

WHITE WING
MESSENGER
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

JANUARY 2024

PRAY WITH BELIEVERS AROUND THE WORLD



ONE

PRAYER

21 Days of Prayer

*Powerful Prayer Devotions
from Global Christian Leaders*

- The Church Was Earnestly Praying

- Prayer as Spiritual Discipline

UNITE IN DAILY PRAYER

with Believers Around the World



ONE PRAYER



CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

21 Days of Prayer

January 8–28, 2024

Something Incredible Happens When We Pray!

Visit HousesOfPrayer.Global for global prayer directives.



HOUSES
of **PRAYER**
Global Prayer Initiative 

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FACING FORWARD

Twenty-One Days of Prayer / January 8–28, 2024

The Church of God of Prophecy around the world is once again beginning the new year with 21 Days of Prayer. Imagine a great multitude praying together from every nation, tribe, people, and language. We may not be in the same room, the same city, or even the same nation, yet we can pray together with one voice, united in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:5-6).

Scripture describes these prayers of God’s people as “golden bowls full of incense” (Revelation 5:8). Filling these golden bowls is not the task of any one individual. Each prayer that we pray is mixed with the prayers of God’s people around the world. When you pray for a lost loved one, you are not praying alone. When you pray for healing, you are not praying alone. When you pray that God will heal our land, you are not praying alone. When you pray that the world will be reconciled through the power of the Holy Spirit, you are not praying alone. Every prayer that you pray is multiplied exponentially by the prayers of God’s people everywhere, as together, we fill the golden bowls with incense.

Consider these two benefits of engaging in 21 Days of Prayer:

First, it will reinforce the practice of spiritual rhythms.

As the calendar rolls to the start of another year, it is not uncommon to make New Year’s resolutions, to set goals that we hope to achieve. In his book *Atomic Habits*, James Clear explains the difference between systems and goals, saying, “Goals are about the results you want to achieve. Systems are about the processes that lead to those results.” He goes on to say that winners and losers have the same goals. We concentrate on the people who end up winning and mistakenly assume that ambitious goals led to their success, while overlooking all of the people who had the same objective but did not succeed. Every Olympian wants to win a gold medal. Every candidate wants to get the job. If successful and unsuccessful people share the same goals, then the goal cannot be what differentiates the winners from



Tim Coalter
Presiding Bishop

the losers. It is only when they implement a system of continuous small improvements that they achieve a different outcome.

Perhaps you share the goal of having power with God and with men, as Jacob did in Genesis 32:28, yet the system needed to arrive at your goal is lacking. You read where Daniel prayed three times a day, yet you can’t seem to find your spiritual rhythm. The good intentions you have to pray regularly are frustrated by lack of follow-through. Your participation in 21 Days of Prayer can help you implement a consistent system which can lead you to your goal.

Second, it will reignite a hunger for more of God.

A few years ago, Lay’s Potato Chips launched the advertising campaign: “Bet you can’t eat just one!” More than just a clever slogan, it’s true. It is difficult to eat just one chip. You open the bag and, before you know it, you have somehow eaten the whole bag.

Prayer has the same effect. The more you pray, the more you want to pray. The more you eat at his table, the more you want to eat. The more you drink of the invigorating, refreshing, thirst-quenching living water, the more you want to drink. The familiar worship lyric by Jesus Culture captures this spiritual craving for more:

*Set a fire down in my soul
That I can’t contain, I can’t control
I want more of You, God
I want more of You, God*

If you are hungry for more of God, I suggest reading *The Practice of the Presence of God*, a book of collected teachings by Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century monk who was preoccupied with cultivating a keen sensitivity to the presence of God in everyday life. Practice the presence of God. Seek him, and you will find him. Hunger for him, and you will be filled. The more of God you get, the more of him you will want.

During these 21 Days of Prayer, make it your determination to join with the saints in filling the golden bowls of incense!



