plain careless in our prayer lives, we may open a door for Satan to slip in to tempt us—or our brothers and sisters—toward destruction. So, stay awake and alert at all times in prayer for the saints—because one quick “nod off” may be all Satan needs to move swiftly.

3. Stay persistent in prayer for one another. As long as we remain here on this earth, engaged with demonic and subtle evil forces surrounding us, there is no safe moment to let up on our prayers.

My mom is one of the most persistent pray-ers I know. She has various lists of people she prays for, and her prayer schedule is multi-layered. She prays for some people daily. Others on a certain day of the week. Still others one day a month. If you get on her prayer list, you don’t get off until God has answered her prayer, dramatically changed your life, or taken you to heaven! She is always alert and ever-persistent in her prayers for fellow believers.

4. Pray toward the future faith of one another. Imagine being Peter and knowing that Jesus was continuously praying for you, always encouraging you, and that He had the insights of heaven to pray specific prayers that framed your destiny. That must have been a comfort to Peter, that is, until Jesus warned him that Satan had asked to sift Peter like wheat—and that it was going to be painful.

Yet, Jesus prayed toward Peter’s

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future despite Satan's plan. Jesus assured him, "I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31–32).

Of course, God answered that prayer powerfully following Peter's denial of Christ and subsequent repentance, and it culminated in significant ministry.

It's possible that Satan has asked to sift each of us. We live in such a dark and tempting world that we may be just one poor decision away from personal devastation.

Recognizing that our children, spouse, or friends might at any time succumb to the sifting of Satan, we need to pray toward their future. Regardless of the potential sin or failure, we can be *praying in advance* that our loved ones will not fall away from the faith but will eventually repent and experience the good future God has planned for them.

Battling Together

Paul pleads for his beloved friends to pray for him, but first he asks that they pray for *all believers everywhere*. If you are a follower of Christ who is committed to the advancement of the Kingdom of God—and you live in this fallen world ruled by evil principalities and powers—you can expect trials and opposition. In fact, Peter wonders why we are surprised when opposition rises against us (1 Peter 4:12).

But Peter also reminds us that fellow believers around the world experience extraordinary suffering and persecution for the sake of Christ (1 Peter 5:9). We can pray for friends we may never meet on earth.

British journalist Dan Wooding describes the plight of Alexander Ogorodnikov, a Christian dissident who spent many years in the Gulag. After five years of imprisonment, he wrote to Mikhail Gorbachev and asked if he could be executed by a firing squad. During his long, hopeless years in prison, he had not

received one visit or even a letter from a Christian.

Wooding heard of this fellow believer's anguish and organized a letter-writing campaign, urging Christians around the world to pray for Alexander and send messages of hope.

Although Alexander was never allowed to read the letters, his guards took him into a room to see sacks of mail addressed to him. He was overwhelmed to realize that people really did care about him.


From that point on, he felt the prayers of God's people. When the guards placed him in a punishment cell, hoping he would freeze to death, Alexander would suddenly feel God's arms wrap around him, warming him. He sensed God was waking people up at that moment to pray for him night after night.

Eventually Alexander was released. And he testified that he knew unknown

friends around the world were faithful to pray for him.¹

We Need Each Other

If you are a follower of Christ, Satan has targeted you for destruction, discouragement, and despair. That's the reality of spiritual warfare. In this evil world, we desperately need God—and we most certainly need each other.

Let's keep on praying always for all the saints. And let your fellow believers know "you've got their backs." 

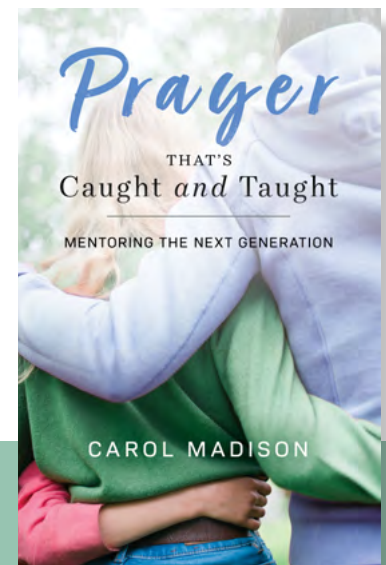
¹Assist News Service, May 20, 2012, "One Down, Two More to Go" (assistnews.net).



