

THE
POWER
OF
EFFECTIVE
Prayer

Jansen and Gloria Trotman

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IADPA

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Telephone (305) 599.0037/ Fax (305) 592.8999

E-mail: mail@iadpa.org / Web site: www.iadpa.org

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Nathaniel Edison

Wendy Marcum

Cover Design

Kathy Hernández de Polanco

Layout Artist

Daniel Medina Goff

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Dedication:

To all those who supported us with your prayers
while we were in the Lord's service; and to our children,
who carry the torch of a meaningful prayer life.

Introduction

IN MANY WAYS, prayer is like the man who went searching for precious pearls. He searched all over, coming across many little pearls here and there; but none satisfied him. One day, he discovered one large and precious pearl that was worth more than all the other treasures he had acquired. He sold all of his possessions in order to buy this exquisite pearl (Matt. 13:45, 46).

When people discover the wonderful merits of prayer, they are willing to give their lives to hold on to it. Daniel the prophet was such a person. He preferred to die rather than give up praying for even one day! The saints of God have discovered a preciousness in prayer that the world can neither give nor take away.

The one who prays aright discovers that prayer is not a burden, but a delight; not a baneful exercise, but a blessed experience; not a dull activity, but a joyful opportunity. Such a person becomes like one famished who has found delectable food at last; like one thirsty who has found a bubbling spring of sweet, refreshing water; like a weary traveler who has found beautiful rest and shade; like one lost who at last has found the comforts of home.

Prayer is a wellspring of joy because it connects us to Jesus, who is the Source of all joy. "If anyone thirsts," says Jesus, "let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:32). What a pity that so many are dying of thirst while within reach of the Fountain of life. Prayer is the key to the abundant resources of a loving, heavenly Father who has invited us to take and enjoy all that we want. The sad truth is that so many are content to sit outside heaven's vault as beggars, when in their hands

they hold the key called prayer, which could unlock that vault of the plentitude of God's amazing grace and immeasurable wealth.

Prayer is available, not just to great prayer warriors like Moses, Daniel, Paul, Martin Luther, and George Müller, but to everyone. God invites us:

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance” (Isa. 55:1, 2, NKJV).

Prayer is an equal opportunity privilege. The person on the street has just as much access to the Monarch of the universe as does an earthly king or ruler. The pauper has just as much access as the billionaire. The simple person has just as much access as the scholar. All receive the same invitation, and Jesus says, “Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away” (John 6:37, NIV).

It is our prayer that in the pages that follow you will discover anew the riches of a dynamic prayer life. And when you do, you will never be the same again. So we invite you to journey with us as we “come boldly to the throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16, NKJV) for the experience of a lifetime!

Jansen Trotman
Gloria Trotman



The Incredible Power of Prayer

ON SOME OF OUR TRIPS to London, England, we have visited the historic Buckingham Palace, the residence of the queen of England. We were even privileged to pose for pictures with the colorfully dressed guards at the palace gate. But we were never privileged to go inside the gates. Why? We had no invitation from Her Majesty the Queen. If we had tried to push our way through the gate, the guards would have immediately arrested us and perhaps thrown us in jail. One cannot just go barging into the presence of a monarch or ruler.

However, we have been given an invitation to enter the throne room of the universe where the King of kings

and Lord of lords sits in regal splendor, surrounded by a countless number of powerful angels. In fact, this is no ordinary invitation. Here is how the apostle Paul describes it: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16, NKJV).

No invitation can equal this! The most powerful Being in the entire universe has invited us to enter into His throne room and chat with Him. Prayer is intimate communication with God. It is meeting and fellowshiping with your best and dearest Friend and spending quality time with Him. It’s a two-way conversation. We not only talk to God, but we also listen to Him. One saintly prayer soldier used to keep an extra chair in his prayer room and imagined that his Friend, Jesus, was sitting on that chair as they conversed together.

Prayer can do anything that God can do. Jesus said, “Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:13, 14). The psalmist declares that “power belongs to God” (Ps. 62:11), and Jesus assures us, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18, KJV).

We get a glimpse of God’s power when we understand the vastness of His domain. Our home, planet Earth, is 8,000 miles in diameter, and 25,000 miles in circumference. But Earth is but a speck in our solar system, which is 9 trillion miles across. Our solar system is located in one of the great spiral arms of the Milky Way galaxy. This galaxy includes over 200 billion stars. The Milky Way is 100,000 light-years across (one light-year equals 6 trillion miles), and our Milky Way is just one of billions of galaxies at the edge of the observable universe! And our God is not only the Creator, but the Ruler and Sustainer of this vast, limitless universe.

The psalmist, in contemplation of the infinity of the universe, says, “When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that

You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?” (Ps. 8:3, 4). “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).

Prayer gets its incredible power from God’s superlative majesty

In Hebrews 4:16, we read, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (NKJV).

The Message puts it this way: “So let’s walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.”

Can you imagine this? The One to whom we are invited to carry our petitions sits on the most exalted throne in the universe. Just think of the earthly potentates—kings, queens, presidents, governors. Theirs is a limited power. “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19). “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool” (Acts 7:49, NKJV). There is no comparison here. All human power is limited. God’s power is unlimited and absolute! Our God is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). He is the immortal and everlasting King (1 Tim. 1:17; Jer. 10:10). He is “the great King above all gods” (Ps. 95:3). His greatness, no one can fathom (Ps. 145:1–7).

Often if we need to see an important person, we have to make an appointment. Depending on how important that person is, we may have to pass through layers of personnel and security screening before we get to the person we are trying to see. There are cases in which one cannot see the “boss.” He or she may be encased in a huge, thick, glass office whose entire appearance is forbidding.

But I am not discouraged when I cannot see an earthly leader, for I can easily connect with the most important Person in the world—and without an appointment! Besides, He has told me that I *should* come to see Him. There is no higher authority or rank in heaven or on earth, and all power comes from Him. This most majestic Being in the entire universe invites us to come to Him boldly in prayer. What an unbelievable privilege!

Prayer gets its incredible power from God's infinite authority

We can say with King David, Israel's greatest king:

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all" (1 Chron. 29:11, 12, NKJV).

"For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth" (Ps. 47:2).

He reports to no one. He consults no one. He depends on no one. He fears no one. He takes orders from no one. He is "excellent in power" (Job 37:23, KJV). Jesus, the God-man could say, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matt. 28:18). His power extends over *all nature*, just like when He stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee. This miracle elicited the confession from His disciples, "Even winds and sea obey Him" (Matt. 8:27).

At Joshua's request, God commanded the sun to stand still (Josh. 10:12, 13).

His power extends over the *animal kingdom*. In fact, He made the animals (Gen. 1:20–25). When Jonah, the prophet, was running away from God, God prepared a great fish to swallow him and take him to the destination that God desired. "And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land" (Jon. 2:10). When the prophet Balaam was on his mission to curse God's people, God caused the donkey he was riding on to rebuke that prophet (Num. 22:21–31). A fish as a cruise ship, a donkey as a lecturer—what a God!

His power extends over *demons*. When the demoniacs of Gadara, possessed by legions of demons, came into Jesus' presence, by His word He banished those demons from the possessed men, and they were restored to sanity (Matt. 8:28–34). Our Great Physician is also the Great Psychiatrist!

God's power extends over *sickness and disease*. Think for a moment of the woman who had been hemorrhaging for more than a decade, receiving no help from the doctors. By touching the hem of Jesus' garment, she was restored to health (Luke 8:43–48). Our God is a gynecologist! In Capernaum, a Roman centurion came to Jesus "appealing to Him" to heal his servant. This man was content with Jesus only speaking the word "and my servant will be healed." Jesus spoke His healing words, "and the servant was healed at that very moment." Jesus is powerful enough to heal by remote control (Matt. 8:5–13)! Also the man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years was healed at Jesus' command: "Get up, take up your bed, and walk" (John 5:1–9). Our God is a neuromusculoskeletal specialist!

His power extends over *death itself*! Picture the heartbreaking scene in the little town of Bethany. Relatives, friends, and colleagues are weighed down with grief. Mourners crowd the house of the deceased, overflow into the yard, and line the streets. The eyes of Mary and Martha are swollen from four days of weeping because their beloved brother, Lazarus, is dead. Then Jesus arrives on the scene, and the atmosphere changes. The weeping Lord directs His steps to Lazarus's grave, and with a prayer to His Father and by His life-giving authority, He commands, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he who had died came out" (John 11:43, 44, NKJV).

Ponder another incident of God's power over death. The twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, was dead. To her wailing parents, Jesus said, "Don't worry! Have faith, and your daughter will get well." Then to the dead girl, He commanded, "Child, get up!" She came back to life and got right up" (Luke 8:50–55, CEV). Our Jesus is the death-sting Remover!

This same power over death will be exhibited at Christ's return when all those who died in Christ will be raised from their dusty graves at His command and will be given immortality. "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28, 29). "The trumpet will sound, and the

dead will be raised imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:52). “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). Jesus holds “the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18, KJV).

What power there is in the Lord Jesus! “There is no power but of God” (Rom. 13:1, KJV; cf. Col. 1:16). And to think that we are able to enter the throne room of the highest Sovereign in the universe—boldly! This access is ours all because of the precious blood of Jesus. This Sovereign is our Father, our Friend, our Protector, our Provider, our Deliverer, our Redeemer, Our Sustainer, and our Defender.

Prayer gets its incredible power from God’s constant availability

We do not have to sit in a waiting room, stand in line, or take a number when we need God. He is always ready to receive us. We are never “on hold” to talk to God. We have a Father who is able to attend to the needs and cries of every one of His children at the same time. “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer” (1 Pet. 3:12).

We are not left in doubt about God’s constant availability. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). He takes no vacation, no day off, and no *siesta*. Psalm 121:3, 4 assures us that “He who keeps you will not slumber.” Neither is He far away. Paul spoke of God directing the affairs of human beings so “that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In Him we live and move and have our being’ ” (Acts 17:27, 28).

He anticipates our call and promptly answers. “Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear” (Isa. 65:24). His ears are open. Nothing can keep Him from hearing our pleading voices. “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears toward their cry” (Ps. 34:15).

With all this evidence of God's availability, how can we waver in our desire to pray? God wants us to pray to Him. Let us remember His distinct command and invitation: "And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you" (Ps. 50:15).

God's heavenly throne room does not need an answering service like those in our earthly offices. How would we feel if in response to our requests to God we had to choose from the following options?

"For financial requests, please press 1.

"For healing requests, please press 2.

"For domestic problems, please press 3.

"For job-related problems, please press 4.

"For spiritual problems, please press 5.

"For all other problems, please stay on the line for the next available representative."

Let us thank God that He is ever available. There will never be a voice saying, "All our representatives are currently busy attending other callers," or, "Your waiting time will be approximately thirty minutes."

One day, our four-year-old son was heard saying to himself, "OK. Really? Uh-huh. I see. OK. OK . . ." His puzzled mother asked him why he was having this strange conversation with himself. What was the matter?

"Oh, nothing," was his reply. "I am just playing Daddy. That is how he answers you when he's not listening."

Ouch! What an indictment that was! Of course, I made an immediate resolution to mend my ways.

God, however, is always ready and willing to listen to us and answer us. We have a direct line to Him. He wants to stay connected to us. His line is never busy, disconnected, or out of order. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

We can always expect an answer from God. It may be immediate as with Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:3–23, or it may be delayed as in Daniel 10. But our God will listen and answer. So let's just pray. Any time is a good time to pray. Any place is a suitable place to pray.

What a unique and mighty God we serve! “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him” (Deut. 4:7).

Prayer gets its incredible power from God’s unlimited ability

There are sometimes people who, although they are willing to help us, are nevertheless powerless. We say that their “hands are tied.” They may be financially limited, or perhaps they are restricted by their status, or they are hindered by the lack of opportunity to help. Sometimes, they themselves are so burdened by their own circumstances that they really cannot help. They have the desire, but they do not have the ability. But our God is not like that. The Scriptures emphasize God’s unlimited ability. Isaiah 59:1 reassures us, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or His ear dull, that it cannot hear.” God has no impediments or disabilities. In Genesis 18:14, we read, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” How this calms our racing hearts when doubts and fears torment us! But there is more. Here is Jesus’ own endorsement of His unlimited ability: “With God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

There are numerous examples in the Bible of God’s unlimited ability. He is sometimes referred to as *El Shaddai*, which means “God Almighty.” The Israelites, in their journey from Egypt to Canaan via the wilderness, experienced mighty manifestations of God’s power: the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14); God’s provision of manna from heaven to feed them (Exod. 16); God’s supply of water from the rock (Exod. 17:1–7). In addition, their clothes and sandals did not wear out (Deut. 29:5).

Our God removes obstacles and feeds, clothes, and sustains us. There is nothing He cannot do! He supplies all our needs. “You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceeding even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus. Our God and Father abounds in glory that just pours out into eternity” (Phil. 4:19, *The Message*). According to Psalm 23:1, we “shall not want.” He is able to fight our battles successfully for us, just like He

promised Jehoshaphat when the Moabites and Ammonites threatened him: “Do not be afraid . . . , for the battle is not yours but God’s” (2 Chron. 20:15).

God is not on a rigid, limited giving plan. He is not on a blessings freeze. He does not have to plan an austerity budget because His funds are low. We have an abundant God—a God who does not hoard His riches but is eager to bestow multiple blessings upon us. Listen to the apostle Paul: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Eph. 3:20, NKJV). Pause for a moment to contemplate this string of superlatives describing our Lord’s giving power: *exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*. So we see that God is only limited by our capacity to receive, not by His ability to give. This is why He urges us, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Ps. 81:10). Our Father does not give minute morsels. His servings are copious!

So, are you ready to receive? Others held fast to God’s promises. Others believed in His ability. You can too. Remember the poor widow who could not pay her debts and was on the verge of losing her two sons to her creditors? Elisha, the man of God told her to collect as many vessels as she could get and fill them with her meager supply of oil. Vessel after vessel was filled, and it was not until she had no more containers that “the oil stopped flowing” (2 Kings 4:6).

Jesus was preaching one day to the multitudes. It was time for dinner. The people were hungry and far from the shops. One little boy had five loaves and two small fishes. These he was willing to share, and Jesus blessed this simple, little lunch. The result? “And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children” (Matt. 14:20, 21).

What about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when threatened with incineration because they would not bow down and worship the golden image? They said in a brave chorus, “Our God whom we serve is able” (Dan. 3:17). And by preserving them from the flames, He showed that indeed He is.

Yes, our God is able. There is none wiser. There is none richer. There is none stronger than our God. He can use natural or supernatural means to accomplish His will. He is indeed *El Shaddai*.

Prayer gets its incredible power from God's unrestricted invitation

Many special events require invitations: "Admission strictly by invitation only." Also, there are stipulations that qualify some persons to be invited. Then there are exclusive clubs that refuse entrance to non-members. This is not so with God. "Whoever comes to Me I will never cast out" (John 6:37). Don't you love that? We can show up at His event and be welcome. All we have to do is be in God's presence. This is so because we are invited.

There are no limits with Jesus' invitations. Invitees are not determined by age, class, religion, color, or gender. Everyone has an invitation: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' . . . Whoever desires" (Rev. 22:17, NKJV). There is also no limit to the number of guests. Moreover, the invitation is for an unlimited variety of guests: thieves, addicts, prostitutes, drunkards, murderers, and others. Our God does not discriminate. Even the Pharisees observed concerning Jesus, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2).

People who attend social events uninvited are referred to as "crashers." Crashers are spurned by invitees and hosts alike. On November 24, 2009, Michael and Tareq Salahi, a married couple from Virginia, attended a White House state dinner for the Indian Prime Minister—as uninvited guests. They were able to pass through security checkpoints and they even met President Obama. However, when discovered, they were thrown out and prosecuted. We do not have to be crashers. We belong. We are sons and daughters of God. Our names ("whoever") are on the invitation.

Prayer gets its incredible power from God's unconditional love

"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"

(John 3:16). There is something about that word *whoever* that thrills our souls. There is a sense of security that comes from its all-inclusive nature. *Whoever* means me. *Whoever* means you and the rest of the world. We are included in God's invitation because of His unconditional love for us.

God's love has prompted Him to answer our prayers. "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). Because God loves us so much, He will not refuse us anything that is for our good. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Rom. 8:32, NKJV). This love is not only unconditional, but also generous and incomparable. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

A little girl was playing with her dolls one day. Suddenly she removed the doll that was wearing the blue-and-white-polka-dot dress and put her in a corner, far away from the other dolls. A visitor to the house who had been watching the little girl play asked her, "Why did you separate that little doll? Don't you love her?"

"Not today," the little girl replied sternly. "She was misbehaving, so I am punishing her. I will love her tomorrow, if I don't forget."

The love of humans is fickle and conditional. God's love is constant and unconditional. We can't earn it or measure it. In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story of the prodigal son who had left his father's house, abandoned his father's principles, and "squandered his property in reckless living" (v. 13). All this time, the loving father was watching and waiting for his return. Dire



poverty and starvation forced this son to return home, even if he had to become a servant. What did he find? Not a scolding, harsh, and judgmental father, but a loving, forgiving father with open arms welcoming him to the comforts of home! Many thousands of children are abandoned by their parents every year. But God never abandons the least of His children. Each one is precious in His sight. “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isa. 49:15).

When I return to my Father after I have strayed and pained His heart, will He still love me? Oh yes, He will (Rom. 5:5–10)! No one is beyond the reach of God’s love. In fact, no one who truly understands the depth and breadth of God’s love can remain apart from Him. Prayer is therefore conversing with the One who loves me without limit—unconditionally!

Prayer gets its incredible power from God’s incomparable faithfulness

Lamentations 3:21–25 enumerates the evidences of God’s faithfulness. God’s excessive faithfulness is kept continually before our eyes. Every day we receive fresh supplies of it. Every morning He pours out new mercies for us. What faithfulness! This brand of faithfulness is ever-present and eternal. This kind of faithfulness keeps its promises. It is a never-leaving, never-forsaking faithfulness (Heb. 13:5–6). What flawless, perfect, never-failing faithfulness! How reassuring and refreshing.

We like to enjoy the comfort and security of lasting relationships. We like our friends to be our friends forever. Abandonment and separation hurt us. Our Friend, Jesus, will always be faithful to us. This faithfulness empowers our prayers. Jesus was faithful when Peter was sinking in the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:28–31). Jesus extended His faithfulness to the dying thief on the cross (Luke 23:42, 43). The faithfulness of our Savior is vast and lasting. It is timeless and unalterable. This is the assurance we have from God’s Word:

“For I the Lord do not change” (Mal. 3:6). “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17). “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). He has promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

Thank You, Lord, for Your faithfulness!

Why don't we pray more?

Here is the big question. Why don't we pray more? Let us attempt some answers:

Are we too busy? The busier we are, the more we need to pray. Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century Reformer, made a journal entry in which he said that he was facing an extremely busy day, and therefore, he had to spend extra time in prayer. No wonder this prayer giant shook the foundations of Rome.

Are we too sick? The more sick we are, the more we need to call upon the Great Physician who can heal all our diseases (Ps. 103:2, 3).