ONE PRAYER

From the Editor:

Years ago, when the Church of God of Prophecy gathered for a meeting or convention or Assembly, it was our practice to pray in “concert prayer.” Some places still do. One reason we all prayed in unison was to signify that no one person was esteemed to be higher or more important than any other person. Another reason may have been that we knew the power of God’s people praying together.

This issue of the *White Wing Messenger* is focused on prayer, specifically the COGOP’s 21-day Global Prayer Emphasis event that is scheduled for January 8 through 28. The pages of this magazine are filled with devotions from a wonderful guide for our prayer journey entitled, *One Prayer*. This power-packed book is being sent all over the world in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Russian so that the Church of God of Prophecy and others can pray in concert.

The printed magazine only contains 12 prayer devotions because we have a set number of pages. We included the devotions written by our presiding bishop, general presbyters, and a few other writers. The beautiful thing is, the digital magazine has no such limitation. All 21 devotions will be in our digital January magazine which you can access at no charge on the Church of God of Prophecy (Official) Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/cogop/> or our church website, www.cogop.org. If you would like to obtain the *One Prayer* booklet at no charge, go to www.HousesOfPrayer.global.

Let’s pray together!

ONE PRAYER: 21-Day Devotional

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The Church Was Earnestly Praying

Brian T. Sutton

Acts 12:1-17

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. (Acts 12:5-7 NIV)

When the church prays, miracles happen, not because of our power, but because of God's power. Acts 12 reveals the incredible miracle of a prison being opened with only the force of the Holy Spirit freeing the apostle Peter as the church prayed for him. God's invitation remains for the church to pray and experience his miraculous power today.

There was a great sense of urgency for the church to pray fervently for Peter, since he was being held under Herod, who had just had James killed. The church gathered for prayer in the home of Mary. They could have all prayed individually on this night, in their own dwellings, but they didn't. They modeled for the church of today God's invitation for us to pray together. Connected prayer affords the church the opportunity to lean on God and one another as a source of faith, hope, and expectancy.



Brian Sutton serves as the North America general presbyter and global prayer liaison for the Church of God of Prophecy, leading the Houses of Prayer global prayer initiative. He served more than twenty-five years as a senior pastor and holds a Doctor of Ministry degree global Pentecostalism from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is the author of several books including *Conversation with God: The Power of Prevailing Prayer*, available at conversationwithgodbook.com. He and his wife Renee are blessed with a daughter and son-in-law (Taylor and Chris), a son and daughter-in-law (Will and Hannah), and two beautiful grand-daughters (Emery and Maddie).

BISHOP BRIAN T. SUTTON, DMIN | NORTH AMERICA GENERAL PRESBYTER

As Peter spent this evening in prison, he was sleeping between two soldiers while sentries stood guard at the entrance. Peter sleeping denotes trust in God and the prayers of the church. He was confident the church was praying for him. Though Peter was asleep, the church was awake and praying. Peter took the posture of trust while the church took the posture of God, who never slumbers or sleeps (Psalm 121:4). Peter's faith in God and the prayers of the church was most likely very secure since he had already seen God deliver him from jail at least once (Acts 5).

The posture of the church was leaning into God and interceding. There was absolutely no thought in the church to "let things work out on their own" or "God will work this out no matter what we do." The church was crying out to God in the act of intercession and participation.

The prayer actions of the church were and are vital. Worship, evangelism, service, and discipleship all play critical roles in the life of the church, but Jesus proclaimed his house would be a house of prayer (Mark 11:17) for a purpose. Ministry to others flows from connection with God. God's work in the world is ongoing, vibrant, and alive. The prayers of the church enliven us to participate in his work and surrender ourselves to his mission. When the church intercedes, we acknowledge our worth to God. He cares about us and our needs. Interceding together for needs is a pattern of life in the New Testament church and is our model to follow.