CAROL MADISON is the editor of *Prayer Connect* magazine and the author of *Prayer That's Caught and Taught*. She is also the compiling editor of *Do It Again, Lord*, a 30-day prayer guide for revival and spiritual awakening.

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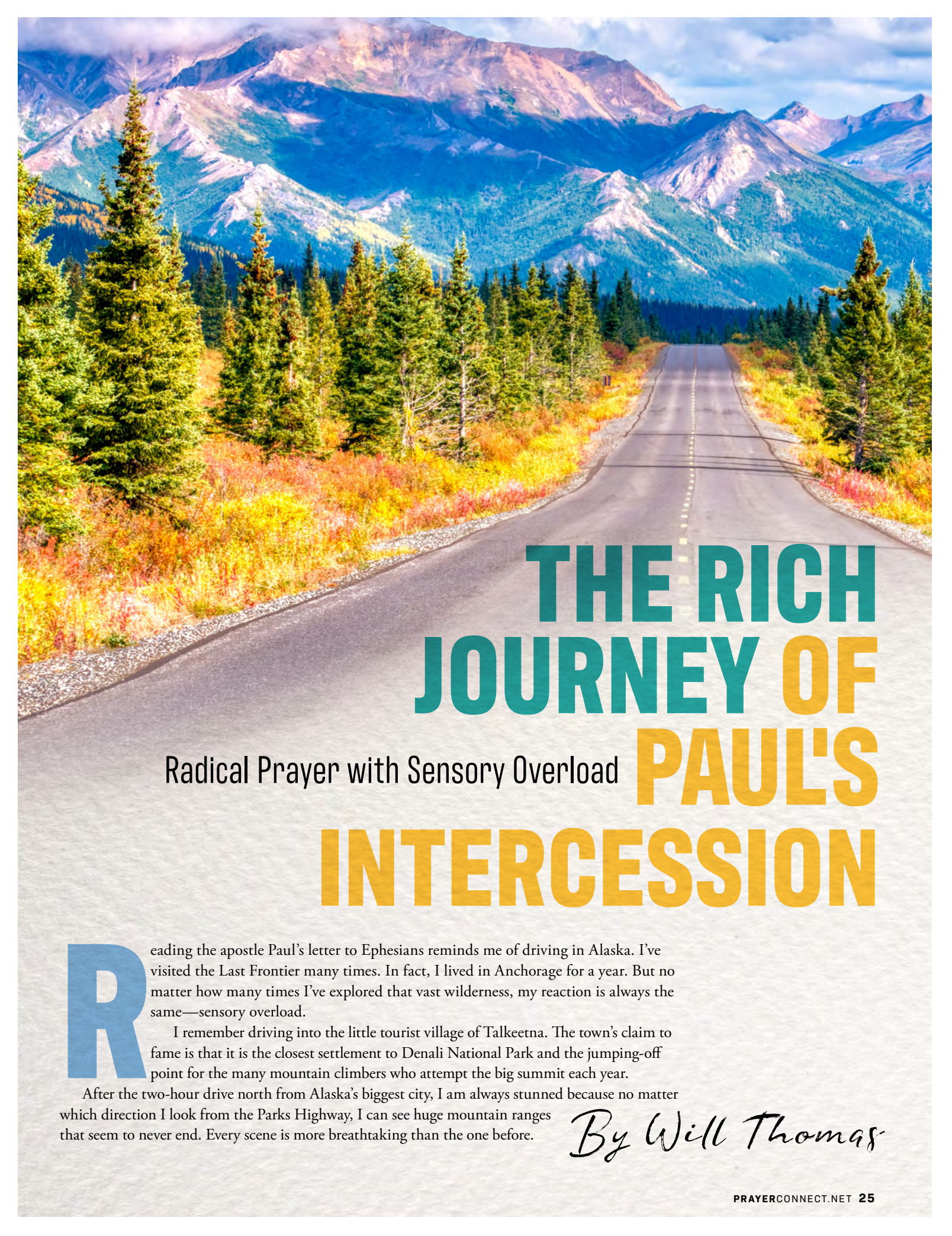
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THE RICH JOURNEY OF PAUL'S INTERCESSION

Radical Prayer with Sensory Overload

Reading the apostle Paul's letter to Ephesians reminds me of driving in Alaska. I've visited the Last Frontier many times. In fact, I lived in Anchorage for a year. But no matter how many times I've explored that vast wilderness, my reaction is always the same—sensory overload.