Are we too afraid? The psalmist David could say in Psalm 56:3, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in You.” The prophet Isaiah declared, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation” (Isa. 12:2).

Are we too sinful? The greater our sinfulness, the greater our need is of running to Jesus. “But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20, NKJV). Prayer connects us to the only One who can forgive our sins and give us power to overcome sin.

Are we too ashamed? Jesus invites us to come to Him just as we are. He covers our unworthiness with His righteousness and makes us into new people. The story of Joshua the high priest is instructive:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?” Now Joshua was standing before the Angel,

clothed with filthy garments. And the Angel said to those who were standing before Him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him He said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the Angel of the Lord was standing by (Zech. 3:1–5).

Sometimes we think we are not capable of praying. We are overwhelmed when we hear the petitions of prayer warriors and those who have been Christians for many years. How can we find the right words? How can we convey the pain or passion of our hearts? Really, what is prayer? Here is a simple definition: “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend” (*Steps to Christ*, chap. 11, p. 93).

Have you ever felt so burdened that you needed to talk to someone? You just poured it all out to him or her? Then after the little chat you felt lighter and freer, relieved of your burden. That is how prayer works. Just tell it to Jesus. You need no special language, no special time. You do not even need a special place. Just tell Jesus—at any time, in any place. Tell Him with confidence and boldness (Heb. 4:16). And the beauty of telling Jesus is that He is confidential. Paul, the apostle, expressed the assurance, “For I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return” (2 Tim. 1:12, NLT).

Heaven is waiting for our prayers. Jesus is ready to listen and to answer. We are not an interruption in God’s busy commitment to rule and maintain the universe. Rather, we are invitees to His presence. We are His children. So God will stop to listen. He can listen to one of us at a time or to all of us at once. He is never confused or overwhelmed by our cries. How awesome! In the turmoil of political upheaval, national and international crises, domestic challenges, interpersonal conflicts, and even joyful celebrations, God will pause to hear our prayers. “Not one sincere prayer is lost. Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human

being. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, chap. 14, p. 174).

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16).



The Holy Spirit: Our Divine Helper in Prayer

“WHATEVER YOU ASK IN MY NAME, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:13–18).

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

The Holy Spirit is the forgotten Person of the Godhead. He is a real, personal Being and is just as involved with the salvation of humanity as the other two Divine

Beings of the Godhead—the Father and the Son. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to continue His work on earth of getting people ready for heaven (John 14:25, 26; 16:12, 13).

The Holy Spirit is God's special gift to us. Just as a father gives gifts to his children, so our heavenly Father gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). When we accept Jesus, we receive this gift. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ . . . , and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

We like to receive and give gifts, don't we? Now suppose someone gave you a gift and you did not open it. Rather, you put it safely up on a shelf. How would you be able to enjoy that gift? Enjoyment of the gift comes from opening and using it. Remember Mary who brought an alabaster box of ointment as a gift to Jesus? When she opened the box to anoint Jesus' head and feet, the rich fragrance filled the room (John 12:3)! Jesus has given us a gift—the Holy Spirit. When we open the "box," the fragrance of the Spirit will fill the world.

The Scriptures place a heavy emphasis on the Holy Spirit and His work in us. In Romans 8:5–8, we read that if we are in the flesh and not in the Spirit, we cannot please God. We need the same Spirit that was in Jesus to dwell in us and make us spiritually alive.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God's Ambassador to help us grow in Christ. An ambassador is one sent to a foreign country as a representative of his or her government. Ambassadors usually specialize in a specific task. The Holy Spirit is an Ambassador from heaven to earth, and His primary activity is to help believers grow in Christ. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, there would be no conversions to Jesus. For this reason, all great revivals have begun with praying for the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Helper that Jesus promised us in John 14:16: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever." There are two Greek words that are translated as "another" in the New Testament. One is *allos*, which refers to another of the *same kind*. The other is *heteros*, which refers to another of a *different kind*. In this passage, Jesus uses *allos*—another of the same kind—so we should expect that the Holy Spirit will be to us all that Jesus was to

His disciples. The Greek word translated “Helper” is *parakletos*, which identifies the Holy Spirit as a Counselor, Advocate, and Intercessor who stands by our side.

The Holy Spirit is not an abstract idea or a mere influence. He is a Divine Person, the Third Person of the Godhead. Thus, the Holy Spirit “is as much a person as God is a person” (*Evangelism*, sec. 18, p. 616). He is everything that God is. He is Christ’s Representative (*The Desire of Ages*, chap. 4, p. 669), and through Him, God dwells in us (John 14:17, 23).

Unfortunately, Satan has succeeded in obscuring the true character of the Holy Spirit through the strange behavior of some who claim to have the Holy Spirit. However, when one truly has the Holy Spirit, God’s love, grace, mercy, and kindness are manifested.

The Holy Spirit helps us to pray with power

This Divine Being helps us to connect with God’s power through prayer. He is our Translator. Many times we are so burdened with our pain and cares that we fail to express our feelings clearly to God. We do not know how to speak the language of heaven. Our attempts to communicate with God are feeble. “Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God’s Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don’t know how or what to pray, it doesn’t matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans” (Rom. 8:26, *The Message*).

A few years ago, I was scheduled to go on a trip to China. Realizing my ignorance of the language, I decided to learn a few words and phrases in Chinese so that I could be functional during my visit to that foreign country. I equipped myself with videos and books and determined to become literate. Unfortunately, that was as far as I got. When I boarded the plane for China, I barely knew how to say a greeting and “Thank you.” I was grateful for our guide, who was fluent in English and very patient. We were also fortunate to meet a very friendly hotel attendant who daily reminded us of the words and phrases she had taught us. The Holy Spirit translates our prayers into the language of God. He translates not only our words, but also our emotions and heartfelt wishes. But He is more than a Translator. He is also our Power Source (Acts 1:8).

Often sin gets in the way and blocks our clear communication with our heavenly Father. So how can we succeed in our efforts to communicate? The Holy Spirit prepares us to come into God's presence by pointing out the sins we need to confess and forsake. "And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Prov. 28:13). The psalmist David observes, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18, KJV). How then could we attempt to approach the mercy seat aware that we have unconfessed sin in our lives?

How does the Holy Spirit convict us of our sins? He works on our conscience (Rom. 9:1). But that is not all; it even gets better. The Holy Spirit points us clearly in the right direction. He is the voice telling us, " 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21). How encouraging! We are not left to stumble in indecision and doubt. We have a Guide and Director. Our responsibility, then, is to respond to the Spirit's conviction, hear, and obey.

What conditions must we meet in order to receive the Holy Spirit?

- We must humble ourselves in true repentance.
- We must confess our unbelief.
- We must meditate on the holy life of Christ.
- We must pray earnestly.
- We must put away our differences.
- We must become united in Christian fellowship.
- We must put away our desires for supremacy.
- We must draw nearer to God.
- We must claim the promise of the Holy Spirit.
- We must feel our spiritual need.

We need the Holy Spirit in order to experience forgiveness

Our most basic spiritual need is for forgiveness and pardon from sin. In Romans 3:23, we read that we "all have sinned." Furthermore, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). At the cross, however, God

provided for this need by the death of His Son (1 Cor. 15:3). “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). We all need forgiveness because “none is righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10; cf. Ps. 14:3; 53:3). The prophet Isaiah laments that “all we like sheep have gone astray” and turned to our own ways; however, God in love has placed our iniquity upon the Sin Bearer, Jesus Christ (Isa. 53:6).

Dr. Harry Ironside, a great preacher of long ago, told of a time that he visited a sheep farm and saw a lamb that apparently had six legs. He inquired of the farmer the reason for this odd circumstance. The farmer explained that the mother of this little lamb had died. At the same time, there was a mother ewe whose little lamb had died. So the farmer made a cloak from the skin of the dead lamb with two legs still attached to it and covered the living lamb with this cloak. Hence, the little lamb appeared to have six legs! When the mother got the scent of the cloak that the motherless lamb was wearing, she accepted that lamb as her own.

When we accept Jesus, we are clothed with His righteousness, and the Father accepts us as His own child. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us this assurance. “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). Since we are God’s children, we know that He will never abandon us. “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isa. 49:15).

When we receive God’s forgiveness, it is full and complete. God has promised that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). He will blot out our transgressions and sins “like a cloud” (Isa. 44:22). He will “cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19). He will cast our sins behind His back (Isa. 38:17). He will forgive our sins and remember them no more (Jer. 31:34).

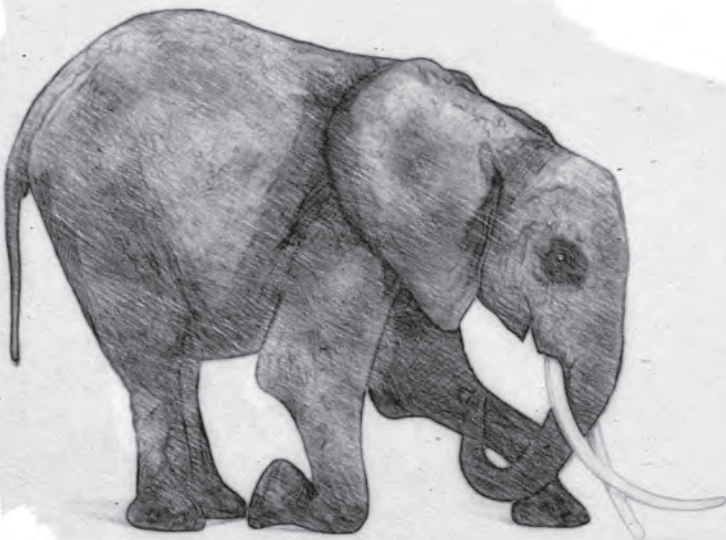
If we know that God can forgive us, then we can forgive ourselves. Satan enjoys bringing back our past sins to taunt us—sins that we have already confessed and forsaken. He delights in seeing us miserable, brooding over our past mistakes. When God forgives us, we can throw

His promises in Satan's face and tell him, "Don't look at my past. Look at Calvary! My sins are nailed there, blotted out by the blood of the Lamb."

Likewise, since God forgives us, we should forgive others (Matt. 6:14, 15). However, forgiveness is one of the most difficult Christian principles to practice. It is natural to want to hurt those who have hurt us. Jesus, however, set a high standard for those who bear His name. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:43, 44). The Holy Spirit makes such forgiveness a reality in our hearts as He produces His fruit in our lives (Gal. 5:22–25).

The Holy Spirit makes us holy

Holiness is God's expectation of us. "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy" (1 Pet. 1:15). But how can sinful human beings live a holy life that is acceptable to God? Only the Holy Spirit can provide us with this holiness. Through the indwelling of Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we receive the power to overcome sin and live a holy life.



The early Christian church was an example of what the Holy Spirit could do in the lives of human beings. Through the moving of the Holy Spirit, the church was able to make bold assaults against the fortresses of Satan. Conversions took place among all classes of people, and there were numerous baptisms. How did the New Testament church become Spirit-filled? Through prayer.

“The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. . . .

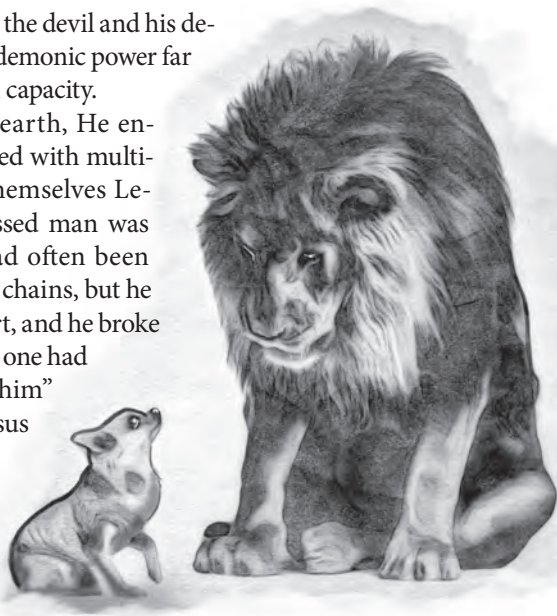
“ . . . The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that would fit them for the work of soul saving” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 4, p. 37).

Our battle with sin is an unequal contest. Imagine for a moment a battle between the following opponents:

- A midget and a towering giant
- A mouse and an elephant
- A Chihuahua and a lion
- A sparrow and an eagle

What do you suppose would be the obvious outcome? Now let us picture ourselves in a contest with Satan. We are certainly no match for the devil and his demons by ourselves. Their demonic power far exceeds our feeble human capacity.

When Jesus was on earth, He encountered a man possessed with multiple devils, who called themselves Legion. This demon-possessed man was so powerful that “he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him” (Mark 5:4). However, Jesus freed the man from the power of these devils!



We are born with a predisposition to sin. “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). We are attracted to sinning like a moth to the flame or a pig to the mud. We cannot change ourselves. The prophet Jeremiah confirms our helplessness by comparing us to the Ethiopian who cannot change the color of his skin or the leopard that cannot change its spots (Jer. 13:23). We cannot keep ourselves from sinning. No detergent, no soap is adequate to cleanse us of our iniquities (Jer. 2:22).

“Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power” (*The Desire of Ages*, chap. 4, p. 671). By ourselves, we are helpless; but with the power that Jesus gives us through the Holy Spirit, we are overcomers. Thank God that while we are helpless, we are not hopeless! He “is able to keep you from stumbling” (Jude 24).

We are at war with the kingdom of darkness

“We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world” (Eph. 6:12, CEV). “Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring” (Rev. 12:17). What a viciously hostile environment this is! There are agents of war against us. These are not ordinary, human soldiers but rather “powers in the spiritual world”!

The battleground is uneven and the territory unfamiliar. How then can we win this battle? But the situation gets even worse. The enemy general is Satan, who is determined to bring about our destruction. The apostle Peter describes him as our “adversary the devil” who “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). This is a chilling picture. His evil roar strikes terror into our hearts, and as he paces around us, intent on our demise, we are paralyzed with fear. How fast can we run to escape him? Where will we go?

Satan attacks in numerous ways. His most effective method is deception. He assumes a variety of shapes and sizes to overpower and destroy his victims. He launches his attacks on us in unsuspecting areas and uses disarming camouflages.

One of the deadliest predators in the marine world is the cuttlefish. This sea creature is known as the “king of camouflage” or the “chameleon of the sea.” These animals change their color and shape according to their surroundings. They can change color faster than any other animal. Cuttlefish use their camouflage ability to capture and kill their prey. They can even hypnotize their prey and thus make it easy to catch.

Like the cuttlefish, Satan is crafty and unpredictable. He employs creative and deceptive measures to enslave and destroy us. Satan is the world’s greatest deceiver (John 8:44). He stalks us, “befriends” us, lies to us, hypnotizes us, and then pounces on us and kills us. He catches us off guard when we are not expecting his attacks. We cannot subdue and conquer him in our own strength.

But thank God, we have the Holy Spirit, who unmasks him. “God does not ask us to do in our own strength the work before us. He has promised divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives us the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, chap. 3, p. 19).

Our most effective weapon against the devil is prayer. By persisting in prayer we can put the devil to flight (James 4:7; Eph. 6:11, 18). We must not underestimate the winning power of prayer. “The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privilege that God has given them in the Divine appointment of prayer” (*Steps to Christ*, chap. 11, p. 95).

It is important to understand that when we have all Three Persons of the Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—working on our behalf, we will defeat the forces of Satan and overcome sin.

It is time to open the wonderful Gift that God has given us. God is eager for you to have it (Luke 11:13). When the Holy Spirit dwells within you, amazing things will happen (Acts 2:3, 4)! Your prayer life will become unbelievably powerful and incredibly delightful.



Jesus: Our Example in Prayer

“**W**HOEVER SAYS HE ABIDES in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked” (1 John 2:6). “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col. 2:6).

These three texts highlight one action—walking as Christ walked. Is that so difficult to practice? I have seen kids who walk exactly like their dads. I recall one little boy who seemed like an exact replica of his dad. He walked partially on his tiptoes and leaned his head to the left side, just like his dad. Amazing! He looked just like his father, especially because he walked like him.

Walking has been discovered to be a very important activity. Studies have revealed that “increasing your daily walking is directly related to your mental

and physical well-being.”¹ Among the alleged *physical* benefits of walking are included promoting weight loss and metabolizing body fat; strengthening bones, preventing fractures, and lessening the risk and severity of osteoporosis; preventing type 2 diabetes; lowering blood pressure and reducing blood cholesterol; slowing the aging process; reducing the risk of various cancers, including colorectal, prostate, and breast cancers; improving recovery after a heart attack or stroke; and improving flexibility and posture. The *mental* benefits of walking include preventing and reducing depression, strengthening cognitive function and preventing cognitive decline, increasing alertness and memory, enhancing creativity and problem-solving ability, improving mood, increasing self-esteem, and alleviating stress. Additionally, walking twenty to twenty-five miles per week has been found to increase life expectancy by several years.

Physical walking has many impressive benefits, but walking with Christ is even more important. It brings eternal benefits. If we are serious about being Christians, we must imitate Jesus. He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). One of Christ’s outstanding features was His prayer life. “In these days He went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12). Jesus’ prayer life was habitual. This was the source of His strength. “It was in hours of solitary prayer that Jesus in His earthly life received wisdom and power” (*Education*, chap. 30, p. 257). The disciples were accustomed to seeing Him in prayer. They noticed the power and strength that resulted from His prayers. They were so impressed by His constant communion with His Father that they asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1).

Jesus Himself, while He dwelt among men, was often in prayer. Our Saviour identified Himself with our needs and weakness, in

1. “Importance of Walking: Benefits, Statistics, Case Studies, and Goals,” *The World of Walking and Running*, posted by rad12, November 17, 2011, <http://campus.albion.edu/walkingandrunning/2011/11/17/importance-of-walking-benefits-statistics-case-studies-and-goals/>.

that He became a suppliant, a petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, that He might come forth braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. . . . His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer (*Steps to Christ*, chap. 11, p. 93).

The prayer life of Jesus is the best model for us. It was not a helpful, religious exercise, but rather His life. When Jesus arose from His knees, Satan's whole host trembled, and fear ran through the ranks of the evil one.

Jesus prayed to God as His loving, heavenly Father

Relationships between children and their parents vary. Some parents are permissive and laid back. This causes their children to be unruly, manipulative, and insecure. Then there are other parents who are authoritarian. These types of parents rule their households like tyrants. Consequently, their children tend to be defiant and rebellious. Another type of parent is the neglectful kind. These parents do not seem to regard their responsibilities to their kids, who are often left to "raise themselves." Then there are authoritative parents who show both love and firmness as they rear their children. These children are taught self-respect and regard for authority. In this home, there is warmth, love, and caring. The best parents are those who realize that their children are God's gifts to them to be nurtured, trained, and prepared for heaven.

The relationship between Jesus and His Father was a model relationship. The Father shows an example of love and caring. Jesus says in John 5:20, "For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing." This heavenly Father cares for His children. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father" (Matt. 10:29). God values us infinitely more than He values the sparrows. Everyone is precious in His sight.

God, our Father, is also anxious to help and ready to listen:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him (Matt. 7:7–11).