As a pastor, I have seen the greatest ministries of my church flow out of times of connected prayer. When believers pray together, we connect to the plan of God. Prayer gives us insight into God's mission. It gives us opportunities for discernment that will maintain our place in God's work rather than taking his place. In a prayer meeting, we not only participate in what God is doing, we have the opportunity to be encouraged by communion in prayer with others. Like logs placed on a fire together to make it burn hotter, when we unite in prayer together, the fire of God will burn within us. God delights in his people praying together. The life and ministry of Christ and the New Testament church is marked by prayer more than worship, service, or even miracles, because those actions flowed from their prayer lives.

Acts is an incredible story of how the gospel of Jesus turned the world upside down through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our passage about the prison opening for Peter illustrates how the church captured that power in prayer. When we reach to God before we reach to humanity, humanity is touched with the power of God.

I cannot tell you that Peter would have died in prison if the church would not have prayed for him, and I do not have to consider that because they did pray collectively. However, I can rest assured that the prayer of the church for Peter was a pivotal part of his miraculous release, so pivotal that Luke includes it in this amazing story.

When we gather in prayer, we gather in expectation of God working. When the church prays collectively, in expectation of God's will and kingdom coming, we will not be surprised when our Apostle Peter is rescued from prison and appears to us. This type of prayerful expectation will lead us to throw open the door and say, "Come on inside! We were expecting you!"

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

For the next 21 days, the global church will pray collectively. I hope you will follow this 21-day, *One Prayer* daily prayer devotional and join your prayers with the saints of God around the world. This resource is translated into English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Though time and space (among other factors) will prohibit us from gathering in one place at one time, we can collectively gather our hearts as one, praying in one accord, for God's purposes. For today's prayer directive, please pray for local churches around the world to become houses of prayer for all nations. Pray for local church prayer leaders. Pray for protection and provision for the church in places of the world where they gather to pray under persecution. Join in prayer for ministry to flow from these collective prayer gatherings. Wouldn't it be incredible if every congregation around the world gathered to pray at least one hour every week? This would represent an incredible number of hours of prayer each year. I believe it can happen. Let's pray for it!

Behold the Lamb

Samuel Rodriguez



The choices we make today will impact our lives tomorrow. The choices we make and how we relate to the Lamb of God determine our destiny in this life and the next. How do you behold the Lamb of God? For how you behold the Lamb will change how you view all of life. When we view the Lamb as the One who sits upon the throne, we will live our life from that place of authority and power. And because he is on the throne, reigning supreme over all things, he is our hope that all things are going to work “for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

We have the choice to believe or not believe, to follow a dream or succumb to a nightmare, to lift our heads or walk in sorrow, to stay in the desert or march toward the Promised Land. We have a choice to live by faith or walk by sight, to look back or push forward, to stay silent because of sin or shout for joy because of grace.

This is the choice that Abraham made when he stood determined to climb with his sacrifice, hoping for the lamb. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, who carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, “Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ And he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’” (Genesis 22:7).

What We Carry Today Will Be Our Bed Tomorrow

Isaac carried the wood to the very place to which he would be bound in a short while. We should ask ourselves, what are we carrying? The fact is that what we carry up will determine what we bring down. What we carry today will be our bed tomorrow. If we carry bitterness, we will lie on bitterness. If we carry hatred, we will be bound to hatred. If we carry envy, we will lie on envy.

Yet if we carry joy, if we carry peace, if we carry love, if we carry righteousness, we will rest on joy, peace, love, and righteousness in the Holy Ghost. In essence, we will rest in the bounty of the kingdom of God.

Where Is the Lamb?

Isaac then asked a critical question, “I see the fire, I see the wood, but where is the Lamb?” Sometimes, we find ourselves asking the same question, God, I prayed. I fasted. I confessed, but where is the answer? And just like with Abraham, the answer is that God will provide.

Where is the lamb? For two thousand years, humanity asked the same question and then the answer came through John: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus is the Lamb.