I remember driving into the little tourist village of Talkeetna. The town's claim to fame is that it is the closest settlement to Denali National Park and the jumping-off point for the many mountain climbers who attempt the big summit each year.

After the two-hour drive north from Alaska's biggest city, I am always stunned because no matter which direction I look from the Parks Highway, I can see huge mountain ranges that seem to never end. Every scene is more breathtaking than the one before.

By Will Thomas



READING EPHESIANS READS LIKE THAT WILDERNESS DRIVE. Paul takes us on an unbelievably rich journey.

And just when I think I couldn't possibly see anything more amazing, the two-lane blacktop makes a sharp turn and there it is—Denali! The monster mountain dwarfs all other peaks by comparison. Its snow-laden slopes loom above the landscape. Even though it's still more than 50 miles away, “The Great One” seems like I could reach out and touch it.

PAUL'S GLORIOUS PICTURE

Reading Ephesians reads like that wilderness drive. Paul takes us on an unbelievably rich journey. He paints one glorious word picture after another. He unveils scenes of God's glory and grace, His purpose and plan for those in Christ, and the transforming power of the gospel.

And just when I think I can't come across anything more amazing, I turn the corner and there it is—one of the most outlandish, awe-inspiring prayers in the entire Bible from Ephesians 3:14–21:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably

more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

This isn't just any prayer. Paul unleashes one of the most radical prayers imaginable. The prayer is “radical” because goes to the foundation of what praying has always been about.

In its basic form, “radical” means to go to the root or foundation of something. In this prayer, Paul takes us back to the fundamental issues of the faith and what it means to pray. He approaches prayer not as a pietistic retreat into comfort and safety, but as a call to live God's eternal purpose.

For Paul, prayer is not about making ourselves feel better, but about preparing for battle. This radical prayer assumes that God is at work—and entreats Him to do His work in us and through us.

FRAMING OUR PRAYERS

Let's take an up-close and personal look at the apostle's petition, with the hope that our prayers will become as radical as his.

“For this reason” (v. 14) follows an explanation of the Church's global, or even bigger “cosmic,” mission. The Church's living exhibition of the gospel through His people provides evidence of the power of God's grace. The world will believe it when they see it in the Church. This is how God designed it—and it calls for serious prayer.

Next, Paul exposes the radical manner of his prayer: “I kneel before the Father.” We may come to prayer from many postures, but radical prayer requires one basic attitude. Standing with heads bowed, lying prostrate, or sitting quietly are all appropriate. But never, ever dare we pray in pride. We are never demanding as if we could tell God what to do. We are asking and submitting. Fear and trembling are always the approach of a praying person who understands the magnificence and holiness of God.

Paul describes God as “the Father, from

whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.” We have no exclusive claim on God. He is bigger than our tribe or clan or nation. If He is Father of all, then we cannot pray as if we alone have a right to ask for His blessings.

Above all, our goal is to bring Him glory “in the church and in Christ Jesus.” Praying is never about us. It is always about Him. Nor are our prayers limited to our problems and dreams. Like Paul, we pray visionary prayers. We think about “all generations,” both for time and eternity.

Radical praying never settles for anything less than a radical view of God.

CONTENT OF OUR PRAYERS

Next, Paul’s prayer turns to his petition—what he desires God to do in the lives of his readers. He asks the Father to grant three overlapping blessings. He doesn’t ask for wealth or health, protection from hard times, or easier lives.

Paul’s prayer list also doesn’t read like the admittance registry at the Ephesian General Hospital. Praying for the sick and the hurting is always good and proper. But if that is the total sum and substance of our petitions, we have missed the heart of God. We can pray for things near and dear to us, but radical praying never omits the things near and dear to the Father.

Paul’s first concern is for their inner strength. If you are strong on the inside, you can survive anything on the outside. That doesn’t mean the outside doesn’t matter.

Our inner belief finds expression in our outer behavior. Both are vital. For most of us, the outer can easily overshadow the inner. That’s a part of the human condition.

Second, Paul prays that the lives of Christian friends might overflow with love. He wants them to be saturated with love. He looks forward to a day when

they will have the power to comprehend how big God’s love really is.

If we know we are loved, then we can risk loving others, even those who are different from us. That’s why Paul prays that his readers—and us by extension—can grasp “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (v. 18). *Wide* may picture the broad, all-inclusive love that encircles people groups across the geographic and cultural divides. *Long* could describe the unending, eternal nature of His love. The gospel has no “use by” or expiration date.