Above all, God, our heavenly Father, loves us unconditionally. Like the prodigal son who left his father's home for a life of recklessness, we can return to a loving Father (Luke 15:11–32). God the Father loves us in spite of all of our wanderings. God does not base His love for us on how well we act or how many good deeds we have done. God does not love us because we are generous or have an elevated social status. He does not love us only when we obey His will. God loves us because we are His children, and as His children we are able to pray to Him.

Jesus spent quality and quantity time in prayer

Jesus' prayers were not only intense, deep, and sincere; they were regular, frequent, and unceasing. Jesus met His Father in prayer early in the morning. God the Father was His Son's first contact in a solitary place after a night of sleep (Mark 1:35). This is a worthy example. Before the rising of the sun and the hustle and bustle of the day, before the ringing of the telephone and the blaring of the television, we must seek God in a solitary place. We must seek Jesus before we consult our day's agenda. We must thank Him for waking us up and then lay our plans for the day before Him. We must connect with Jesus even before the light of day, when the mind is fresh and alert and is not crowded by the cares of the day or night. We must seek Him first thing in the morning. The time we spend in prayer must be a continual habit. Jesus urged us to "watch therefore, and pray always" (Luke 21:36, NKJV).

Jesus sometimes spent all night alone with God in prayer (Luke 6:12). There are times when we are happy to spend long hours, or even an entire night, with our friends. We are inclined to do this when we

have not seen them for a long time or if they are going away from us. We long to capture every precious moment of association with them. Jesus had such periods of all-night communion with His Father. What strength, power, and wisdom He gained from these encounters, away from all distractions!

Andrew Murray, who was known for his deep devotional life, declared, “The enemy uses all his power to lead the Christian and above all the minister, to neglect prayer. He knows that however admirable the sermon may be, however attractive the service, however faithful the pastoral visitation, none of these things can damage him or his kingdom if prayer is neglected. When the Church shuts herself up to the power of the inner chamber, and the soldiers of the Lord have received on their knees, ‘power from on high,’ then the powers of darkness will be shaken and souls will be delivered.”²

How important is secret prayer? What are the benefits of talking to God in private? Jesus valued secret prayer so much that He advised His followers to engage in it, just as He did. “Go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matt. 6:6). Enjoy the blessings of a one-on-one session with the Father. It is an opportunity for confession, openness, sincere conversation, and expressions of gratitude. An invitation to share intimate moments with God is precious and rewarding. Let’s accept it.

“Our prayers are to be as earnest and persistent as was the petition of the needy friend who asked for loaves at midnight. The more earnestly and steadfastly we ask, the closer will be our spiritual union with Christ” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, chap. 12, p. 146).

Jesus recognized that the faith factor is paramount in prayer

What is faith? Faith is believing God so fully that there is no room for doubt. Jesus taught that all things are possible for the person of faith.

2. *Andrew Murray on Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1998), 159–160.

“All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22, KJV). Ponder for a moment the story of the two blind men:

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” When He entered the house, the blind men came to Him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.” And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, “See that no one knows about it” (Matt. 9:27–30).

The healing of the blind men hinged on their implicit faith in Jesus. Later, in Matthew 17:20, 21, Jesus emphasized the importance effectiveness of even a tiny measure of faith—faith the size of a mustard seed. This kind of faith was pleasing to Jesus. I have seen and with difficulty held mustard seeds. They are so tiny it is challenging to separate them in order to hold a single seed between one’s fingers. Can we develop even such a small amount of faith? Ask and it will be made available to you. Faith, no matter how small, will be rewarded. We need a measure of faith. “It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask” (*The Great Controversy*, chap. 12, p. 525).

Consider the miracles of healing of the woman who was ill for twelve years and resurrecting the daughter of the ruler Jairus. Jesus credited these miracles to the exercise of faith that trusted in Christ’s power in spite of the hopeless appearance of the circumstances (Luke 8:48–50). This was the kind of faith that Jesus commended. This is the faith that is the basis for pleasing God. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6).

Charles Blondin was a famous French tightrope walker. Stories say that in one of his high-wire acts he walked across Niagara Falls from the Canadian side to the American side—a distance of 1,100 feet, 160 feet above the Niagara River—pushing a wheelbarrow. On one occasion, when he landed safely at the end of his walk, he was met with thunderous applause from the ecstatic crowd of spectators. Blondin

asked, “How many of you believe I can do it again—with a man in the wheelbarrow?” There was a loud chorus saying, “Yes!” He then asked, “Could I have a volunteer?” Not a single person in that vast crowd volunteered. Their actions did not match their words.

When we truly believe what Jesus says, we will trust Him completely and quickly obey. Pray for faith. Pray with faith, and see that “by your fervent prayers of faith you can move the arm that moves the world” (*The Adventist Home*, chap. 45, p. 264).

Jesus taught that hypocrisy has no place in a good prayer life

What is hypocrisy? It is pretending to have virtues that one does not actually have. A hypocrite is a person who pretends to be what they are not. The word is derived from the Greek *hypokrites*, which means “stage actor” or “pretender.” People despise hypocrites. In fact, in His sermon on the mount, Jesus warned His listeners not to pray like the hypocrites (Matt. 6:5).

Using strong language, Jesus denounced the hypocrites. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:27). People recognize a hypocrite when they see one. Since we cannot fool God, He is not impressed when we engage in hypocrisy. In fact, hypocrites impede God’s work.

Hypocrisy is a hindrance to effective prayer. It is not the rhetoric of our public prayers that determines our spirituality. Instead, it is the time spent and the sincerity and depth of our private prayers. Effective prayer does not result from a public display of piety. Jesus condemns this attempt to “be seen of men” (Matt. 6:5). While public prayer is important, “it is secret communion with God that sustains the soul life” (*Education*, chap. 30, p. 258).

A famous orator often mesmerized his audience with his stunning eloquence. At one of his performances, he recited the Shepherd’s Psalm, “The Lord is my Shepherd” (Ps. 23). When he came to the end, the orator received a standing ovation. When the cheering died down, he asked the audience if there was anyone who would be willing to

recite the psalm as well. After a while, an old preacher stepped forward and volunteered to repeat the psalm. When the preacher had finished, there was no applause; but many in the audience were contemplative and crying. The orator then turned to the old preacher and said, “I know the psalm, but you know the Shepherd.”

Prayer is a simple conversation with God. It “is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 93). Many of us have a close friend in whom we can confide. We do not need to have a choice vocabulary or employ the use of technical terms. It is not necessary to use professional jargon to impress our friend. We just need to unburden our hearts. So it is with talking to God. That is what prayer is all about. Let us not ignore this blessed opportunity to meet with God.

Jesus taught that we must forgive in order for our prayers to be effective

There are habits, behaviors, and sins that block the channels of blessings. In order for God’s grace and power to flow freely, there must be a clearing of these clogged channels. One of the most serious evils that hinder the flowing of God’s grace and power is an unforgiving spirit. Jesus made it very clear that in order for us to be forgiven, we have to forgive. The Lord’s Prayer states in clear terms, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). Jesus points out that if we do not forgive our fellow men, our Father in heaven will not forgive us. What fearful eternal consequences!

Matthew 18:23–35 relates a fascinating story about two debtors. One debtor, a servant of the king, owed the king ten thousand talents. When the king demanded payment, the servant begged for mercy. The king forgave him his debt. Later, that same servant met a fellow servant who owed him only one hundred denarii. The forgiven servant assaulted his fellow servant and cruelly demanded total payment of his hundred denarii. He ignored the poor man’s pleas for mercy and had him thrown in jail. When the king heard of this, he delivered that unforgiving servant to the tormentors. In short, if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us.

What are some of the reasons we give ourselves for not forgiving our enemies?

1. He/she hurt me too deeply.
2. I cannot forget what he/she did to me.
3. I do not think I can stop hurting.
4. I do not need his/her friendship anymore.
5. I want him/her to feel guilty and uncomfortable.
6. I am too proud to forgive.
7. I want to hurt him/her.

Jesus wants us to forgive our enemies and even pray for them. It is unfortunate that we do not think of the eternal consequences of our unforgiving spirit. It is sad that we still pray to God for forgiveness and forget that our prayers are in vain. "If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15).

A young missionary became frustrated because of the opposition he was getting from the natives. Worn out by his futile efforts to make a success of his ministry, he decided to resign from the ministry and return to his country. Before finalizing his plan, the young missionary decided to talk to the senior pastor of that area. He shared complaint after complaint with the senior pastor. Finally, he said to the senior pastor, "I have had enough of these people. I do not care about them anymore. I am leaving."

"Just a minute," said the senior pastor with a restraining hand on the young man's arm. "Did they nail you to a cross?"

"No," replied the young missionary.

"Did they laugh at you and insult you? Did they spit on you?"

"No," he answered again.

"Then they must have thrust a spear through your side."

The young man understood the point the senior pastor was making. Jesus bore so much so that we could be saved, and yet He asked His Father to forgive His murderers and those He came to save who rejected Him. We must pray even for our enemies, just like Jesus taught. Why don't we follow His example?

Jim Elliot was a missionary to the Auca Indians in Ecuador. He and his team of five missionaries made several efforts to befriend the natives. When they thought it was safe, they landed their small plane

among the natives. They did not realize that the natives were still hostile. Shortly after the missionaries disembarked, all five were massacred by the Auca Indians. Some time later, Jim Elliot's son resolved that his father's death should not be in vain. He started another missionary project for the Auca Indians. God moved on the hearts of the natives, and many were converted. Elliot's son had the joy of baptizing his father's murderer. That is what forgiveness is all about.

Forgiveness is a process that takes time, and in this process, it is helpful to remember the following principles.

Forgiveness does not mean that we completely forget the wrong that was done to us. It means that we give up our right to retaliation and revenge. We no longer brood over the injustice with feelings of anger and hate. We turn the matter over to the righteous Judge who says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19).

We do not have to wait for the one who has wronged us to seek our forgiveness before we offer it. Instead, we should take the first step toward reconciliation. While Stephen was being stoned, he prayed for forgiveness for his persecutors (Acts 7:54–60). This was also Jesus' example on the cross. "And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'" (Luke 23:34).

Feelings of forgiveness may not be instantaneous, depending on the depth of the hurt. Time, effort, and prayer will aid in the healing process. We do not need to feel guilty because the pain does not disappear overnight. However, when we experience hurt, the goal is to rise above the pain through God's strength and genuinely forgive the offender.

We should ask God specifically for His sustaining grace to carry us through the pain (2 Cor. 12:7–10). There is no trial that you face that God cannot give you the strength to bear. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Ask God to help you not become bitter or lose all faith in humanity. Follow the counsel of the apostle Paul: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger . . . be put away from you" (Eph. 4:31).

Forgiveness is not always easy, but it is always right. Some wounds are painfully penetrating. A spouse whom you have loved dearly for many years runs off with your best friend. Someone you trusted with a deep, dark secret betrays you and reveals your guarded secret. Someone tells a lie about you to your employer and blocks your promotion.

Jesus knows what it is like to be betrayed. Did not Judas betray Him for about twenty-five dollars? Jesus must have felt crushed when His disciples left Him alone to face Calvary. Imagine His anguish when many whom He had helped and healed joined the demonic chorus and cried out, “Crucify Him!” Jesus’ heart must have ached when those He came to earth to save nailed Him to the cross.

Forgiveness is not always easy, but it is always beneficial. A man became seriously ill when his coworker spread a false rumor about him. He was filled with anger and a desire for vengeance. The more he dwelt on the injustice that was done to him and the unfairness of life, the more ill he became. However, when the man released the matter to God, started praying for his colleague, and forgave him, the illness disappeared, and he finally found peace.

There is a freedom that the soul receives when one extends forgiveness. The peace of God floods the chambers of the heart, and the spirit



soars on joyful wings. Let us try forgiveness, let us file away the bitterness and hate that corrode our hearts, and let us enjoy the blessings of God's grace and power.

Jesus also taught that we need to persevere in prayer

Sometimes we give up too easily. Jesus advised those He was teaching "that they ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). Sometimes, persisting in prayer while waiting for God to answer is difficult. Our patience wears out. However, we can receive certain benefits from waiting. On the one hand, our connection with God is strengthened. On the other, we are able to engage in soul searching and soul cleansing, just like the psalmist who prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!" (Ps. 139:23).

The Bible is full of examples of people who obtained results from being persistent in their prayers. Jesus commended the persistent widow who kept bringing her petitions to the unjust judge (Luke 18:1–8). Then there was Jacob, who at Jabbok wrestled with the Angel all night until the morning. When the Angel attempted to leave, Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Gen. 32:26). Daniel was also a man of prayer and power. He refused to refrain from praying, even when threatened by death in the lions' den (Dan. 6). At one time, he earnestly sought God in prayer for three whole weeks (Dan. 10:2, 12). Jesus persevered all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12). All of these were persistent in prayer and obtained the victory.

Dick Eastman, an advocate of prayer, noted that "painstaking, persistent prayer has always been a persistent mark on every man of God. . . . Adoniram Judson spent his life in persistent prayer. He said, 'I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything but it came at some time; no matter how distant a day, somehow, in some shape, probably the last I would have devised, it came.' " Eastman further observed, "History is replete with testimonies showing the value of persistent prayer, which has changed the course of nations. Armies have stood frozen in their tracks because of prayer. Raging elements

have subsided when persistent prayers were prayed. Mountains are conquered, cliffs scaled, rivers crossed and deserts cultivated, when people persevere in prayer.”³

You may ask, How can one spend such long periods in prayer? Would there not be repetitions? Jesus expects us to spend time in prayer. Remember His disappointment when in the Garden of Gethsemane He discovered that His disciples, instead of watching and praying as He asked them to, had fallen fast asleep? We can feel the pain of Jesus’ heart when He asks, “So, could you not watch with Me one hour?” (Matt. 26:40).

It is necessary to plan for the “hour of prayer.” Here are some helpful ideas:

- Practice the presence of God. Visualize Him conversing with you.
- Talk with Him as friend to friend.
- Pray the names of God.
- Pray the names of Jesus.
- Pray the names of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray the Psalms.
- Pray God’s promises back to Him.
- Pray the great prayer hymns of the church.
- Pray passages of Scripture.
- Pray the miracles of Jesus, and claim His healing power.
- Pray for leaders, rulers, enemies, friends, family, cities, and nations.
- Practice pausing to listen to God.
- Use the A-C-T-S formula:

Adoration: Praise Him.

Confession: Confess your sins.

Thanksgiving: Enumerate some of His blessings with gratitude.

Supplication: Express your requests to Him.

Perhaps, at first, you may not be able to spend an hour. Do not get discouraged. The goal is to spend an unhurried period with Jesus. After much practice, it will be surprising how fast the time will pass and you will easily spend more than an hour.

3. *Dick Eastman on Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Global Christian, 1999), 109–110.

Jesus believed in intercessory prayer

It is not good enough to pray only for ourselves. One who does not pray for others as well is not truly praying. Jesus prayed for others. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus made a startling comment to Peter: "Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31, 32). In Jesus' last major recorded prayer, He used twenty-one out of twenty-six verses to pray for His disciples (John 17:6–26). Let us develop the habit of praying for others. "As you spend an increasing amount of time praying for others, you will find that your attitude toward people improves. It becomes more positive and compassionate. And your prayer time will also mature."⁴

Here are some more examples of intercessory prayers in the Bible:

- Moses begged God to spare the lives of the children of Israel (Exod. 32:9–14).
- Daniel prayed asking God to turn His anger away from Jerusalem (Dan. 9:3–19).
- Job prayed for both his children and his friends (Job 1:5; 42:10).
- Paul interceded for many different people (Rom. 1:8–10; Rom. 10:1; Philem. 1:4; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2). He also encourages us to intercede for others (1 Tim. 2:1–4).

Jesus taught us to watch and pray

Jesus advised His followers not only to pray, but to watch as well (Matt. 26:41). Christians need to be alert while they pray. What are some of the things we need to watch for? We need a keen awareness of the world in which we live. We live in a world of temptations. This means we have to recognize the temptations that lure us. Peter reminds us of the dangerous, prowling activity of the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil stalks us like a hungry lion that is bent on devouring us. He will set a net to ensnare us. His temptations, which are many and varied, are custom-made for us. We must watch so that we will not become his prey.

I had the opportunity to go on a safari in South Africa. It was fascinating to get up close to some of the amazing animals, such as elephants,

4. John C. Maxwell, *Partners in Prayer* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), p. 73.

giraffes, and wildebeests. When we came to the area where the lions were, I was relieved to see that there was a tall, sturdy fence separating them from our party. Even then, our guide warned us not to get too close to the fence. Lions are to be feared and avoided.



We must pray for God's wisdom and protection. We must watch for clues of the nearness of Christ's return (Mark 13:33) and pray for a spirit of preparedness. By watching and praying, we can be ready to face tribulations (Luke 21:36). We need to watch because the end is near (1 Pet. 4:7).

God is looking for a few sincere people who will dare to live, watch, and pray like His Son (Ezek. 22:30). When God finds such persons, they will turn the world right side up. The agents of darkness—Satan and his armies—will be stricken with fear. Prison doors will be opened, the sick will be healed, sinners will be converted with a rapidity that would stun today's church, and God's name will be glorified. Then Jesus will come to claim His own. Are we among those persons whom God is looking for?



Five Things Every Church Should Pray For

“**A**BOUT THAT TIME Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church” (Acts 12:1–5).

“These I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isa. 56:7).

When the New Testament church prayed, the world felt the impact. After Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, His followers assembled in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost. They gathered for prayer and soul searching. Note the result: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Three thousand souls were converted that very day (v. 4).

When the church gets on its knees, there is transformation, revival, and reformation. Fervent prayer registers such a marked intensity and magnitude that onlookers feel the world reeling with change. The world is turned right side up, not "upside down" as the Jews accused in Acts 17:6. There is power in united prayer. This is why the church ought to be a community of united, praying believers. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). Furthermore, Jesus called the temple His house of prayer (Matt. 21:13).

The sincere prayers of God's people have always produced significant results. It is as if God is in our midst, waiting anxiously to grant our requests. "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress" (Ps. 107:6).

1. We must pray for revival and reformation.

Our church is in a near-death state of lethargy. Where there is no energy, there is no action. Where there is no action, there can be no results. Therefore, we need a revival that will lead to a reformation.

According to the Scriptures, we need to ask the Lord for this revival. "Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring rain, from the Lord who makes the storm clouds, and He will give them showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation in the field" (Zech. 10:1). "Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Ps. 85:6). "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years" (Hab. 3:2, NKJV). God's special messenger gave the following exhortation: "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. . . . A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, chap. 16, p. 121).

An author writing under the pseudonym Unknown Christian once observed: “Do we realize that there is nothing the devil dreads so much as prayer? His great concern is to keep us from praying. He loves to see us ‘up to our eyes’ in work, provided we do not pray. He does not fear because we are eager and earnest Bible students, provided we are little in prayer.”¹

There are many reasons why the church needs a revival:

The absence of love. While there are sprinkles of love here and there in the church, there is a great need for more love in the church. Throughout the Bible, there are admonitions that we should love one another. Love is the nutritious soil that nurtures growth. Love does not naturally spring up in our hearts. We must therefore pray for a heart of love, then practice deeds of love among other church members and in the community. Our church is not a social club to which we pay our dues and attend meetings. Our church is a community of believers who share and feel one another’s pain and suffering. We need to pray that the love of Jesus will be “poured into our hearts” (Rom. 5:5). When love blossoms among us, there will be a revival.