Even today, humanity cries out, “Where is the Lamb?” From all strata of society, men and women, children, and elders cry out for the Lamb. Let us rise and respond with the answer of John the Baptist, “Behold! The Lamb of God.” God is now looking



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REVEREND SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ | PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL HISPANIC CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

for men and women who will not only declare the identity of the Lamb and the provision of the Lamb, but who will hold on to the certainty of the Lamb's agenda so that they desire to do what's right even amid criticism, persecution, and possibly imprisonment or death.

The Lamb Is on the Throne

Let this generation shake off the shackles of complacency and mediocrity while declaring, "Behold the Lamb! Behold the Lamb who brings forth righteousness and justice. Behold the Lamb who activates sanctification and service. Behold the Lamb who reconciles the message with the march, holiness with humility, and truth with love."

The apostle John saw the Lamb seated on the throne. Not only did the Father provide the Lamb, but he also seated the Lamb on the throne, which means the Lamb rules and governs. As long as the Lamb is on the throne, there is hope.

On a trip to Israel, I visited an olive tree farm. The director of the farm and surrounding campground pointed to an olive tree and asked me to guess the age of the tree. I responded, "One or two hundred years old." She replied, "That tree is somewhere between fifteen hundred and two thousand years old." I asked, "How can a tree survive that long?" She quickly replied, "That tree has experienced fires and droughts, and it still stands. Simply, the roots are embedded within the rock. As long as the rock does not move, that tree will live."

Christ is our Rock. As long as our rock, the Lamb, is on the throne, we have hope for our nation, hope for our children, hope for our faith, and hope for humanity. As long as the Lamb is on the throne, faith, hope, and charity will live.

The Lamb Is Our Hope

An angel tells us the Lamb is capable of opening what others cannot open (Revelation 5:5). The Lamb produces a new song sung by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in heaven (5:9). In Revelation, we learn of the survivors, who triumphed in their battle against Satan "by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (12:11).

The Lamb's agenda opens the book and reveals the truth. The Lamb's agenda produces a new song, the song of the redeemed. The Lamb's agenda enables us to overcome, for we cannot dance in the Promised Land until we learn to sing in the desert.

Therefore, let us press forward with the agenda of the Lamb. Let us speak to the barrio and Beverly Hills, to those on Wall Street and Main Street, to all in this generation tired of partisan politics, tired of archaic nomenclature, tired of discord and strife, but hungry for righteousness and justice. To you I say, let us stand up and declare, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of all humanity."

"TO HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE AND TO THE LAMB BE PRAISE AND HONOR AND GLORY AND POWER, FOR EVER AND EVER!" (REVELATION 5:13).

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Acknowledge God as the all-knowing, ever-present, and all-powerful God.

Ask God to give you spiritual eyes to see his will and faith to follow his plan for your life. Pray for strength to release any bitterness, hatred, envy, or unforgiveness you may have toward someone else, and embrace God's joy, peace, love, and righteousness in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for God to give you spiritual eyes to see the sovereignty and grace he gives to others. Pray for his anointing to empower you to surrender to his agenda of grace and share the hope of his plan and love with others.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that you sit on the throne and rule as Lord and Creator. Because you reign, we will not fear. Because you are sovereign over all, we walk in faith. Please grant us your grace to surrender our lives to the work of your kingdom and to share your love and hope with those around us.

Pray About Everything

Tim Coalter

Do the words of a song, a commercial jingle, or a particular phrase ever get stuck in your head? Like a never-ending loop, it repeats itself over and over again. Today, allow your mind to dwell on these three words—pray about everything. Such a simple phrase, yet it has the potential to remove your anxiety and give you peace.

As Paul was writing to the believers at Philippi, he encouraged them with these words: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6).