We can’t outlive or stand by waiting for the clock to run out. He loves now and forever. Could *high* cover those exciting, wonder-filled experiences of the Christian life? When everything is going well, it is all too easy to want to stay there, focus inward and never let go of the good times. But high love results in sharing love.

Deep might be the valley experiences, the harder and darker times. Understanding God’s love even in hard times keeps us from retreating into our shells, trying to protect ourselves from more pain and hurts. Those low moments are the very moments we need to lean on the deep love of God, along with the love of our Christian brothers and sisters.

GLORIOUS WRAP-UP

In his third and final petition, Paul asks that his readers might be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. Christ dwelling in our hearts, being rooted in love, and being filled with God’s fullness all express the same conviction.

God is at work in our world and our lives now. He is not a God of “once upon a time.” He didn’t retire when the last apostle died. Paul’s radical prayer assumes the radical reality of God.

Sadly, the prayers of the people and churches I know best seldom mirror Paul’s radical prayer. I suspect we pray

for small things because our picture of God is too small. We pray for the temporary and not the eternal because we seldom think of His everlasting purpose.

A radical visitation of the Spirit of the One “who is able to do immeasurably more than we think or imagine” (v. 20) will result in a return to radical praying. This is the sensory overload in prayer that can rekindle the power of radical prayer in a day when we can no longer “do business as usual.”

Paul’s prayer is our reminder that *today* the Church is empowered by the Spirit with the gift of radical and transformational prayer. ☒



WILL THOMAS is a freelance writer and Bible teacher. He is the author of seven books, including *God Is at Work and the Difference that Makes*—a devotional commentary on

Ephesians.


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Praying for Christian Writers and Media Influencers

Most Christian writers and authors like me consider our work more than a business or part-time job. We consider our work a ministry. The same is undoubtedly true for Christians in other media roles—people like journalists, celebrities, hosts, producers, directors, recording artists, podcasters, YouTubers, social media influencers, and more.

Through our words—whether written or spoken—we seek to shine the light of Christ in a dark world, to share truth and influence people to place their faith in Jesus. We strive to inspire, encourage, instruct, or provide wholesome entertainment. Advancing the Kingdom of God here on earth is our business.

So, God's enemy Satan—our enemy—fights against us. He wants to silence our voices. You can play a vital part in our work by asking God to thwart Satan's plans to discourage and defeat us. Here are some specific ways to pray for and support Christians in media roles:

- Pray they will glorify God, shine for Him, and plant seeds that will advance and expand God's Kingdom,

as well as nourish and encourage believers.

- Pray they maintain pure motives in all they do, displaying Christ-like behavior and guarding against pride.
- Pray they will seek God's guidance, empowering, and blessing in all their work. Ask God to guide their business decisions.
- Pray they will have wisdom to regularly meet with others in their fields—for fellowship, encouragement, instruction, and inspiration.
- Ask God to give them self-discipline and time-management skills needed to do the work He's called them to do.
- Pray they'll have the support of their family and friends.
- Pray for their tenacity and perseverance when disappointment, rejections, and discouragement come.
- Ask God to give them wisdom not to compare themselves with others or to let jealousy take root. Pray they will rejoice in others' success.
- Pray they will provide wise mentorship and advice to those newer in the business. Ask God to bless their

sacrifice of time.

- Ask for courage and willingness to promote their work (get their message out) and for wisdom in selecting marketing strategies. Pray they will generously promote others.
- Ask God to bless them with good sales, abundant positive reviews, opportunities for appearances, and additional avenues for sales.
- Ask God to give them loving, encouraging spirits as they interact with readers or fans.
- Pray for good health—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—and for mental clarity to do their work with excellence.
- Ask God to inspire, encourage, and point many to Christ through their work.

On behalf of Christians in all media roles, thank you for supporting our work and ministries through prayer. Your prayers will help us stay faithful to God's call.

CHERYL BARKER is a writer and author of *Christmas for the Heart*, a devotional coming October 2025 from B&H Publishing.

Unhindered Prayer Warriors

Hannah walked slowly into her evening Bible study group, teary-eyed. Her dad had turned himself in that afternoon to begin serving a one-year prison sentence. No one noticed her coming in; they were already busy amongst themselves.