Dissension among the believers. “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you” (James 4:1). The apostle James noted that dissension was a hindrance to the Christian spirit in the early church. He observed that the cause of conflict lay within the hearts and minds of the church members. Selfishness, competitiveness, and the desire for pleasing oneself are roots of conflict and dissension. It is only by resolving conflict and uprooting our selfish passions that dissension can be quelled. This will prepare the way for revival.

Being at ease in Zion. “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion” (Amos 6:1). Revival is lacking because we are in a state of complacency. We must be uncomfortable with our present condition and

1. Unknown Christian [Albert Ernest Richardson], *The Kneeling Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 18.

strive for revival. It is only as we cultivate a passion for cleansing and the renewal of our spirits that a desire for revival will overpower us. Then revival will take place.

Coldness. The freezing temperature in our churches counteracts the heat of revival. Unfortunately, the mercury in our thermometer fluctuates between cold (Rev. 3:1) and lukewarm (Rev. 3:15–18). Neither of these temperature levels is conducive to a revival. We must pray for the heat of the Holy Spirit.

How can revival start? A revival does not have to start with a great conflagration. The entire church will not always feel the passion for revival all at once. If one by one the members are convicted of the need for revival, eventually the whole church will seek for a revival. We must pray for a revival. Ezekiel the prophet had a vision of a graveyard full of dry bones. God breathed His breath into these bones, and they came alive (Ezek. 37:1–10)! Our church may be cold and dead, but God is anxious to revive and resurrect it. God is willing to bring about a revival. We only have to ask. A church that has experienced a revival will light the fire of Jesus' love in the hearts of all. The community will come ablaze. Pray, "Lord, please let a revival begin with me."

2. We must pray for the spread of the gospel.

Jesus saw the disheartening challenge that faced the church. "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:37, 38, NKJV). Millions go to sleep at night without the knowledge of Jesus. Millions go to work and to their places of entertainment without the awareness of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary. This is sad.

The present state of the world reveals that many people still need to be introduced to Jesus. According to a comprehensive demographic study published by the Pew Research Center, while there are 2.18 billion Christians around the world, this number represents only one-third of the world's population in 2010.² We can walk down the streets

2. "Global Christianity—A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," Pew Research Center, December 19, 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>.

of some of the world's major cities and not meet a single Christian. In some of these cities, millions of people have never even seen a Bible or heard about Jesus.

We need a greater conviction of the urgency for the spread of the gospel. More men and women need to be trained as missionaries. More money is needed to support them. More prayers are needed for the spread of the gospel. "Evangelistic work, opening the Scriptures to others, warning men and women of what is coming upon the world, is to occupy more and still more of the time of God's servants" (*Evangelism*, sec. 1, p. 17).

God is waiting to answer our prayers for the spread of the gospel. "The harvest truly is plentiful."

"The solemn, sacred message of warning must be proclaimed in the most difficult fields and in the most sinful cities, in every place where the light of the great threefold gospel message has not yet dawned. Everyone is to hear the last call to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Ibid., pp. 21, 22). Let us pray to the Lord for more reapers for the ripe harvest.

3. We must pray for the household of faith: the church family.

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (1 Tim. 2:1). "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Many do not realize that intercessory prayer has a two-fold blessing. Job's friends were miserable comforters who ridiculed him when Satan had stripped him of his children and material possessions and afflicted him with sickness. In Job 42:10, the Bible tells us that when Job prayed for his friends, God restored his fortunes to twice as much as before.

The church is a family, and like all families its members have differing personalities, varying goals, and individual weaknesses. And because we are family, we must make efforts to alleviate discord and disharmony. Here are some of the things we need to pray for so that our church family may be one that reflects the heart of Christ:

Pray for love. Jesus urges us to love one another. This was the burden of His heart. "By this all people will know that you are my

disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Jesus meant for there to be love in the church family. Love in the church must not only be spoken; it must be manifested in actions. It is difficult to automatically show love. Love is a virtue that has to be cultivated. Like a skill, we must practice it in order to perfect it. We must look for occasions and opportunities to show our love. Through prayer we can learn to love one another.

Pray for unity. This was Jesus’ last prayer before His crucifixion—“that they all may be one” (John 17:21). The presence of disunity in the church saddens Christ’s heart and chokes our spiritual growth. Disunity is a seed sown by the devil, the author of discord. Lack of unity breeds weakness among believers.

A man had four sons who were always quarrelling among themselves. Frustrated by their frequent bickering and fighting, the father thought of a plan. He collected a dozen stout sticks and tied them together. Then he called his sons one by one, and giving each of them the bundle of sticks, told them to try to break it. They were unable to do so. Then the father untied the bundle and separated the sticks. He then asked his sons to break the sticks. This they were able to do. One by one, each stick was easily broken. The sons learned the lesson. In unity there is strength. As long as our church family is united, there will be strength and power. However, when we separate ourselves from one another, the devil can intervene and break our power and our influence.

Be determined that you will not be at variance among yourselves, but will have the peace of Christ in your own hearts. . . . But when the garden of the heart is neglected, poisonous weeds of pride, self-esteem, self-sufficiency, obtain a rank growth. We individually must watch unto prayer. . . .

. . . Unity in the home, unity in the church reveals Christ’s manner and grace more than sermons and arguments (*Evangelism*, sec. 10, p. 342).

Pray for the sick and suffering. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him. . . . And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick” (James 5:14, 15). Let us

minister to the sick among us by our fervent prayers. “The divine Healer is present in the sick room; He hears every word of the prayers offered to Him in the simplicity of true faith. His disciples today are to pray for the sick, as verily as did the disciples of old” (*Gospel Workers*, sec. 6, p. 215).

Pray for our families. Churches and communities are comprised of families. If our families are fractured and unhappy, their influence becomes ineffective. In praying for our families, we must especially intercede for our youth. They are threatened by the influences of Satan and by association with evil companions. It is our responsibility to mentor, support, and love our youth. We must pray for God’s hedge of protection around them.

Here are some other things we can do to maintain an emphasis on prayer in our church family:

1. Create a prayer calendar.
2. Organize prayer bands.
3. Hold prayer convocations.
4. Make the mid-week prayer meetings more attractive.
5. Organize prayer ministries for the children.

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Matt. 26:41).



4. We must pray for world conditions.

The present conditions of the world are on a rapid decline. The attitude of mankind today is more and more similar to the days of Noah, when “every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Morality has been diluted, Christian standards discarded, and vice glorified. Violent crime is widespread. There are multiple incidents of genocide and patricide. Abuse of children and the elderly is on the rise. Marriage and the family are under attack as sexual sins are condoned and legalized. God’s Word is spurned. God Himself is rejected and disparaged. National and international peace is disappearing from the world, in spite of numerous peace summits. These developments force us to admit that world conditions are worsening. The picture of our present world is a mirror image and fulfillment of 2 Timothy 3:1–5, in which the apostle Paul presents a list of social and spiritual ills.

This situation forces us to our knees. Our only hope lies in constant intercession on behalf of our world. The prayers of the church are urgently needed. We must pray and not faint (Luke 18:1). This is our only hope. “Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict of sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 55, p. 563). “By your fervent prayers of faith you can move the arm that moves the world” (*The Adventist Home*, chap. 45, p. 264).

5. We must pray for preparation for the end time.

We plan and prepare for many different events in our lives—weddings, memorials, inaugurations, baby showers, trips, dinners, conferences, picnics, and church retreats. We plan and prepare. But are we preparing for the second coming of Jesus? Sometimes it seems as if we have either forgotten that Jesus is coming again or we think His coming is a long way off. Our great-great-grandparents were looking for Jesus’ second coming. Our grandparents and parents were looking, longing, and waiting for Jesus to return. But He has not come yet. So we become relaxed and careless. “Perhaps His coming is not just now,” we think.

Such thoughts are just what the Bible predicted. Peter described a tendency to coldness and indifference at the end of time. “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4). God knew that this would be the reaction of many people in the face of apparent delay. But note the response to this disbelief: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient . . . , not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Jesus is coming again. He is coming soon—very soon. Therefore, the church must prepare and be ready!

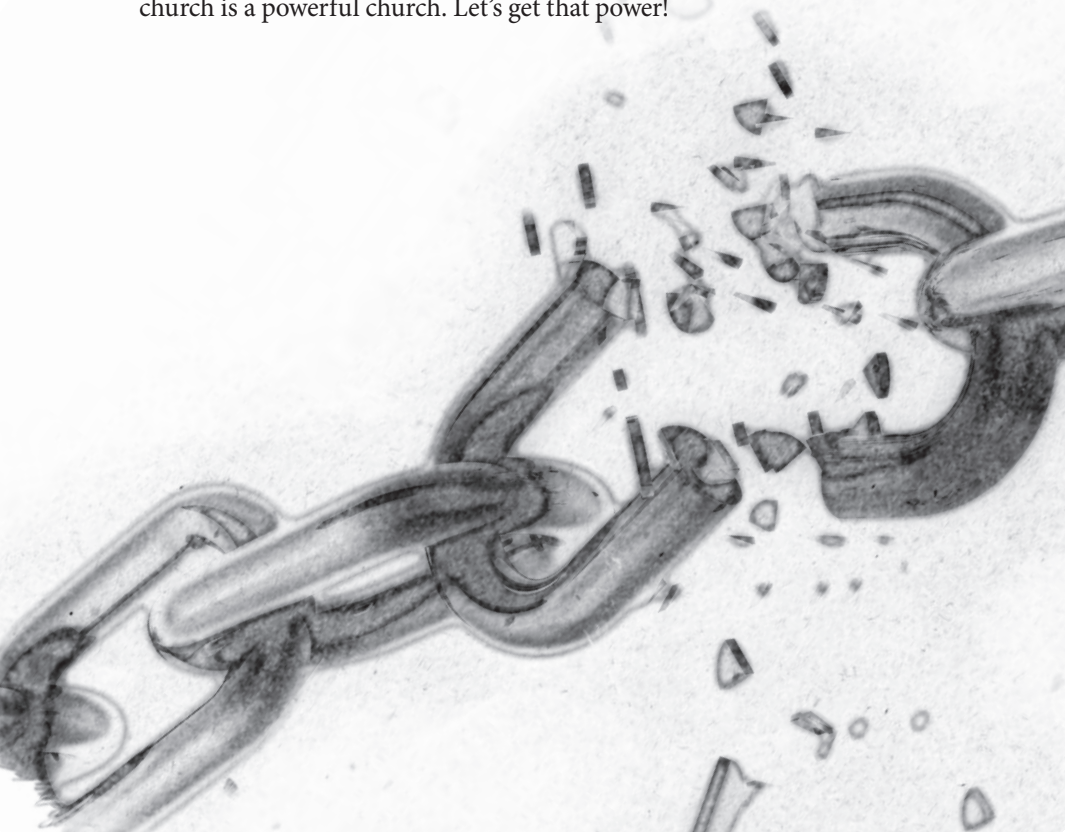
Let’s think about the ten virgins who prepared for the wedding (Matt. 25:1–13). Picture those young, beautiful bridesmaids. Imagine the preparations that preceded this wedding—the choice of their dresses, the sessions scheduled for fitting, the accessories chosen with care. Then there were days and nights of dreaming of that occasion. It is possible that they had many conversations with the bride about that special day. The countdown was on. The day was coming soon.

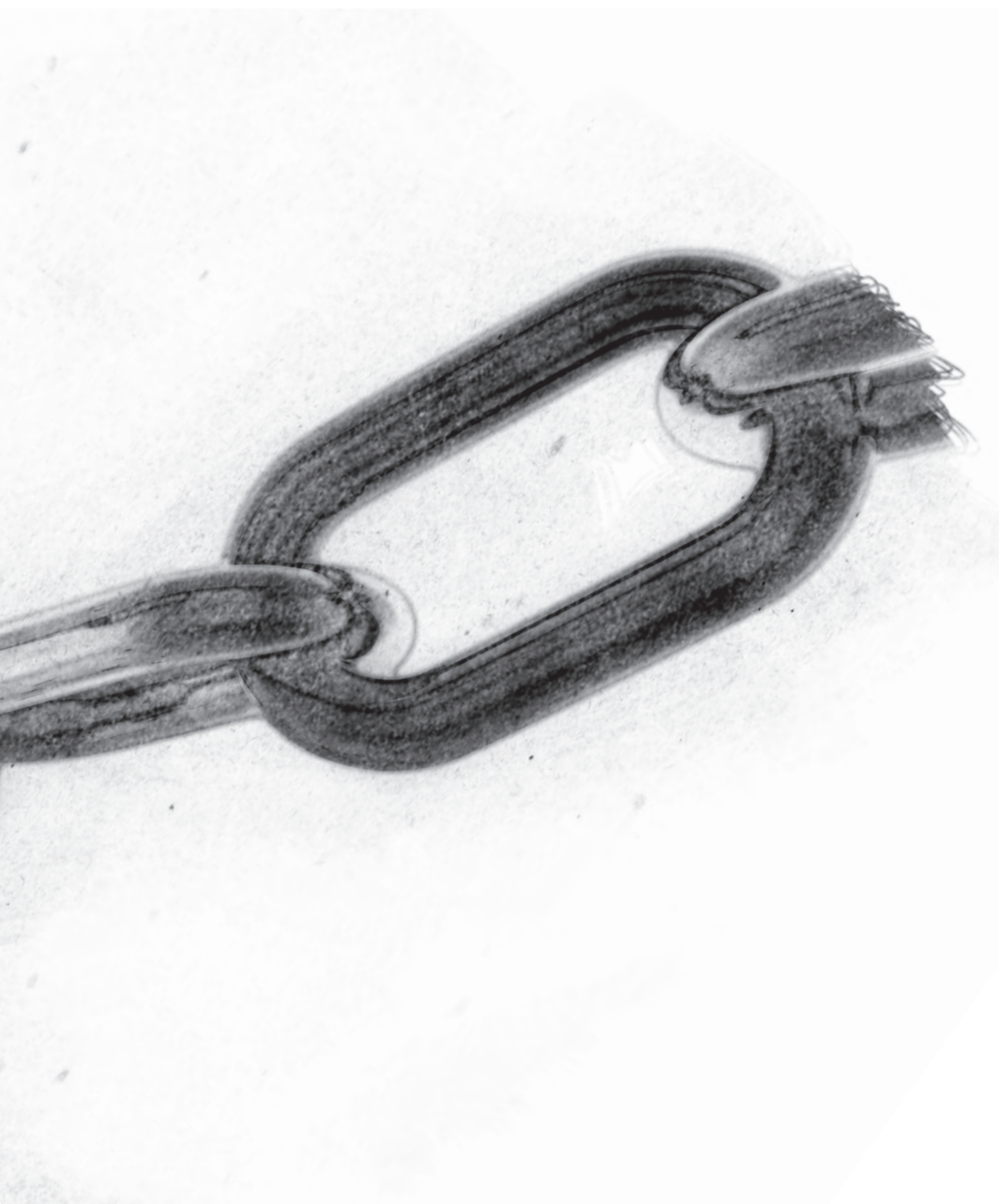
But there is a sad side to this parable that Jesus told. Here were the bridesmaids, waiting expectantly—waiting, but not truly prepared and ready. While they waited, “they all became drowsy and slept” (Matt. 25:5). One cannot be ready and asleep at the same time. While they slept, the oil in their lamps ran out. Because they were sleeping, they could not monitor their lamps. The announcement of the arrival of the bridegroom roused the girls from their sleep. Five of the virgins had extra oil, so they were prepared for any emergency. They were able to participate in the wedding. The other five virgins (Jesus refers to them as foolish), had no extra oil for their lamps. Their lamps had gone out, and they were unable to go with the bridegroom, for “the door was shut” (Matt. 25:10).

The indication that we are really prepared and ready is that we are also watching for the Lord’s coming. Sleep impairs our ability to watch. That’s why the apostle Paul urges us to stay awake! “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11).

Our business is to be prepared as we look for the coming of Jesus. We must always be on the look out, for the coming of the Lord will be unexpected (Luke 21:34, 35; Matt. 24:36). A praying church is a powerful church because prayer restrains Satan's power. In fact, a praying church puts Satan to flight. When the first Christians were besieged by their oppressors, the church grabbed its most important weapon, prayer, and wielded it successfully! The church prayed, and Peter's prison chains fell off. When the church begins to pray, more chains will be loosed, for prayer is the power that defeats the armies of hell.

So we must not forget our emphasis on prayer. We must not allow programs and accessories to crowd out our prayer habits. We must not be lulled to sleep by our conveniences. We have to pray. The New Testament church did not possess many of the comforts and conveniences we enjoy today, but they had a passion for prayer. A praying church is a powerful church. Let's get that power!







The Power of Prayer in the Salvation of Others

Evangelism is the church's mission

THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE WORLD hinges upon prayer power. It is only through prayer that God's church can execute the mandate that Jesus gave in His last days on earth: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19, 20). "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation' " (Mark 16:15). "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

To call oneself a Christian and not be passionate about evangelism is an abuse of the name of Christ. First, we need to realize how critical our responsibility

is. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). We are often zealous about sharing good news about products we find effective—bargain deals, medicinal remedies, cosmetics, and even persons whom we recommend as friends. It is tragic that we do not feel the same enthusiasm for sharing the gospel.

In 2 Kings 7, we find a story about four lepers who were outside the gates of the city of Samaria while it was under siege by the Syrians. Inside the city there was starvation. In desperation, these lepers decided to go to the Syrian camp to get food. To their surprise, they found the tents deserted by the soldiers, but with ample supplies of food and weapons. God had confused the Syrian army, and they had fled, leaving everything!

And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid them; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried some from there also, and went and hid it.

Then they said to one another, “We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent” (2 Kings 7:8, 9, NKJV).

Like those lepers, “we do not well” (v. 9, KJV). We enjoy a feast of quality preaching. We partake of enriching seminars. Our souls are refreshed with inspiring music. Our pews and libraries are strewn with uplifting literature. We are treated to elaborate programs. But what is our response to all of these treats? We hoard them all. We collect them and freeze them in our selfish hearts. We feel no conviction to share. We hurriedly pass our starving neighbors on our way to church. We give them no invitation. This is very much like the priest and the Levite, who on their way to Jericho left the wounded man unattended and dying. “We do not well.” In fact, we are ignoring Jesus’ express command to tell the world. How sad!

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was born an evangelistic church, and we have always stressed evangelism. But in recent years, we have too often allowed ourselves to be attracted by fascinating diversions and have been occupied by less crucial projects.

The Second Advent is very near

“Now our salvation is nearer” (Rom. 13:11). The thought of reaching a goal or destination is often an incentive to press on. Sometimes one may allow tiredness, loss of interest, or other attractions to quench that desire for completion or accomplishment. Think of the student who is near graduation, but instead of continuing to study hard, slackens the pace. Think of the athlete who turns away from the trophy and reduces the time spent in workout sessions because the mornings are too cold and it’s easier to just stay in bed a little longer. They “do not well.”

Many years ago, we were on a historical tour. There were many thrilling sights that captured our interest and attention. We walked on and on until our feet ached. But our guide continued tirelessly. Soon he told us that we were almost to the end of the tour, informing us that the best was yet to come. He would not describe it to us. He said it was too glorious for words. We had to see it for ourselves to really enjoy it. Our spirits flagged. Our feet ached more. We began to lag behind. Our tour companions urged and encouraged us to keep going. Soon our tiredness and sore feet won. We decided to stop and rest. “You go ahead,” we told our travelling companions, “we will rejoin you on your return.”

About forty-five minutes later, our companions returned. They were ecstatic over the sights they had seen. Everyone expressed their disappointment that we had not enjoyed what they had seen. And it was only a few minutes from where we had stopped to rest. We had lost our interest; we had abandoned our zeal; and as a result, we had missed a sensational opportunity. That is what is happening to our church. “We do not well.”

There ought to be a constant refrain in our hearts: “Your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28). “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37, NKJV). Jesus is coming again, and His coming is very soon! The assurances and signs of His imminent return should motivate us in the fulfillment of our mission. What are some of these signs of the approaching end of the world?

- Natural signs: earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, volcanic eruptions
- Social signs: marital disintegration, immorality, indifference to the importance of virtue
- Political signs: tension between governments, futile attempts for peace, frequent coups
- Religious signs: the rise of atheism, spiritualism, disregard for God's law
- Prophetic signs: the prophetic succession of earthly kingdom to be followed by the setting up of God's eternal kingdom (Dan. 2:36–45); the rise of the antichrist and the persecution of God's people (Dan. 7:23–27; 8:23–25); the revival of the “wounded beast” (Rev. 13:3); the worldwide deception (Rev. 13:13, 14).

Every member must be involved; every convert must be a convert maker

Luke 8:26–38 relates the story of a demoniac whom Jesus healed. The fascinating element of this story is that the man who had just recovered was ready to join Jesus immediately in His ministry. “The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with Him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him” (Luke 8:38, 39). When Jesus returned to that area, the whole city then received Him gladly.

Jesus was clear about what He expects of us, His disciples. “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). The persecution of the early church facilitated the spread of the gospel. “At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1, 4, NKJV).

It happened on March 14, 1964. “Twenty-eight-year-old Catherine Genovese, who was called Kitty by almost everyone in the neighborhood, was returning home from her job as manager of a bar in Hollis. She parked her red Fiat in a lot adjacent to the Kew

Gardens Long Island Railroad Station” in Queens, New York. A man who had been stalking her attacked her multiple times, fatally stabbing her. “For more than half an hour, thirty-eight respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab a woman.” When the police questioned witnesses about why they had not taken action to stop the attacker, one of them replied, “I didn’t want to get involved.”¹

We cringe at this manifestation of the bystander effect. But are we also guilty of it? Are we standing by, not getting involved, while others rush along unaware of Satan’s deadly stalking and Jesus’ sacrifice for them? We must act. We must act now. Every one of us must get involved before it is too late.

“Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 11, p. 110).

Prayer is an indispensable weapon in this warfare for souls

The evangelization of the world depends first and foremost on a revival in prayer. The early church depended on prayer. They included prayer in all of their activities and in the pursuit of their goals. One of the reasons that the apostles decided to appoint deacons was to devote more time to prayer (Acts 6:4). When they craved the infilling of the Holy Spirit, they gathered together in prayer “with one accord” (Acts 1:14, KJV; 2:1–4). Only then were they able to participate in successful evangelism.

Prayer is not just a helpful additive to the evangelistic program. Prayer *is* evangelism. As Jesus observed the fields waiting to be harvested through evangelism, He advised, “Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest”

1. Martin Gansberg, “Thirty-Eight Who Saw Murder Didn’t Call the Police,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 1964.

(Matt. 9:38; Luke 10:2). All the great revivals were bathed in prayer. When believers pray, the Holy Spirit moves into action, as was demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost.

“God’s faithful messengers are to seek to carry forward the Lord’s work in His appointed way. They are to place themselves in close connection with the Great Teacher that they may be daily taught of God. They are to wrestle with God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit that they may meet the needs of a world perishing in sin” (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, chap. 17, pp. 459, 460).

Why is prayer so important in evangelism?

We are in spiritual warfare. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Our weapons are spiritual. “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4). Prayer is our most effective weapon. Even if the enemy binds us, imprisons us, and gags us, we can still pray.

Prayer can do anything God can do. Through prayer, we become linked with God. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14). When human will is linked with God’s will, the results will be earth-shaking! “Prayer must be the foundation of every Christian endeavor. Any failure is a prayer failure.”²

Prayer can remove all hindrances. “If My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

Prayer will carry on the work of God. We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power that does the work. While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, prayer, and the study of God’s Word. “Only the

2. Germaine Copeland, *Prayers That Avail Much* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1997), xviii.

work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good” (*The Desire of Ages*, chap. 38, p. 362).

Through prayer we seek the Holy Spirit. Without prayer we are only shadow boxing. Prayer and the Holy Spirit are intertwined in evangelism. The Holy Spirit comes to us at our prayer request. Jesus advised His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit. “And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

What happens when the church prays?

There will be many conversions to the truth and more hearts reached with the gospel. “The Spirit came upon the waiting, praying disciples with a fullness that reached every heart. . . . The sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through unbelief. Thousands were converted in a day” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 4, p. 38).

There will be less bickering and strife and more holiness of life. “Be determined that you will not be at variance among yourselves, but will have the peace of Christ in your own hearts” (*Evangelism*, sec. 10, p. 342).

The church will be awakened. “Men need to be aroused to realize the solemnity of the time, the nearness of the day when human probation shall be ended. Decided efforts should be made to bring the message for this time prominently before the people. The third angel is to go forth with great power” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, chap. 2, p. 16).

We will become united in Christian love. Love is a most potent power for good. That is why Jesus constantly begged His disciples to love one another. “When we love the world as [Jesus] has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts” (*The Desire of Ages*, chap. 70, p. 641).

How do we go about this?

- Encourage individuals to pray earnestly for souls.
- Have group prayer in Sabbath School or Divine Service and prayer meetings.

- Schedule all-night prayer meetings (Luke 6:12).
- Be sure to include the youth and children in the prayer initiative.

“For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:20). “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14).

Jesus is calling for prayer evangelists now

We are surely living in the last days. Even Satan knows that time is short (Rev. 12:12). An anxious God is waiting for His church to recapture the passion of the church at Pentecost. Restless angels are waiting



to cooperate with God's people. Jesus is waiting to answer the earnest prayers of His children. Now is the time for us to pray as never before. And God will respond by pouring out His Spirit upon us.

John Knox, the most famous Scottish religious Reformer of the sixteenth century had a burden for his country. He got on his knees and prayed with passion, "Give me Scotland, or I die." What followed was the great Scottish revival in which many people gave their hearts to the Lord. When we become as burdened for souls as John Knox was and pray as earnestly for the salvation of those around us, there will be such a revival as has not been seen since the days of the apostles.





6

Effective, Fervent Prayer

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16, NKJV).

“Tremendous power is made available through a good man’s earnest prayer” (James 5:16, Phillips).¹

“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results” (James 5:16, NLT).

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16, NIV).

Prayer, without fervor, stakes nothing on the issue, because it has nothing to stake. It comes with empty hands. Hands, too, which are listless, as well as empty, which have never learned the lesson of clinging to the cross.

Fervorless prayer has no heart in it; it is an empty thing, an unfit vessel. Heart, soul, and life must find place in all real praying. Heaven must be made to feel the force of this crying unto God.²

1. J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (New York: Harper Collins, 1962).

2. *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds on Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 35.

Without God we are helpless

We are powerless by ourselves. Without God in our lives, we are like a light bulb out of the socket. Without God in our lives, we are like a flashlight without batteries. Without God in our lives, we are like an automobile without a driver. Without God in our lives, we are like a piano without a pianist. Without God in our lives, we are nothing. Jesus declared, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). A life without God is like the earth before creation: “without form and void” (Gen. 1:2). We get our power from God and through prayer.

“Our only sure defense against besetting sins is prayer, daily and hourly prayer. Not one day zealous and the next careless, but through watchfulness and earnestness becoming vitalized by intercourse with God. Prayer is necessary, and we should not wait for feeling, but pray, earnestly pray, whether we feel like it or not” (*Our Father Cares*, p. 244).

With God we are invincible

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, NKJV). God not only promises enabling power; He also guarantees success. “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” (Josh. 1:3–5). Moreover, He has promised that we will not merely succeed; instead of just getting the minimum passing score, we will have outstanding success! “In all these things we are *more than conquerors* through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8: 37, [emphasis added]).

God will be our Defense when leaders or rulers oppress us. With God by our side, they will lose their power. “And He will give their kings into your hand, and you shall make their name perish from under heaven. No one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them” (Deut. 7:24). “No one shall be able to stand against you. The Lord your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you shall tread” (Deut. 11:25).

With God in our lives, we have the security of His providence, power, greatness, and strength. “Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand are power and might, and in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all” (1 Chron. 29:12).

With God, we are like the simple jawbone of a donkey in the hand of Samson, with which he slew “a thousand men” (Judg. 15:16). With God we are like the sling in the hand of young David, which he used to slay the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17:50). With God, we are like the rod in Moses’ hand, with which Moses faced Pharaoh and divided the Red Sea (Exod. 14:21, 22).

With God on our side, the weakest becomes strong. “Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 17). God specializes in displaying His power in those who acknowledge their weakness and lean on Him. “My power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). “When I am weak, then am I strong” (v. 10).

The story of Gideon dramatically illustrates how God works powerfully through weakness. After dismissing thirty-two thousand soldiers, God gave Gideon the victory with only three hundred (Judg. 7).

When Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, acknowledged his weakness to face the threefold alliance that was coming against him and his army, he prayed to God for help. God gave Jehoshaphat an astonishing victory. Note the following elements in Jehoshaphat’s saga:

Jehoshaphat’s Prayer: “O our God, will You not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (2 Chron. 20:12).

God’s Response: “Thus says the Lord to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s’” (v. 15).

The Result: “And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir,

who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. . . . When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much" (vv. 22–25).

Bear in mind that "prayer is measured, not by time, but by intensity."³ The men and women who moved the arm of God by their prayers were not satisfied with snack-box prayers. They enjoyed the full-course meal at the table of the Master. As a result of the depth of this experience, they did not see prayer as something to be rushed, but rather a relationship to be enjoyed and savored, spending time with their best Friend.

Fervent prayer will give not only military success, but wisdom for the battles of life

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" (James 1:5). "Wisdom and might are His" (Dan. 2:20, NKJV). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 112:10; cf. Prov. 1:7).

God is the Source of all true wisdom. He is the reservoir from which we can obtain wisdom. When we connect with God, He generously gives to us from His store of wisdom. King Solomon, regarded as the wisest man who ever lived, asked God for wisdom and received it (1 Kings 3:5–12; 4:29–34). However, when Solomon turned his back on God, he began to do foolish things.

God created the human brain with its intricate contortions and baffling functions. Only recently have neuroscientists begun to understand this magnificent organ. Researchers at Stanford University reached the following mind-exploding conclusions in a study:

3. Unknown Christian [Albert Ernest Richardson], *The Kneeling Christian* (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 73.

A typical healthy human brain contains about 200 billion nerve cells, or neurons, linked to one another via hundreds of trillions of tiny contacts called synapses. It is at these synapses that an electrical impulse traveling along one neuron is relayed to another, either enhancing or inhibiting the likelihood that the second nerve will fire an impulse of its own. One neuron may make as many as tens of thousands of synaptic contacts with other neurons.⁴

Based on these findings, Stephen Smith—a professor of molecular and cellular physiology at Stanford University, who participated in the study—made this stunning comment: “A single human brain has more switches than all the computers and routers and Internet connections on Earth.”⁵

It is no wonder that Daniel and his three friends astounded everyone with their wisdom. They were not embarrassed to acknowledge the Source of their wisdom; they were connected to the One who made the human brain. And God is just as willing today to give His wisdom to those who trust in Him and humbly seek it.

Of course, this is not just a gift from a fairy godmother; we must combine our desire for wisdom with actual work. We have a part to play. “The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chap. 47, p. 509). Jesus fed five thousand men, in addition to all the women and children. However, there was an initial lunch of “five barley loaves and two fish” (John 6:9). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but the onlookers first had to roll away the stone from the grave (John 11:38, 39). When we pray for wisdom, we must do all we can to buttress our prayers with practical effort (Prov. 8:17; 13:4).

A young Christian was sitting on a crowded bus one day. Some of the people on the bus were standing in the aisle. As the bus made its next stop, a lady who looked rather ill came on board. She was

4. “New imaging method developed at Stanford reveals stunning details of brain connections,” Bruce Goldman, Stanford Medicine, November 17, 2010, <http://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2010/11/new-imaging-method-developed-at-stanford-reveals-stunning-details-of-brain-connections.html>.

5. Ibid.

obviously in need of a seat. The young man became concerned for her and prayed, “Lord, please help someone to get up and give this woman a seat.” Then he looked around to see if his prayer would be answered; but nobody surrendered their seat. The woman looked distressed, badly needing a place to sit. The young man prayed again, “Dear Lord, please help someone to get up and give this woman a seat.” As he looked around once more, he could hear the Holy Spirit saying to him, “*You are sitting on the answer to your prayer.*” He got up and offered the woman his seat, and his prayer was answered. Often by cooperating with divine agencies, we can help to answer our own prayers.

Fervent prayer by righteous people can bring physical healing

Hezekiah, one of the best kings of Judah, was dying. He earnestly prayed for healing, and God granted his request (2 Kings 20:1). It is God’s desire for His children to be in good health (3 John 2). He promises that “none of these diseases” will afflict us (Exod. 15:26, KJV). When any among us become ill, we should pray for them (James 5:13–15).

So where does sickness come from? Why is it that our bodies are afflicted by pain and suffering? One Sabbath when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, He saw a woman who had been sick for eighteen years. “She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself” (Luke 13:11). Then Jesus healed her. When the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath by doing this, His reply was, “Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond?” (v. 16). This shows us that Satan is the source of sickness and suffering. All pain and suffering are the result of the devil’s activity. “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

Satan’s motives are to cast a shadow over God’s love for His children, causing them to doubt God’s goodness. He desires to cause as much suffering as possible to the human family and thus hurt God by hurting His children. This cunning adversary will sometimes use a

person's prosperity to destroy their faith (Deut. 8:12–14). In other cases, he attacks a person's faith through pain and suffering. This was the tactic he attempted to employ with Job, but without success.

God however, wants us to be holy, healthy, and happy. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases” (Ps. 103:1–3). We must remember His love for us, even in the midst of pain and disappointment. “When you can't trace His hand, trust His heart.” It was Job's previous experience with God's unfailing faithfulness that led him to say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15, NKJV).

Even when God allows suffering to come our way, we can trust Him that it is for some good purpose. “I know, O Lord, that Your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me” (Ps. 119:75). Sickness and suffering were never in God's plan. These came about with the entrance of sin (Gen. 3:16–19). However, God gives His faithful soldiers strength to be able to endure under the pressure of adversity. He cares about our suffering and wants to remedy it. However, He may take one of the following three approaches as His children pray for healing:

1. His healing may be *instantaneous*, as it was with the man at the pool of Bethesda: “Jesus said to him, ‘Get up, take up your bed, and walk.’ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked” (John 5:8, 9).
2. His healing may be *gradual*, as it was with one blind man. “And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to Him a blind man and begged Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when He had spit on his eyes and laid His hands on him, He asked him, ‘Do you see anything?’ And he looked up and said, ‘I see people, but they look like trees, walking.’ Then Jesus laid His hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly” (Mark 8:22–25).
3. His healing may be *deferred* until the return of Christ. Paul had such an experience. God did not remove Paul's infirmity in answer

to his prayer but provided grace to bear it. “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:8–10).

Ultimately, all of God’s children will receive healing from sickness and relief from suffering. “Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come . . . and save you.’ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy’ ” (Isa. 35:4–6). Revelation 21:4 gives us an encouraging glimpse of what our condition will be in the new earth: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” This text resonates in Walt Harrah’s lyrics in the song “No More Night”:

No more night,
No more pain,
No more tears,
Never crying again.

Unimaginable, but real! Apparently distant, but not far at all!

Joni Eareckson Tada is an author and disability advocate and the founder of the Joni and Friends International Disability Center. Joni was injured in a diving accident in 1967, becoming a quadriplegic while she was still a teenager. Tada is one of the longest-living quadriplegics on record. She shares her powerful insight into suffering. “Suffering provides the gym equipment on which my faith can be exercised.”⁶

6. Joni Eareckson Tada, *Suffering: Making Sense of Suffering* (Torrance, CA: Rose, 2008).

Although suffering weakens the physical being, it can strengthen the spiritual muscles and cement our connection with God. Let us not allow the apparently unanswered prayer to deter us from sending our requests heavenward. Our responsibility is to present our requests and trust God to handle them according to His wisdom. He knows what is best for us and will not withhold it. In the end He will make it plain to us. “In heaven, we will stand amazed to see the topside of the tapestry and how God beautifully embroidered each circumstance into a pattern for our good and His glory.”⁷

Fervent prayer by righteous people will provide their daily bread

Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11). The psalmist David said that he had never “seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread” (Ps. 37:25). Paul assures us, “My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). Therefore, we have nothing to worry about, because God’s riches are limitless.

Let us review some of our Father’s resources:

- The whole world belongs to Him. “The earth is the Lord’s” (Ps. 24:1).
- God owns all of the minerals of the earth. “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine” (Hag. 2:8).
- He even owns large herds of cattle. “For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine” (Ps. 50:10, 11).
- He does not have to ask for anything. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you” (Ps. 50:12).
- He provides food for man and beast. “You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth” (Ps. 104:14).

Could we possibly ask for more? There are no budget cuts, no freezing of funds, no threat of bankruptcy, in my Father’s house. He is a reliable Resource.

7. Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

Many of us take our daily bread for granted. We tend to feel that as long as we have a job, we will certainly be able to provide for ourselves. But that is not quite accurate. We cannot even do our jobs on our own. We must receive breath and strength from God. Moses reminds us of this, saying, “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:17, 18). We are solely dependent on God for our very existence. We cannot draw a breath without God; we cannot move a muscle on our own; we are unable to even blink without God’s help. We are totally dependent upon Him for every thought and every movement. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). To Him we owe everything.

Jesus demonstrated His ability to provide “our daily bread” when He multiplied the five loaves and two fishes and fed the multitude of five thousand men, along with women and children (Matt. 14:15–21). God is always able to provide. One of the many remarkable names by which God chooses to be called is *Jehovah Jireh*, meaning “The Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:14). When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, He provided their daily meal of manna for forty years (Exod. 16:35). When they were parched with thirst, God gave them water from a rock (Exod. 17:1–6).