No one, that is, except Faith, a newcomer to the group who had been invited

just that morning. Faith walked up to Hannah with a smile and concerned inquiry. The tears rolled as Hannah shared her heartache and fears with her new friend. Faith had no idea what to say to help Hannah, so she did what she knew to do: she hugged her, grabbed her hand, and prayed. Faith prayed the one thing she knew for sure—her loving God

had a plan for Hannah, her family, and her dad—a plan to help them and not to harm them.

By now, Faith and Hannah had several people's attention. As the two of them stood in the room—holding hands, heads down, praying together—group leaders, now also teary-eyed, stood nearby and listened in, amazed at what

they were seeing and hearing.

You see, Faith and Hannah were only five years old.

Laying Groundwork for Children

This special moment was recounted by my daughter Faith's church club leader. I was so grateful my youngest daughter had stepped up in a difficult situation with compassion and prayer.

While teaching our children to say "please" and "thank you" will certainly lay the groundwork for their life in society, teaching them to pray will lay the bedrock for their life as Kingdom citizens. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have received guidance directly from Him regarding our children's unique position in His Kingdom and how we are to nurture their relationship with Him (Matt. 19:14).

Hindering our children's approach to Jesus by failing to bring them up in the



understanding and confidence of prayer creates a stumbling block they will have to overcome as adults. It robs the family of the power that is uniquely given to the bold and simple prayers of these earnest stewards to whom Jesus proclaims, "the Kingdom of heaven belongs."

Faith's natural response to pray with Hannah at age five was simply the result of a young life grown in prayer. Regardless of our children's age, we can follow seven easy steps to begin growing our children in prayer.

1. Model prayer as a matter of daily life.
2. Pray aloud, allowing children to hear and learn.
3. Share excitement of answered prayers during dinner or other family time.
4. Incorporate prayer into daily activities and special occasions.
5. Discuss prayers in the Bible during family conversations.
6. Pray with children, especially during challenging times.
7. Pray brief blessings over children before they start their day.

May we look upon our children and see the unhindered prayer warriors God has placed before us.

CATHY ENDEBROCK is the author of *My Voice, HIS Heart: Experiencing Prayer in God's Will*. She also hosts LoveTalk Network Radio and Podcast.

You Don't Have to Be a Super-Spiritual Saint to Have a Meaningful Prayer Life

In an easy-to-understand and encouraging way, author Jonathan Graf presents the keys to a dynamic prayer life. Whether you are a new believer or one who has struggled with prayer for years, *The Power of Personal Prayer* will help you grow more passionate and effective in your prayer life.

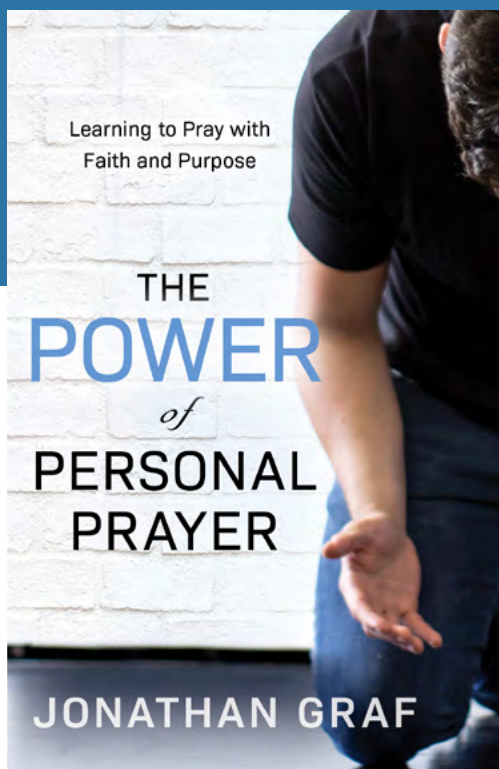
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Revive Us Again | By Brady Casper

What image comes to mind when you think of revival? Is it the mass evangelism of the 1858 movement where, within two years, one million out of 30 million people in America professed Christ? Perhaps the renewal of sacramental life seen in the Franciscan order of the medieval period transformed the Catholic Church by viewing the world as Christ's creation. Or is it the hunger for theological purity exemplified by the Reformation, which focused on returning to biblical truth under Luther's banner of *Sola Scriptura*?