God is not only interested in providing for the masses but also attends to our individual needs. In the days of Elisha, there was a widow of one of the sons of the prophets who was experiencing extreme poverty. Elisha the prophet, through God’s power, miraculously multiplied her small amount of oil, which she was able to sell to pay her debts. There was even enough left for her to get money for her and her sons to live on (2 Kings 4:1–7).

“He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing” (Deut. 10:18). There was a famine during the days of the prophet Elijah. During this period of extreme scarcity, a widow in Zarephath had emptied her pantry. She was literally “at the bottom of the barrel” of her food supply. She had only enough food left for a final meal for herself and her son. Her only

prospect was death by starvation. When Elijah approached her and asked her for food, she declared, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die” (1 Kings 17:12). What a cry of desperation! The poor woman was verbalizing her resignation: “I have no means of support. I have no food. I can barely start a fire. I will make two little rolls of bread; then my son and I will die together.”

It was during the lowest ebb of the widow’s economic state that God intervened by sending Elijah to be her houseguest. What an odd situation this was! The worst time for a guest to come to our house is when we have no food. We are tempted to regard that person not as a guest but as a burden. But the drama gets even worse. Elijah the guest, even though he was aware of her meager provisions, requested that the widow feed him first, and then what was left (which would more than likely be nothing) could be given to the widow and her son. If we examine Elijah’s request, it seems not only strange, but also selfish and unreasonable. “And Elijah said to her, ‘Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But *first make me a little cake of it* and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son’ (1 Kings 17: 13, [emphasis added]).

What an enormous dilemma, the worst nightmare for a hostess! First, an uninvited guest arrives. Then the guest demands that she feed him first, even though there is very little food. How demanding that seems! This guest does not even ask for the child to be fed first! Several thoughts must have raced through the widow’s mind: *I have never before in my life seen anything like this. This man is unreasonable.*

But God’s purposes are not subject to human logic. The widow discovered that if she obeyed the Lord’s instructions through the prophet Elijah, God would supply all her needs. “And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that He spoke by Elijah” (1 Kings 17:15, 16). Jehovah Jireh had passed by.

You cannot lose by putting God first

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Do you have a list of things you would like to ask God for? You can receive them according to the Father’s will. To this end, it is important to order our priorities in agreement with God’s purposes. According to the ranking that Jesus recommended, “the kingdom of God” must come at the top of the list.

If we put God first in our time, He will give us eternity. If we put God first in our talents, He will grant us access to His unlimited ability. If we put God first in our finances, He will give us eternal riches. If we put God first in our lives, He will give us immortality and eternal life.

God has made total provision for our needs. He has promised to give us our daily bread. When Elijah needed food, God sent ravens—carrion-eating scavengers—to bring him food (1 Kings 17:4–6). God also places resources in the hands of other human beings to provide our daily bread.

A poor, elderly, Christian lady had a neighbor who was an atheist. He was always teasing her about her faith. In spite of this, she constantly talked about the goodness of God and His ability to provide for her daily needs. One day she had no food. The atheist neighbor heard her praying, asking God for her daily bread, and he decided to play a trick on her. He bought a large supply of food and placed it on her doorstep. Then he positioned himself where she could not see him and waited to see her reaction when she got the food he had supplied. When the poor lady saw the food, she burst into praise and thankfulness to God! Her atheist neighbor promptly came by to tease her.

“You are thanking God for the food that I supplied,” he said.

“Praise the Lord,” the woman responded. “I knew God would supply my need, even if He had to use the devil to do it!”

We, too, can be God’s instruments to meet the needs of others. We often worry about poverty and malnutrition around the world. We sometimes feel discouraged and helpless when we consider

the seriousness of this problem. However, we must not just shake our heads in pity when we think of global poverty. Instead, we should focus on what we can do to contribute to the solution.

We can all contribute to helping the poor and the hungry. We are stewards of God's blessings, and our responsibility is to share our blessings with those who are less fortunate. We should be frugal with the resources God has given us, living within our means so that we may help others. Furthermore, the Bible also admonishes us to treat those who work for us fairly and pay them promptly. "You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy. . . . You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets" (Deut. 24:14).

God promises special blessings to those who are kind to the poor. "Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him" (Ps. 41:1). "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed" (Prov. 19:17). "The generous soul will be made rich" (Prov. 11:25, NKJV). "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap" (Luke 6:38).

The real cause of human poverty is human selfishness. Many take God's abundance and hoard it for themselves. Instead of being God's channels of blessing to others, they have become mere cisterns of selfishness. These selfish persons deprive themselves of the blessings God wants to bestow on them. We must therefore pray that God will help us to take our eyes off ourselves and change our priorities, serving others and putting Christ's kingdom first.

Fervent prayer can bring about the conversion of whole cities as well as individuals

Nineveh was an evil city. It was such a wicked place that God had marked it for destruction. Centuries earlier, God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness. However, God, in His mercy and longsuffering, decided to give Nineveh another chance to repent and turn to Him. We serve a God who specializes in second chances. All we need to do is repent. He will not turn us away.

To deliver His message to Nineveh, God chose a prophet, Jonah, who still needed to learn many lessons about the ways of God (Jon. 1:1, 2).

Jonah ran away (Jon. 1:3). He travelled in the opposite direction of where God had sent him. Here began his training. God was ready to teach him. A storm overtook the ship in which Jonah was sailing, and the wayward prophet was thrown overboard.

There in the middle of the sea, in the belly of a whale, with seaweed twirling around his neck, Jonah prayed to God. “I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and He answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice” (Jon. 2:1, 2). That must have been quite a prayer meeting! Imagine Jonah, all salty and wet, snugly wedged between the whale’s bones, and with fish scales dangling from his eyelashes. From here Jonah cried out to God, and God heard his prayer.

By the time the fish vomited Jonah onto the beach, the city of Nineveh was ready for evangelism! As Jonah preached, the Holy Spirit went into action. The people of Nineveh organized a prayer meeting of their own. Even the king was converted. There was a citywide, fiery revival, and the people turned from their wicked ways. Then God turned away His anger and spared the city from the destruction He had declared through Jonah (Jon. 3:10).

There is no secret about the power of prayer. God will listen to the earnest petitions and intercessory prayers of nations, communities, churches, or individuals for the salvation of others. What a surprise Stephen, the first Christian martyr, will receive when he stands on the sea of glass and sees Saul (who later became Paul) standing close to him! This was the man who had sanctioned Stephen’s stoning. Stephen’s last intercessory prayer—“Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60)—was answered. His persecutor, Saul, became the greatest apostle and missionary of the Christian church.

No case is impossible before the power of prayer (Matt. 17:20; 21:21, 22). We must never be reluctant to pray for someone whom we consider hopeless. Many stubborn hearts have been converted through the persistent prayers of earnest people. If there is someone you want to see saved, just keep on praying. Only eternity will reveal the results of the fervent prayers of parents for their children, of children for their parents, of spouses for each other, of churches for their communities,

and of individuals for one another. “And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him?” (Luke 18:7, NKJV). More good can come from the earnest prayers of God’s children than from all the laws enacted by parliaments and senates. We can reach closer to God by falling to our knees than by climbing Mount Everest.

Fervent prayer brings revival

“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit” (James 5:17, 18). Let us review the entire story as recorded in 1 Kings 17 and 18. The nation of Israel, under King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel, had reached the low ebb of its spirituality. The king and queen had led the nation into apostasy and idolatry. It was at this time that God called His servant Elijah into action. Elijah’s weapon of choice was prayer—fervent prayer. He prayed, and heaven shut off the rain, and famine and drought followed.

Three and a half years later on Mount Carmel, Elijah challenged the 850 prophets of the false god, Baal, and the other prophets of the other false gods to a prayer contest to see whose god would answer by fire. The prophets of the false gods failed ignominiously, no matter how loudly they prayed or how long they cried. “Baal’s priests have screamed and foamed and leaped, from early morning until late in the afternoon” (*Prophets and Kings*, chap. 11, p. 152).

Then it was Elijah’s turn to pray to his God. His prayer was simple. “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back” (1 Kings 18:36, 37). At the end of his prayer, the fire fell from heaven (1 Kings 18:38). God had heard Elijah’s prayer. Then a revival resulted. The nation acknowledged that there was no God like Elijah’s. There is no God like Jehovah.

We can start a revival like the one in Elijah’s day. We only have to repair the altar of God. Let us start with repairing the altars of our



own hearts. Let us come before God with clean hands and pure hearts. Then we need to repair the family altar. The patriarchs of old erected altars around which their families could gather to give praise and adoration to God. The united prayer of a family forms a hedge about the home. "In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before the fast is broken, to thank their heavenly Father for His protection during the night, and to ask Him for His help and guidance and watch care during the day. How fitting, also, when evening comes, for parents and children to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day that is past" (*Child Guidance*, chap. 78, p. 520).

God is calling for modern Elijahs who know how to prevail in prayer. The Old Testament closes with this promise. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes" (Mal. 4:5). These are the days of Elijah, the days about which the prophet Malachi wrote. Jesus wants to return to claim His own; that is why He is looking for Christians who will pray like Elijah as He prepares the world for that day of the Lord.

About one half of the world's population has not yet heard about Jesus. Jesus wants them to hear the good news of His love and sacrifice. He wants the world to know of His desire to save them before He returns to earth (Matt. 24:14). God is in search of modern-day Elijahs who will help usher in His reign by preparing themselves and helping others to get ready for Christ's second coming.

"As the servants of God bear to the world a living message fresh from the throne of glory, the light of truth will shine forth as a lamp that burneth, reaching to all parts of the world. Thus the darkness of error and unbelief will be dispelled from the minds of the honest in heart in all lands, who are now seeking after God" (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, chap. 17, p. 459).

Heaven can't wait

"Heaven is open to our prayers. Prayer is the channel that conducts our gratitude and yearnings of soul for the divine blessing to the throne of God, to be returned to us in refreshing showers of divine grace. With very many, this channel is allowed to freeze up, and then the connection with heaven is interrupted. . . . Oh, that we would spend more time upon our knees and less time in planning for ourselves and in thinking we may do some great thing" (*Our Father Cares*, p. 244).

Prayer is the answer. When the 120 disciples gathered in the upper room to pray following Jesus' crucifixion, God responded by pouring out His Holy Spirit upon them, and they were filled with heavenly power. Today, God is still ready and waiting to give the Holy Spirit to empower His people to carry out His mission.

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16, NIV). God is looking for people who are committed to living righteously and praying fervently. And when He finds them, He will use them as He used Peter and Paul. Are you one of those whom God is looking for?



7

The Answer to Unanswered Prayer

*“Why, O Lord, do You stand far away?
Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?”
(Ps. 10:1).*

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words
of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest”
(Ps. 22:1, 2).*

GREAT CHRISTIANS have often had to struggle with the fact that some prayers go unanswered. The apostle Paul related his experience of not having his prayer for healing answered. “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it

should leave me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness' " (2 Cor. 12:8, 9). Paul was content with God's answer, and his faith in God remained intact. The apostle's courageous response to a negative answer from God, when he asked for God to remove his "thorn in the flesh" (v. 7), is not only exemplary, but encouraging to us personally: "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (v. 10). Like Paul and so many other Christians who have gone before us, in the midst of our own pain and sickness we, too, can take courage from God's comforting words, "My grace is more than enough to carry you through."

Someone who had encountered a huge dose of suffering once said that one of the best things a Christian can do for fellow Christians is to show how to joyfully bear up under suffering. Listen to the apostle Paul once again: "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17).

In modern times as well, many of God's children have prayed but not received the answers to their requests that they expected. As our prayers seem to go unanswered, the question arises in our minds, "Lord, why don't You answer my prayers?"

The truth is that God is still in the prayer-answering business. "Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am' " (Isa. 58:9). Our heavenly Father not only promises that He will answer; He invites us to ask (Matt. 7:7-11). When was the last time someone said to you, "Ask me for anything you need; tell me what you would like to have? Trust me; I will give it to you?" But perhaps you are thinking, *That is what I do; but He does not answer me. How does all this add up?* Let's examine some facts to attempt to understand God's responses to our prayers.

God has the power to answer any prayer. "Ah, Lord God! It is You who have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for You" (Jer. 32:17). "But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible,

but with God all things are possible' ” (Matt. 19:26). Sometimes people offer help to us, or they promise to do something for us, but later they have to apologize because they were unable to deliver what they had promised because they lacked the necessary resources. That is never the case with God, for His resources are limitless. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Ps. 24:1).

God has the wisdom to provide the best answer. Do you remember taking a multiple-choice test or a true-false test? Do you recall not being sure of which answer you should have chosen? Sometimes you just guessed the answer. If you were fortunate, you got the right answer. But there were times you were just not so fortunate! God’s decisions, however, are not a guessing game. Rather they are based on His infinite wisdom. He knows the right answer, even before we ask Him. “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His” (Dan. 2:20, NKJV).

God loves us so much that He will not deprive us of any good gift. The Bible assures us of this: “No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11). His gifts are good and perfect (James 1:17). Sometimes the gifts we receive from friends are inferior or recycled. Of course, gifts do not have to be expensive to be appreciated. Have you ever received a gift and discovered that the person who gave you that gift had received it from someone else and then passed it on to you? That is a recycled gift. God knows just what we need. He knows our desire for good things. In fact, He knows what is best for us better than we do, and that is what He will give us.

God has promised that He will answer our prayers. “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24). What a powerful promise! That is even better than receiving a blank check from a billionaire who has authorized you to cash it for any amount your desire!

There are some prayers that God cannot answer

Prayers from idolaters. Anything that replaces God in our affections is an idol, and God warns us that He will not answer the

prayers of idolaters. “And I will surely hide my face in that day because of all the evil that they have done, because they have turned to other gods” (Deut. 31:18). While heathens make and worship idols made of wood, stone, and other materials, idols can also consist of one’s spouse, job, entertainment, house, or possessions. God gave very specific commands about idols. We must neither make nor worship them. “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image. . . . You shall not bow down to them or serve them” (Exod. 20:3–5). We must not have a divided heart, for Jesus says that we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). We must choose to whom we will give our hearts. If we cling to our idols, God will leave us to our idols, saying, “Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone” (Hos. 4:17).

Prayers from covetous or selfish persons. Simon, who previously had been a sorcerer, was baptized after hearing the preaching of the apostles. However, when he saw the miracles that the apostles performed and how when the apostles laid hands on people they received the Holy Spirit, Simon coveted the gift of the Holy Spirit and offered to buy it. “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:19). Peter rebuked Simon and urged him to repent and pray for God’s forgiveness because his heart was “not right before God” (v. 21).

We must avoid praying only for our own benefit. We need to make an effort to include others in our prayers. Too often our prayers resemble a wish list to Santa Claus. This is an indication of selfishness. The apostle James encourages us to pray for the right motives. “And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure” (James 4:3, NLT). “No one prays aright who seeks a blessing for himself alone” (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 267). The whole object of prayer is to make us more like Jesus. One way to become like Him is to be unselfish and “let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3, NKJV).

Prayers from people who hold on to sin. The psalmist declares, “If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me” (Ps. 66:18).

Living a life of sin causes our separation from God (Isa. 59:1, 2). Yet, there are some persons who refuse to let go of their sins, in spite of how much this endangers them.

In India, there are many monkeys, and the natives lay traps to catch them. They put a banana in a bottle, which they anchor to the ground. Then they wait for a monkey. The neck of the bottle is just large enough for the hand of the monkey to fit through. Along comes a monkey, and seeing the banana in the bottle, puts its hand in to get the banana. While holding on to the banana, the monkey is unable to get its hand out of the bottle. It remains there, struggling to release itself, but will not let go of the banana. In this way it is captured. If only the monkey would let go of the banana, it would be free and safe.

That is how it is with men and women. They are unwilling to let go of their sins, and as a result, God cannot answer their prayers. Only the “prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:17, NKJV). “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to Him” (Prov. 15:8).

Prayers not accompanied by faith. According to Hebrews 11:6, “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” This same passage defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (v. 1). Faith is leaving all to God, knowing that He best knows what we need and what to do in every situation. Faith serves as our safety net. Faith is an unfailing guide. The Bible states that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

The Bible lists several Christians who were rewarded through faith: Abraham, who was willing to offer up his son; Noah, who trusted God and preached about the Flood; the three Hebrew boys, who were ready to go into the fiery furnace; Daniel, who was thrown into the lions’ den; the centurion, whose servant was healed by his faith. Faith is necessary for our very existence, for “the righteous shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). Prayer coupled with faith is prayer that God will hear. The prayer of faith defeats Satan. “The prayer of faith is the great strength of the Christian and will assuredly prevail against Satan” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, chap. 61, p. 296).

Prayers from the self-righteous and proud. Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector who went into the temple to pray. The Pharisee boasted about a number of his virtues, comparing himself to the tax collector, whom he considered inferior to him. The proud person approaches God based on their own self-righteous merit. In contrast to the proud Pharisee, the tax collector, in humility, “would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner’ ” (Luke 18:13). It was the prayer of the tax collector that was endorsed by Jesus.

Pride and self-righteousness are offensive to God. Thus they form a barrier between Him and us. “For though the Lord is high, He regards the lowly, but the haughty He knows from afar” (Ps. 138:6). We have no merit of our own to approach God with. Indeed, we can only approach the Majesty of heaven through Jesus. Only He can open the door to God’s presence for us. That is why He says, “I am the door” (John 10:9).

We must learn to pray with power

Some devout Christians seem to have a very close and special connection with God. They seem to possess an uncommon power as a result of their direct line to heaven. Jacob had “power with God and with men and . . . prevailed” (Gen. 32:28, KJV). Moses engaged in direct, personal conversation with God. “The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Exod. 33:11). When Elijah prayed at the time of the evening sacrifice on Mount Carmel, God answered with fire (1 Kings 18:36–39). The New Testament church prayed while Peter was in prison, “and the chains fell off his hands” as he was freed from prison by an angel (Acts 12:7).

Successful praying is a learning experience. First, we must desire to learn. The disciples of Jesus had the desire to learn to pray. “Lord, teach us to pray,” they said (Luke 11:1). Then we must be willing to be taught to pray by the Holy Spirit. The following principles will help you to learn to pray with power.

Study what the Word of God has to say about your specific need or desire. We have been blessed with Scriptures that are custom-made

for us. In them, God promises that our needs will be supplied—all of our needs. “And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). If you need guidance, pray for it, and God will give you clear direction. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5–6, NKJV). God will always “be our guide, even to death” (Ps. 48:14, NKJV). The study of the Word gives us wisdom.

Timothy Keller makes this insightful observation: “Without immersion in God’s words, our prayers may not be merely limited and shallow but also untethered from reality. We may be responding not to the real God but to what we wish God and life to be like. Indeed, if left to themselves our hearts will tend to create a God who doesn’t exist.”¹

We can trust the Bible because it is God’s inspired Word. Paul reminded Timothy, his son in the faith, “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:15, 16, NKJV).

Be as specific as possible in your requests. Jesus drew out a specific request for healing from the blind man by the wayside in Jericho. “And when he came near, He asked him, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ He said, ‘Lord, let me recover my sight’ ” (Luke 18:41). Nehemiah is another example of one who made a specific request. “Give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy” (Neh. 1:11). David prayed, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness” (Ps. 51:14). Hannah prayed to the Lord to remove her barrenness, asking Him to “not forget your servant, but . . . give to your servant a son” (1 Sam. 1:11).