Revival might evoke the expansive missions of the Moravians, whose century-long prayer movement led to John Wesley's conversion and the spread of the gospel to all corners of the earth. It could be the rich hymnody of the Wesley brothers, whose thousands of songs continue to be sung today. Alternatively, it might remind you of the renewal of spiritual gifts seen in the Azusa Street Revival, which launched the charismatic movement and rekindled the global conversation about the operation of spiritual gifts.

Revival could also manifest as a heightened concern for the needy and marginalized, reflected in Matthew 25:31–46. Or perhaps you envision it as a pursuit of holiness, like the Welsh Revival, where the coal miners' donkeys stopped obeying them because they, as new believers, had ceased cursing.

It might bring to mind stadiums filled with people seeking God, as seen in the Billy Graham Crusades, or continuous worship services like those at Asbury. Revival might also be associated with greater generosity, community favor, or cultural transformation.

Encountering Revival

I wrestled with this question personally when a single word—*revival*—was impressed on my heart, seemingly from God. My only context for revival then was from a video game where reviving someone involved stabbing a needle into his or her heart to restore to life.

As a junior at the University of Kentucky in 2019, I encountered revival in a profound way during a particularly challenging week. I was grappling with physical pain, grieving the loss of a friend to suicide, and struggling with the aftermath of assaults on friends at a fraternity house.

Amid this turmoil, I found solace in prayer and turned to the Bible, landing on Psalm 85:6: "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"

This verse illuminated for me that "revival" is a divine act of God, meant to awaken hearts to His glory and bring His people to rejoice in Him.

Pursuing Revival

Determined to pursue revival on my campus, I was inspired by Jeannine Brabon's story from the 1970s, when she prayed for each person by name on her Asbury campus. I requested a list of all students at the University of Kentucky. To my astonishment, they provided the names of more than 28,000 students!

Recognizing the enormity of the task, I sought help and created a website for people to sign up for prayer. Within the first ten days, more than 800 people had joined. Our first official day of prayer coincided with March 17, 2020—the day the university closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In those quiet lockdown months, I often questioned the purpose of our

efforts. However, when we finally returned to campus, the fruits of our labor became evident. A small campus ministry grew from 20 to more than 400 members. Around 120 students began sharing their faith daily. The largest gatherings on campus were Christian events, and I witnessed students being convicted of sin in their dorms, experiencing deliverance from spiritual bondage, and making significant sacrifices, such as selling their cars to buy a bus for serving the homeless.

While I would not claim this as a full-scale revival, it demonstrated the power of prayer as a catalyst for spiritual awakening. As A.T. Pierson aptly noted, "There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer."

This experience taught me that God, in His sovereignty, is the chief agent of revival. Jonathan Edwards observed that revival is a cry from God's people, much like the Israelites in Exodus 2 or the early Church in Acts, calling on the Lord who, in His mercy, sends "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19). We cannot force revival, but we can earnestly seek it through prayer and trust that God will move in ways beyond our imagination (Eph. 3:20–21).

I encourage you to pray—for evangelism, the poor, your family, healing, and holiness. But let your primary prayer be for God's glory and for His people to rejoice in Him. This is the heart of revival, and it begins with the prayers of His people. ☞



BRADY CASPER is a campus prayer mobilizer. You can listen to a OneCry interview with him at [facebook.com/theOneCry/videos/725305502754000](https://www.facebook.com/theOneCry/videos/725305502754000).

PRAY FOR YOUR COMMUNITY!

RAISE UP OTHERS TO PRAY WITH YOU!