The reason for being specific is not that God does not know or understand our needs or desires. He wants us to declare what we want. He knows our requests before we make them. “Your Father

1. Timothy Keller, *Prayer: The Essential Guide* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 62.

knows what you need before you ask Him” (Matt. 6:8). Murray observes that many of our prayers are vague and pointless because we are not specific in our requests.² We must be definite.

Come to God with a clean heart. “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (Ps. 24:3, 4). While God is willing to accept us as we are, when we realize our filthiness of heart, we need to repent and ask Him for forgiveness. Then He will cleanse us. Consequently, we will come to our Father with clean hearts to present our requests. Jesus told several people to “go, and from now on sin no more” (John 8:11). This shows the importance He places on clean hands and hearts. “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8).

Claim specific promises of God. Our God keeps His promises. He “keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Neh. 1:5). It is so good to serve a God who is dependable and trustworthy. God has never failed us yet, and neither will He fail us in the future. “For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him” (2 Cor. 1:20). What a consolation for us! We have a promise-keeping Father, a God of “exceedingly great and precious promises” (2 Pet. 1:4, NKJV).

Visualize the presence of God as you pray. Prayer is a conversation with a real, personal God. Talk with Him as you would with a friend. God is not far away. In recent years, communication technology has made great strides in bridging the gap of distance. People can see images of their friends and relatives through services like Skype and FaceTime. Conversation is no longer limited to telephone calls. However, God does not need the help of technology; He has always been present with His people. He was near Moses in the burning bush (Exod. 3:1–5). He was in the fire with the three Hebrew boys (Dan. 3:23–25). He was with the disciples in the storm

2. Andrew Murray on *Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1998), 357.

(Matt. 8:23–27). Jacob, in the solitude of Bethel, could say, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it” (Gen. 28:16). So remember that God is with us anywhere and everywhere. “He is actually not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).

He is here, hallelujah!

He is here, Amen!

Stay focused. It is necessary to take control of our wandering thoughts. When possible, establish an environment that is conducive for prayer. There may be occasions when you are in traffic, in crowded areas, or in situations in which you are unable to “go into your room and shut the door” (Matt. 6:6). In those cases, you can still send up a prayer to God. However, as much as possible, try to employ methods to keep your mind on your conversation with God. Find a calm atmosphere. Nature is excellent for this. Peaceful music is also very helpful. Above all, sincerity and fervency are important. “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

In order to receive results from our prayers, we must be intentional with our requests and passionate in our presentation of those requests. Keeping our minds “stayed on” God (Isa. 26:3) helps us to stay focused. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). Sometimes our incessant talking drowns out the voice of God. It is better to spend more time listening to what God has to say to us, than telling Him what we want Him to do for us. When the apostle Paul had his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, he humbly asked, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6, NKJV).

Often fasting can help us to stay focused during a season of prayer. When Jesus’ disciples were unable to expel a demon from a sick boy, He told them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29, NKJV). There are different ways to fast, abstaining either partially or completely from food.

Persevere in prayer. There are several examples in the Bible of persons who succeeded in prayer because they persevered. We are

urged to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). In other words, we must have a lifestyle of prayer. Pray several times a day, even while doing mundane tasks. There is always room for a prayer. This facilitates our perseverance in prayer. When Jacob wrestled with the Angel, he insisted, “I will not let You go unless You bless me” (Gen. 32:26). Jesus told the story of an unjust judge whom a widow petitioned for help. Because of her persistence, the judge heard her case (Luke 18:1–8).

Perseverance helps us to develop patience. Patience is an essential virtue. “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31). The psalmist advises us, “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord” (Ps. 27:14, NKJV). God’s people who exercise patience will be rewarded at Christ’s second coming.

Many lose the blessings that God desires to give them because they give up too soon. What if Naaman the leper, who was told to dip in the Jordan River seven times, had stopped after dipping for the sixth time? (2 Kings 5:1–14). May God grant us the will to persevere.

Pray with simple, childlike faith. The gospel of Mark tells us the story of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, whose little daughter lay dying. He came to Jesus and begged the Master to lay His hands on her so that she would be healed and live. While the ruler was speaking to Jesus, a messenger from the ruler’s house came announcing that the daughter had died. There was, therefore, no need to trouble the Master any further. When Jesus heard the message, however, He turned to the ruler and said, “Do not fear, only believe” (Mark 5:36). Jesus—accompanied by Peter, James, and John—went to the ruler’s house, where they found a scene of great mourning. Jesus said to them, “Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn’t dead; she’s only asleep” (v. 39, NLT). The people laughed at Him. Jesus had them all taken out of the room, and with only the parents of the twelve-year-old and a few of His disciples present, He approached

the bedside of the dead girl. He said to her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise" (v. 41). Immediately, the girl arose and walked, and Jairus's faith was rewarded.

Because Elisha was constantly revealing the Syrian army's secrets to the king of Israel, the Syrian king sent an army to capture him. When Elisha's servant saw the little town they were staying in surrounded by the Syrian military, he despaired for their safety. He cried to Elisha, "What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15).

Elisha replied, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (v. 16). Then Elisha prayed that God would open the eyes of his servant so that he could see the protection that God had provided. "So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (v. 17).

Faith is seeing a prayer request as an action that God has completed. It is knowing that the answer is already on the way. "The prayer of faith is never lost" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, chap. 46, p. 231).

Submit to the will of God. "And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us" (1 John 5:14). This is often very difficult to do because the human will and God's will are often in conflict with each other (Gal. 5:17). God's ways are often not our ways (Isa. 55:8).

Peter, James, and John were seasoned fishermen. They had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Then Jesus commanded them, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (Luke 5:4). Peter was reluctant, since they had tried to get a catch all night without success. But his response of submission to Jesus is commendable. "But at Your word I will let down the nets" (v. 5). In other words, while it did not seem logical, Peter was saying, "If You command it, I am willing to obey." The result was that they caught more fish than they had ever caught before. Their nets broke, and the ships began to sink under the weight of all the fish.

Jesus said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). The

apostle John adds the following assurance: “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him” (1 John 3:22). “Our prayers should ask God to help us do what He is blessing, not bless what we are doing. God is not interested in our circumstances as He is in our attitude. When our attitude is right, our prayers become consistent with His will and ultimately benefit us—often in ways far greater than we could have planned or imagined.”³

We need to submit to the will of God, even when we do not like the counsel we receive. King Ahab suffered dire consequences when he rejected the counsel of Micaiah, the prophet of God, resulting not only in the loss of the battle, but also the loss of his life (1 Kings 22:1–37).

Pray in the name of Jesus. “Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:13, 14). “In that day you will ask nothing of Me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23, 24).

Have you ever experienced the power of a friend’s name? Many years ago, our youngest daughter was travelling to college alone because I could not accompany her at that time. The plan was that I would join her two days later and spend a week with her, helping her get settled. Still, my parent’s heart was not at ease with the arrangement. “If only I knew someone to meet our daughter and help her until I arrived,” I mused. “Lord, she is our baby, please work things out for her.”

Shortly before the trip, I met someone who knew a pastor that lived near the university. This person gave me the contact information of the pastor and confidently assured me, “All you need to do is tell him my name and that I gave you his contact information. Everything will be OK.” My fears were alleviated. The contact was

3. John C. Maxwell, *Partners in Prayer* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson: 1996), p. 43.

made, and the plan worked beautifully and successfully. I had made my request in the name of my friend. The authenticity of his name opened doors for me.

To pray in Jesus' name is more than adding "in Jesus' name" at the end of a prayer. It is approaching the throne of God in the Spirit of Christ. It is having the mind of Christ. "For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). It is recognizing that Jesus is the Way and that "no one comes to the Father except through [Him]" (John 14:6). It is deciding to follow in Jesus' steps and accepting His will. There is power in the name of Jesus. "Then press your petition to the Father in the name of Jesus. God will honor that name" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, chap. 12, p. 148).

"Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9–11).

Praise and thank God in advance for the answer. Have you ever felt that something you were hoping for is already yours? Have you ever celebrated a victory, a birthday, or an anniversary in advance? At these times, success and accomplishment were very real to you, and there was no doubt in your heart. The psalmist encourages us to have a thankful heart. "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name" (Ps. 100:4).

The prophet Isaiah declares, "Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him" (Isa. 30:18, NKJV). Andrew Murray elucidates this text by commenting, "We must not only think of our waiting upon God, but also of what is more wonderful still, of God's waiting upon us. The vision of Him waiting on us, will give new impulse and inspiration to our waiting upon Him. It will give an unspeakable confidence that our waiting cannot be in vain."⁴

4. Andrew Murray on *Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1998), 281.

There are biblical examples of prayer and thankfulness. Paul and Silas sang praises to God as they sat in the stocks in prison. “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25). At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus prayed and gave thanks. “And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me’ ” (John 11:41). What better example could we have than that of Jesus, who showed a spirit of thankfulness! “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

Realize that our heavenly Father is too loving and wise to always give us what we ask for. Children often ask for gifts that are not good for them. They may even be unsafe or too difficult for them to handle. Most parents are careful in their selection of toys or gifts for their children. That’s why every year, just before Christmas, various organizations issue a list of toys that are not recommended for kids. For example, in November 2014, the organization World Against Toys Causing Harm (W.A.T.C.H.) released its annual “10 Worst Toys” list. The list includes toys like a battle hammer for three-year-olds and guns and bottle rockets for older children, as well as a bow that shoots toy arrows 145 feet.⁵

God already knows what “toys” are not suitable for us at a given time. We can be sure that if He withholds anything that we request, it is for our best good. When Paul asked for the removal of his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7, KJV), God did not grant this request. Instead, He told the apostle, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul accepted God’s decision and remained strong in faith in spite of the fact that he was not healed. We must trust God, who in His wisdom knows the end from the beginning, “for wisdom

5. “The 10 ‘Worst’ Toys To Buy This Holiday Season,” Megan Willett, *Business Insider*, November 19, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/10-worst-toys-2014-from-watch-2014-11>.

and might are His” (Dan. 2:20, NKJV). Just as earthly parents are careful about the gifts they give their children, our heavenly Father gives us what He knows is best for us. “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him” (Matt. 7:11).

God does not always answer our prayers in the way we expect

“Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him” (*Steps to Christ*, chap. 11, p. 93). It is not intended to work a change in God, but to work a change in us. It is not intended to inform God about something He does not know, but to help us understand what the will of God is.

God has many different ways of sending His answers to our prayers. These include the following:

- Through the impressions of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 30:21; John 16:13)
- Through His Word (Ps. 119:105; 2 Tim. 3:16)
- Through His inspired servants (Amos 3:7; Dan. 9:6, 10; Heb. 1:1; Jer. 29:19)
- Through the voice of the church (Matt. 18:17; Acts 6:1–7; 13:1–3; 15:22–29)
- Through angels (Luke 24:4–7; Acts 1:10, 11; 8:26; 27:20–24)
- Directly (Saul on the Damascus Road—Acts 9:3–6; Moses at Mount Sinai—Exod. 19:19; Joshua after Moses’ death—Josh. 1:1–9; Samuel in the tabernacle—1 Sam. 3:3–14)
- Through visions and dreams (Acts 2:17; 9:10–12; 10:1–20)
- Through providential leading (showing Hagar the well—Gen. 21:19)

God wants to answer our prayers

The Cross is absolute proof that God wants to grant our requests. “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things” (Rom. 8:32).

It was the holy Sabbath day. The Pharisees had just accused Jesus and His disciples of breaking the Sabbath because they had plucked ears of grain to eat. Jesus ended their discussion with words of authority: "For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:8). Then the scene changed. Jesus entered the synagogue, where He found a man with a withered hand. The Jews would not let another opportunity slip to accuse Him. They demanded that He tell them if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus' unexpected response was, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (v. 12). Then, obeying Jesus' command, the man stretched out his withered hand and was healed (v. 13). God is anxious to grant a variety of requests to us, including requests for healing, economic success, academic progress, spiritual improvement, and relational happiness. We only need to stretch out our hands to receive His blessings.

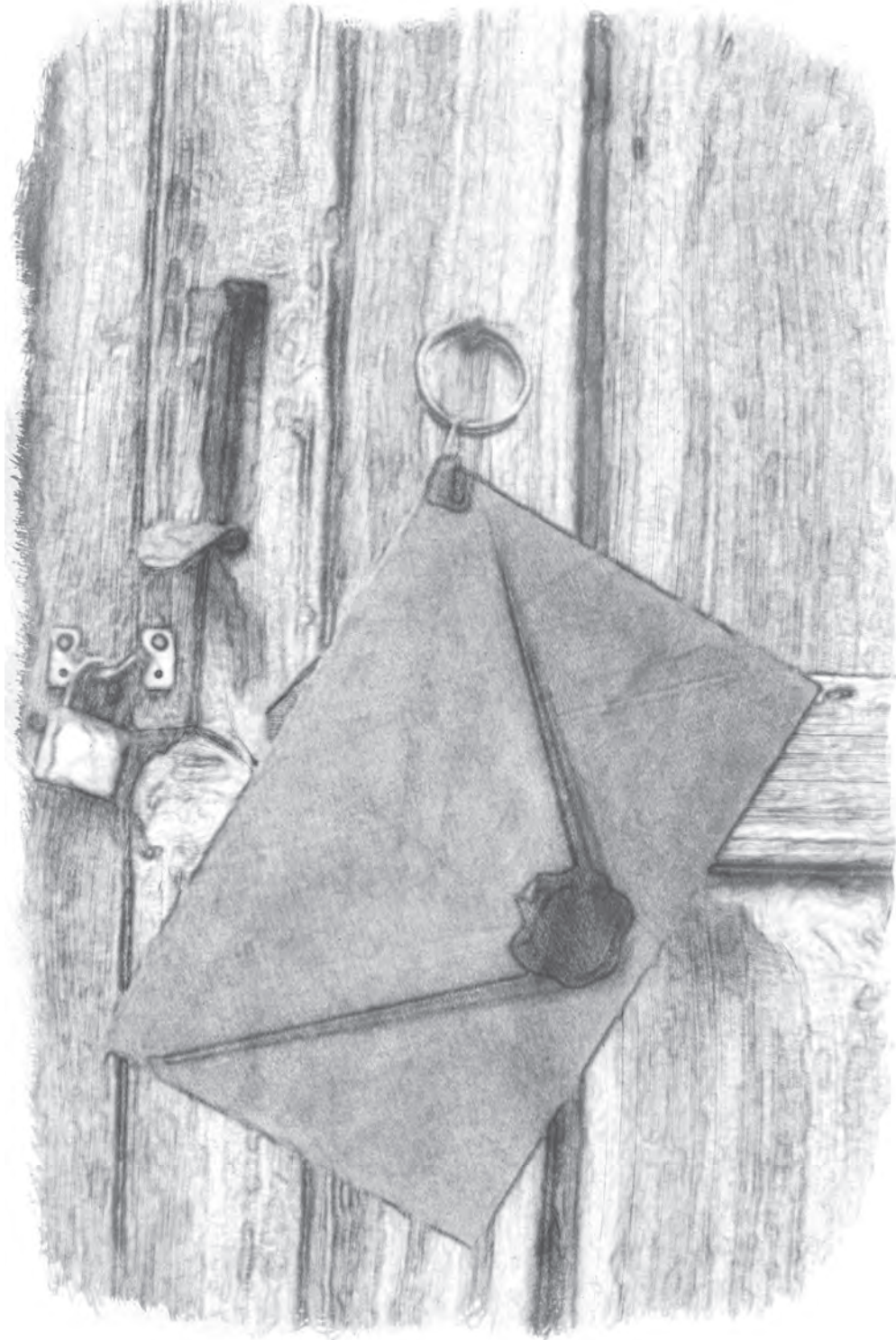
The hospital corridors of the pediatric floor were tastefully decorated. There were fresh flowers and balloons. Across the main archway was a huge sign: "Welcome, Mr. President!" The president of the nation and his entourage went from room to room, giving Christmas gifts to the sick little boys and girls. There was excitement on the floor. This was going to be a memorable day! Each little patient got a present and a handshake from the president.

Then the president and his party came to Room 201. On the bed lay a pale-looking little Timmie with bandages on his head. The president put the gift on Timmie's bed and held out his hand to greet him. The little boy would not shake the president's hand. After much coaxing, Timmie presented a clenched fist for the president to shake.

When the important visitors left, a nurse pried open the boy's hand to find out why he had kept it closed. There in his hand was a little glass marble. It was as if Timmie had valued his little marble more than a handshake from the most important man in the nation.

So often we hold on to our own thoughts and ideas like children cling to trinkets. We forget that we have a big, powerful God who

rules the universe. We even overlook that He is wise, able, and loving. He wants to help us. He has the answer to our problems. Why don't we just let go and let God?





The Privilege of Prayer

“LET US THEN WITH CONFIDENCE draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

An ancient king decided to take a trip to a distant part of his realm. Unfortunately, there was a severe snowstorm, and the king was unable to get home, trapped in the storm. He wandered around a bit, and fortunately, he saw a little house on a farm. When he got to that house, he discovered that a poor farmer and his wife lived there. They were very kind to the king and took good care of him as he spent the night in their humble home. The next day, the weather improved, and the king returned to his palace.

A few months later, the king was having a great celebration at his palace. Remembering the kindness of the poor farmer and his wife, he sent them an invitation to the event at the palace. The farmer and his wife were so thrilled to receive a royal invitation that

they framed it and hung it where everyone could see. However, they were so busy taking care of their farm that they did not attend the event at the palace.

In the Bible, Jesus told a story of a certain man who had a great supper and invited many. When the supper was ready, the man sent his servant to tell the invitees that everything was ready. The guests “all alike began to make excuses” (Luke 14:18). Then the host became angry and ordered his servant to go into the streets and invite as many people as he could find.

Jesus has invited us to join Him in His Father’s house. We are honored to receive an invitation from the King of kings. That invitation is for us to come before His throne to pray to Him. All we have to do is accept that invitation. This is a great privilege.

Why is prayer such a privilege?

God’s surpassing greatness. Our God is great and powerful. “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as Head above all” (1 Chron. 29:11).

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3). “O Lord, what is man that You regard him, or the son of man that You think of him?” (Ps. 144:3).

Our great need. Extreme need is a global concern. In major cities around the world, millions of street children not only suffer starvation and deprivation but also become objects of crime and brutality. Almost half of the world’s population lives in extreme poverty. Over 800 million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat. More than 700 million people do not have access to clean water.

We live in a world of great need. Social welfare agencies are helpless in their attempts to address all the need. However, even greater than the physical need in the world is the spiritual need. Our world needs Jesus. We need to pray for both the physical and spiritual conditions in the world. The good news is that our heavenly Father is able to supply every need.

Its priceless nature as a free gift of God. Some things are free but of low value. It is commonly believed that people do not value that which is free. On the contrary, prayer is free but invaluable.

To cope with the high cost of goods and services, we try to make ends meet in various ways. Someone once said that it is impossible to make ends meet because as soon as the ends come close, an invisible hand pulls one end away. I remember living in a country where grocery shopping was a great challenge. In order to stretch our funds, we had to shop in different stores for different items. This was because there was a startling disparity in prices. We scoured the town for bargains. We shopped at one store for dairy products, another for vegetables, and still another store for toiletries. We knew which stores had the best prices.

However, we do not have to shop around to have our prayers answered. Praise God! We only have to go to God in prayer with all of our needs, and from His storehouse of riches He can supply all our needs. Psalm 34:6 gives great consolation: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.”

Our weakness and God's strength. Have you ever tried to open a jar with a tight lid and could not because your grip was not strong enough? You asked for help from someone who was stronger than you, did you not? Once a young boy insisted on opening a big, heavy door for his mother, who was carrying an armload of parcels. The door was too heavy for his little strength. Seeing his plight, I hastened to help him. He seemed a bit reluctant to accept my help because he wanted to be the one to help Mom. But he was happy that I helped him. Sometimes we think we are able to take care of our needs. We think we have it all in control, and we struggle with our load. All we need to do is place our burdens in God's powerful arms. “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

The enemy, Satan, brings us trials and temptations. We are no match for him, but prayer will put him to flight. God will shelter us from his attacks (Ps. 91:3, 4). God is our Protector and Refuge (Ps. 46:1, 11).

Three-year-old Mark was being chased by two angry dogs in the park. Little Mark tried to run as fast as his little legs could carry him to get away. But the dogs were about to catch up with him. Mark screamed in terror. But his father, who was nearby and saw his son's plight, had already started off running to rescue his son. Dad reached little Mark and swept him up in his arms. Mark was now safe.

Our heavenly Father will rescue us from danger. He will lift us up and carry us to safety. "But You, O Lord, are a shield about me" (Ps. 3:3). "Yes, You exalted me above those who rose against me" (Ps. 18:48).

As Germaine Copeland eloquently stated, "The prayer armor is for every believer, every member of the Body of Christ, who will put it on and walk in it, for the weapons of our warfare are *not carnal*, but mighty through God."¹

Our poverty and God's unlimited wealth. The son of a poor widow was very ill and had to be hospitalized. A famous surgeon performed a successful surgery on the boy. When the boy was discharged from the hospital, his mother was given the bill, which was for a huge amount. Would this poor mother ever be able to pay it? At the bottom of the bill was a note: "This bill must be paid in full in thirty days." She couldn't get that much money in thirty days! Not even in a lifetime! After many sleepless nights, the woman decided to visit the doctor and explain her predicament. The doctor listened quietly. The woman left after presenting her case. At the end of the thirty days, she received another bill. Nervously, she read the bill. The total was the same large amount. Nothing seemed to have changed. Tears welled up in her eyes. Then she noticed a handwritten note at the bottom of the page: "Forgiven. Too poor to pay." The note was signed by the surgeon.

We are very poor, but God has unlimited resources. Our Father is rich and owns everything. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is

1. Germaine Copeland, *Prayers That Avail Much* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1997), xvii.

Mine, declares the Lord of hosts” (Hag. 2:8). “For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are Mine” (Ps. 50:10–12). This is something worth boasting about. We have a rich Father who owns the whole world and everything in it. So why do we not take our needs to Him in prayer? He can take care of us. “And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). Believe it!

Our helplessness and God’s omnipotence. A paralyzed man lay at the pool of Bethesda, waiting and wishing to be healed. This man had been ill for thirty-eight years. He could do nothing to help himself. Jesus came along, and with His healing words—“Get up, take up your bed, and walk” (John 5:8)—the man was immediately made whole. One helpless man met the omnipotent God.

Jesus and His disciples were in a boat when a vicious storm arose. “And the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling” (Mark 4:37). Jesus was asleep in the boat. The terrified sailors—Jesus’ disciples—shook Jesus awake. “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” (v. 38). When Jesus awoke, He ordered the waves, “Peace! Be still!” (v. 39). The waves hushed, and the storm was calmed when helpless sailors met the omnipotent Son of God.

Our helplessness evaporates in the presence of an omnipotent God. We need not faint nor fear. We serve a God who is all-powerful. “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength” (Isa. 40:29). “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27, NKJV). Cast your helplessness on the Lord, for He is able.

Our sinfulness and God’s abundant grace. “But He gives more grace” (James 4:6). “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). What is this thing called grace? Grace is an indefinable divine virtue. It is

His unexplainable gift to human beings wrapped in the incarnation of His Son. We receive it in abundant quantities. The greater our sins, the more copious is the gift of God's grace!

Whatever you've done, wherever you've been,
God's grace will always be greater than sin.

Think for a moment of the worst things you have done from your first conscious years until now. How does that make you feel? Then think of how clean the precious blood of Jesus makes you feel. That's the result of the gift of grace.

Now think of how many times we have messed up and found ourselves once more in our "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6, NKJV). "Oh no! Not again!" we cry in frantic desperation. But wait; don't give up! Jesus does not discard us when we sin. He is saddened, but there is still hope for us. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). There's that gift again! Jesus holds out barrels of grace for us. He does not give up on us.

It is important for us to remember that we cannot save ourselves. Peter, one of the disciples, saw Jesus walking on the water. Then, through Jesus' power, Peter started walking toward Him on the water. "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me'" (Mat. 14:30). Immediately, Jesus extended His arm of power and saved him.

The thief on the cross, facing death in his sin, needed a Savior. He saw his hope in the Man on the cross beside his and cried out to Jesus to save him. Jesus responded immediately with the assurance of salvation (Luke 23:42, 43).

Whether you are a disciple or thief, Jesus is willing to save. Whether you are rebellious or compliant, there is an ample supply of grace for you. Whether you are rich or poor, slave or free, God's abundant grace is for you. Here's your gift. Take it.

Our unworthiness and God's unconditional love. In a nighttime visit with Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was worried

about his salvation, Jesus assured him, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

God’s love is so all-inclusive that it baffles our minds while it moves our hearts. “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7, 8). Human beings have on rare occasions given their lives for other people. But our God gave Himself for humans! That is unbelievable! Human sacrifices have been offered to heathen gods. But the very God of the universe offered up His Son as a sacrifice for our world. What matchless love!

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, a story set in the time of the French Revolution, Charles Dickens tells a story of a young man, Sydney Carton, who loved a girl, Lucy, so much that he gave his life for her happiness. The unusual element in the story is that the girl, Lucy, was not in love with Carton. Instead, she married a young nobleman, Charles Darnay, who was later sentenced to death on the guillotine. The hero of the story, Carton, devised a plot to disguise himself so that he could take Darnay’s place on the guillotine. He died in the place of Darnay so that Lucy and her husband, Darnay, could live in happiness together.

Jesus took the form of a human being so that He could die for us. He died on the cross in our place so that we could enjoy eternal life and happiness. We could not have purchased His love. Jesus gave it freely. This is divine, unconditional love. That is what the Cross is all about.

Our emptiness and God’s fullness. There are certain circumstances that can reduce us to emptiness, such as a fire, tornado, flood, earthquake, or hurricane. Life is so uncertain. One day we may be comfortable and happy and another day homeless, jobless, and destitute.

God saw our emptiness and brought us His riches. The Cross provided us with worth because there the precious blood of Jesus was shed for us. That blood transformed us from paupers to sons and daughters of God.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling

The Cross makes us partakers of God's fullness. "For from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16). Petersen expresses it this way: "We all live off his generous bounty, gift after gift after gift" (John 1:16, *The Message*).

When we are lost and wandering aimlessly, the Cross points us to our eternal home. A little girl was lost on the streets of London. All of the streets looked alike to her. She knew that her home was not far away from where she was, but she still could not find her way home. A policeman tried to help her by pointing at various landmarks. Each time she shook her head. No, she did not recognize anything he pointed to. Finally, the policeman pointed to a church in the distance. On its roof was a tall steeple with a cross at the top. The little girl started jumping up and down with excitement. "Yes!" she squealed with delight. "Just take me to the cross. I can find my way home from there."

Let us make our way to the Cross. The Cross transforms our emptiness into fullness in Jesus. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

Prayer is a privilege beyond all compare

There is nothing like prayer. It is a rare privilege. Daniel would rather die than not pray (Dan. 6). Adoniram Judson, Hudson Taylor, George Müller, William Tyndale, and many others who made great advances for the kingdom of God were persons who spent much time with their Master in prayer. Time spent in the audience chamber of God was not considered a sacrifice by them, but an honor and a privilege. Some of them felt cheated if they could not spend at least five to eight hours a day in prayer.

All that God is waiting for is the pleasure of our company. Why do we keep Him waiting? We often think that we are too busy to pray. We postpone our prayer times. We shorten our prayer sessions. We keep Him waiting. We do not focus on our conversation with Him,

and our communication becomes sketchy. We do not stop to listen to what He has to say. These are all obstacles to building a solid relationship.

Yet our Father in heaven, the King of the universe, is patient with us and is always ready and waiting to receive us. The scepter of the King of the universe, in contrast to that of earthly monarchs, is always extended. The protocol is simple. God's favorite word is *come*. Come just as you are. Come confidently and fearlessly. "Come . . . all you who labor" (Matt. 11:28, NKJV). "Come now, let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18). And finally, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16, NKJV).

Appendix A

Invitations to Prayer

Paraphrase and personalize the following verses of Scripture:

Heb. 4:16

Ps. 46:1

Ps. 84:11

Ps. 102:17

Isa. 65:24

2 Chron. 7:14

Ps. 34:17

Jer. 29:12, 13

Matt. 21:22

1 John 5:14, 15

Appendix B

Blessings to Pray For

“Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith”
(Matt. 21:22).

1. A pure heart
2. Victory over sin and temptation
3. Strength to face personal battles and struggles
4. Health and healing for ourselves and those among us
5. The experience of genuine conversion, both personally and as a church
6. Unity among the members of God’s church
7. Readiness for Jesus’ second coming
8. Preparation for the time of trouble that is before us
9. For our children and young people to be good representatives of Christ
10. The academic success of our students
11. For Christian education to be effective
12. For our families to enjoy peace, harmony, and good success
13. The Pentecost experience
14. The outpouring of God’s Spirit on the entire church
15. For the binding of Satan so that the gospel can go forward with power
16. The faithfulness of all church members

17. Greater fervency among us for spreading of the gospel
18. For leaders and officers to be good examples of Christian behavior
19. For the church building program to be successful
20. For the financial needs of the members of the church family to be supplied
21. The success of our evangelistic programs
22. The return of backsliders and former believers
23. For parents to receive godly wisdom to face the challenge of training children in this present age
24. Safety and peace for military families
25. Wisdom and understanding for the leaders of the nation and state
26. For the community around us, as well as the state and nation, to receive a mighty religious awakening and accept God's truth for these last days
27. The breaking down of Satan's barriers and strongholds in our homes, churches, and communities
28. For greater love to saturate our lives individually and as a church
29. The hastening of Christ's return to gather His children home
30. _____
31. _____

Appendix C

A Collective Prayer

Jansen Trotman

Leader: Dear Lord and Master, we come into Your presence with joy, knowing that You are a loving God, abundant in mercy and abounding in grace. You are a God ready to forgive.

People: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Leader: We have not always been eager to come into Your presence, even though in Your presence is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand are everlasting pleasures.

People: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. You are most worthy to be praised, for Your glory fills heaven and earth, but all too often we seek praise for ourselves and try to steal Your glory.

Leader: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Leader: We have sinned against You, even when we did not want to. Numerous times we have grieved You. Countless times we have wronged You. On many occasions we have misrepresented You.

People: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Leader: We have hurt You more than anyone has ever hurt us. By our sinful acts we have crucified You afresh and put You to open shame.

People: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lord, some of the wrongs that have been done to us seem almost too heavy to bear. Our hearts ache with the burden of the sins against us, but Calvary reminds us that any wrongs done to us may be forgiven if we really want to forgive.

Leader: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Leader: Knowing that our forgiveness of others is what enables Your forgiveness of us, we pray for a heart like Yours.

People: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Leader: We want to become more like You each day so that those who associate with us can see the reflection of Your face in ours and note in our actions that You live through us.

People: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Leader: Help us not to dwell on the unkind, painful, and unjust things that others have done to us, but rather count the many blessings You have given us in spite of our unworthiness.

People: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

People: Sometimes those who have wronged us seem insensitive to our pain, blind to our grief, and oblivious to our sorrow. It reminds us of those who stood around Your cross at Calvary like uninvolved spectators, yet You extended forgiveness to them, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Leader: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

All: Forgiving Lord, we thank You for the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. We thank You for Your promise that if we confess our sins, You will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now that we have tasted of the cup of Your forgiveness and are willing to grow up into Your likeness, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and seal us for Your kingdom. Amen.

-
- * Scriptural references: Neh. 9:17; Matt. 6:12; Ps. 16:11; 18:3; Isa. 6:3; Ps. 8:1; Heb. 6:6; Matt. 6:14, 15; Gal. 2:20; Luke 23:34; 1 John 1:9.

Appendix D

Sample Program for an All-Night Prayer Meeting

ALL-NIGHT PRAYER MEETING

Date:

9:00 P.M.–10:00 A.M.

P.M.

Chairperson #1

9:00–9:15 Song Service

9:15–9:30 Opening Song, Prayer & Scripture Reading

9:30–10:00 Devotional

10:00–10:30 Kidz Korner

10:30–11:00 Special Feature

Chairperson #2

11:00–11:15 Prayer in Groups

11:15–11:30 Special Reading

(Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, nos. 698, 704, 706, 710, 711)

11:30–11:40 Private Meditation

11:40–12:00 Bible Drill

A.M.

Chairperson #3

- 12:00–12:20 Special Reading
(*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 19–25)
- 12:20–12:30 Group Discussion
- 12:30–12:45 Prayer in Groups
- 12:45–1:00 Testimonies

Chairperson #4

- 1:00–1:15 Praise Team
- 1:15–1:45 Singing with Understanding & Hymn Quiz
- 1:45–2:00 Prayer in Groups
- 2:00–2:15 Break & Fellowship
- 2:15–2:30 Private Meditation
- 2:30–2:45 Favorite-Text Drill

Chairperson #5

- 2:45–3:00 Special Reading
(*Evangelism*, pp. 110–115)
- 3:00–3:15 Group Discussion
- 3:15–3:30 Prayer in Groups
- 3:30–3:45 Private Meditation

Chairperson #6

- 3:45–4:00 Special Reading
(*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 19–23)
- 4:00–4:15 Discussion
- 4:15–4:30 Prayer in Groups

Chairperson #7

- 4:30–4:45 Special Reading
(*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 305–312)
- 4:50–5:00 Prayer in Groups
- 5:00–5:45 Devotional & Pledge
- 5:45–6:00 Morning Praise
- 6:00–7:30 Prayer Breakfast

Chairperson #8

8:00–9:00 Sabbath School

9:00–10:00 Festival of Praise

Notes:

1. Selections for readings are suggestions only.
2. Friday nights are excellent for all-night prayer meetings.
The Sabbath atmosphere is favorable for these meetings.

Appendix E

How to Pray With Power

Jansen Trotman

MOST CHRISTIANS know that we should pray, but many do not know that there are definite principles we must follow for our prayers to be most effective. Even the disciples of Jesus realized that there was something missing in their prayers, so they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. “Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’ ” (Luke 11:1).

What are the basic principles of how to make our prayers more acceptable to God and therefore more powerful?

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray aright. “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).
2. Study what the Word of God has to say about your specific need or desire, and pray God’s Word back to Him (e.g.: Phil. 4:19; Deut. 33:13; Prov. 3:5, 6).
3. Be as specific as possible (Neh. 1:11; Luke 18:41; Ps. 51:14).
4. Claim specific promises of God (1 Kings 8:56; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Pet. 1:4).
5. Visualize the presence of God. He is a real, personal Being (Acts 17:27, 28; Exod. 3:1–5; Gen. 28:16, 17).

6. Keep focused and control wandering thoughts (James 1:6–8; 5:16; Isa. 26:3, 4).
7. Persevere in prayer. Do not give up too soon (Luke 18:1–8; Gen. 32:26).
8. Pray in faith, believing that God will fulfill His promise (Mark 5:35, 36; 9:23, 24; Heb. 4:16; 11:6).
9. Submit to God's will. He is too wise and loving to always give us what we want (Dan. 2:20; 2 Cor. 12:7–10; Rom. 11:33; 1 John 5:14).
10. Come to God in humility (Luke 18:9–14; Ps. 34:18; 51:16, 17; 138:6).
11. Pray in the name of Jesus, in the Spirit of Jesus, having the mind of Jesus (John 14:13, 14; 16:23, 24; 20:31; Prov. 18:10).
12. Come before God with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. 24:3, 4; 66:18; Isa. 59:1, 2; 1:15; James 4:8).
13. Forgive anyone who has injured or troubled you in anyway (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15; Eph. 4:31, 32).
14. Sometimes you may need the support of others in prayer (James 5:13–16; Matt. 18:20).
15. Sometimes a matter may be of so great importance that you should fast along with your praying (Mark 9:29; Neh. 9:1; Esther 4:15, 16; Dan. 9:3).

One thing is certain, God loves to hear and answer the prayers of His children. If we make time and find the words to pray, our heavenly Father will answer. “The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth” (Ps. 145:18).

Appendix F

My Love Letter to Jesus

Using the ACTS formula explained below, take a few minutes to write a love letter to Jesus.

A—Adoration: Let Him know why you think He is so wonderful. The Psalms might help.

C—Confession: Tell Him the things you have done that may have disappointed Him and the things you have not done that you should have.

T—Thanksgiving: Think of the many blessings He has given you.

S—Supplication: This is the part for the requests that you would like Him to grant for you or your family and friends.

Dear Jesus,

Your loving child,



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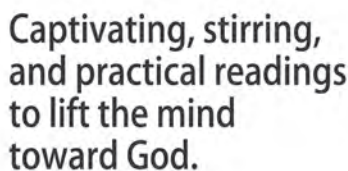
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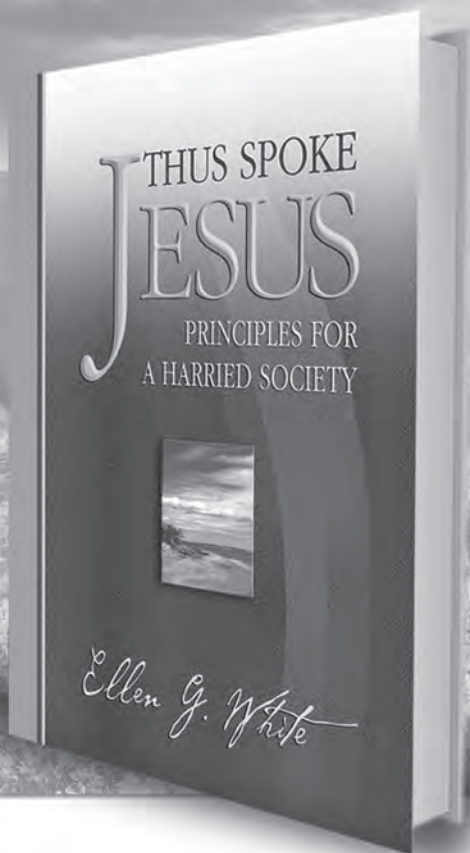
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