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

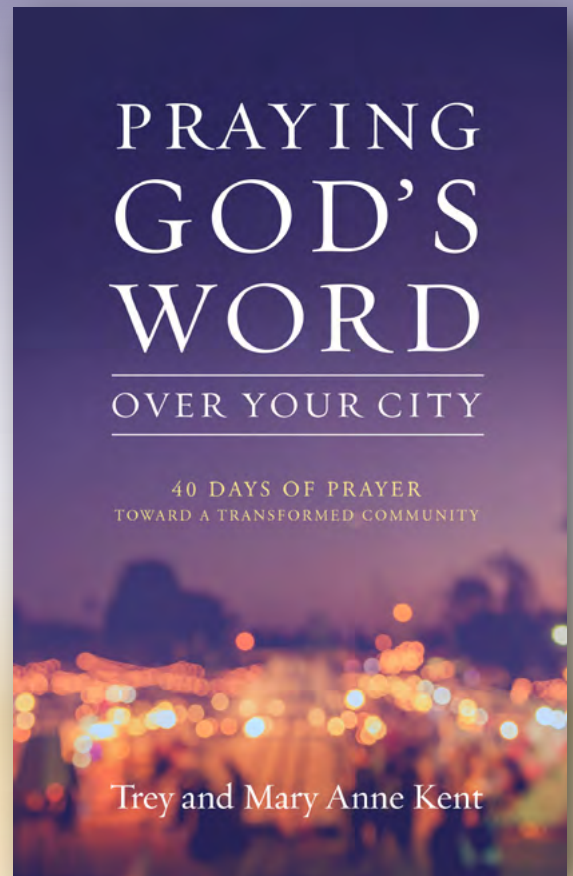
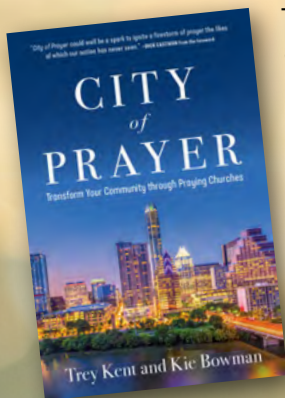
This guide follows the America Prays "7 topics for prayer" model. Each topic covers 5 or 6 days, and each day includes a Scripture, prayer points, and a powerful prayer.

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

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

Praying God's Word Over Your City is a sequel to *City of Prayer* by Trey Kent and Kie Bowman. *City of Prayer* tells the story of how God raised up 100 churches to pray together for Austin,

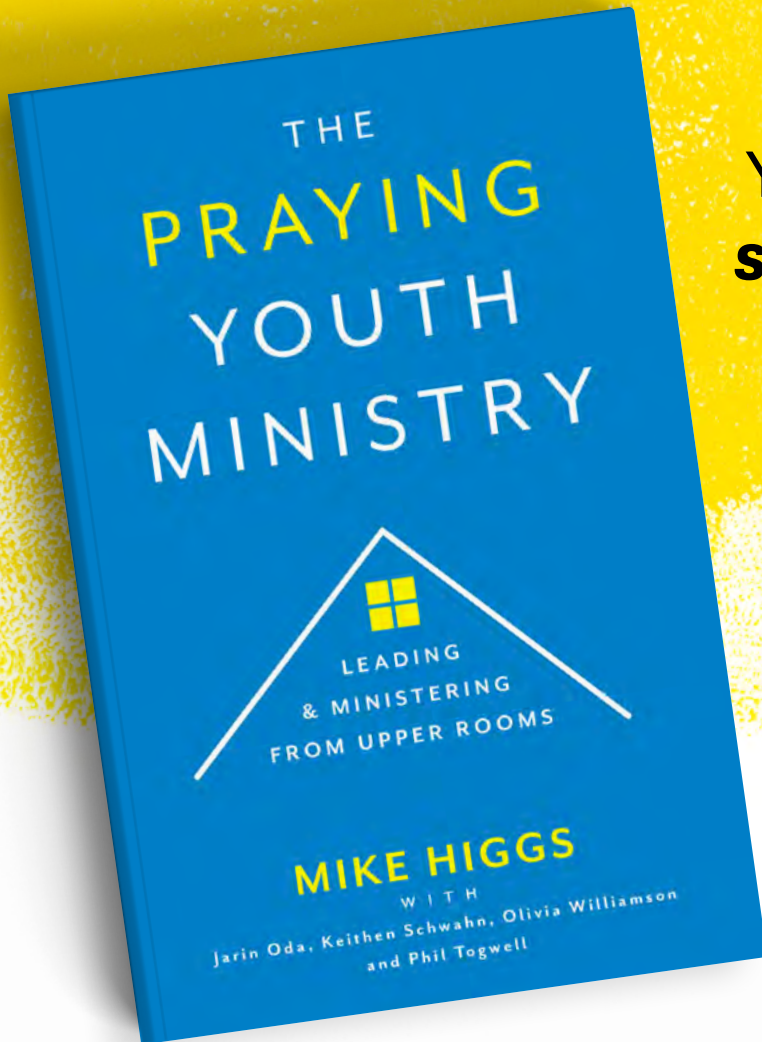
Texas, and it shows you how to do the same in your community. *Praying God's Word Over Your City* provides the "what to pray."



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