Prayer carries the idea of adoration and worship. Jesus taught his disciples to begin in this manner: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matthew 6:9). To hallow is to worship, exalt, honor, and adore. Centering your thoughts on the Lord will lift you above the clouds of anxiety so that you can see the majesty of the Lord in his fullness. This was the view David described as he lifted his gaze above the clouds:

“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. 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 Chronicles 29:11–12).

Magnify the Lord, knowing that he is greater than all your problems and bigger than all your fears. Supplication is the cry of your heart. In 1894, E. A. Hoffman penned the lyrics to this hymn about prayer:

*I must tell Jesus all of my trials;
I cannot bear these burdens alone;
In my distress, He kindly will help me;
He ever loves and cares for His own.
I must tell Jesus all of my troubles;
He is a kind, compassionate friend;
If I but ask Him, He will deliver,
Make of my troubles quickly an end.*

What do you need today? Just ask Jesus.



Bishop Tim Coalter was selected and accepted by one accord to serve as the presiding bishop of the Church God of Prophecy at the 101st International Assembly in 2022. Before being selected to this office, he and his wife, Kelly, served twenty-eight years in pastoral ministry before being appointed as state bishop of South Carolina in 2009. At the 2014 International Assembly, he was recommended and selected to serve as the North America general presbyter. He and Kelly reside in Cleveland, Tennessee, and have been blessed with three children and eight grandchildren.

PRESIDING BISHOP TIM COALTER | CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

Scripture very simple indicates, “We have not because we ask not” (James 4:2)

Thanksgiving is the prayerful response to God’s goodness. What parent does not welcome a heartfelt “thank you” from their child? Surely, our heavenly Father takes joy in our thankfulness. Do you think he doesn’t notice? He certainly took note when he healed the ten lepers, yet only one returned to give thanks (Luke 17:11–19).

Pray about everything. Take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there. Give him your greatest concerns as well

as those things which seem rather insignificant. Nothing is too big or too small. He knows what you need even before you ask. As you fill the atmosphere with adoration, supplication, and thanksgiving, anxiety will have no room to flourish.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). The word “guard” used by Paul is a military term implying that peace stands on duty to keep anxiety at bay. This peace does not have its origin in the power of positive thinking, mind over matter, or a trouble-free life. Rather, it is given freely from the One whom Isaiah ascribed as the Prince of Peace. Before leaving his disciples and ascending to the Father, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Jesus is inviting you to live today and every day free from anxiety. Go ahead and give it a try . . .
PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING!

Do not fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, allowing God to know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together

for good, will come and settle your heart and mind. It is wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life (Philippians 4:6–7 MSG).

TODAY’S PRAYER FOCUS

Thank God for the opportunity to pray about everything.

Reflect on circumstances you are facing that make you anxious. Pray, asking the Lord to take those circumstances into his hands. Submit your requests to the Father with thanksgiving, knowing how much he loves you and desires to work in and through you, revealing Christ as the center focus of your life, not your troubling circumstances.

As you pray, focus further on the greatness of God. Worship and magnify the Lord for his greatness, power, and incredible love for us. Recognize the goodness of God is his motive in all he does in our lives. Through worship, receive God’s peace that surpasses all understanding. Jesus invites you to live in his peace. Receive his embrace and kindness today as you release worry, fear, and anxiety to God.

TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for leaning down to hear us. We praise you for your goodness, and we approach you with thanksgiving from the depths of our hearts. You are worthy of our worship. Your goodness is beyond comprehension.

Today, I surrender all my anxiety and worry. I am blessed that you care for me and desire for me to live in your peace and loving care for me. Father, open my spiritual eyes to your incredible love for me. Transform my heart and make me an instrument of your peace, so I may share with others all you share with me.

He Prays for Us and Longs for Us to Pray with Him

Stormie Omartian and Jack Hayford

God wants each of us to become an intercessor. An intercessor is someone who steps into the gap between God's righteousness and man's failure and, through prayer, brings the merits of the cross to bear upon people and situations.

God wants each one of us to become a member of an army. His army! God is commander-in-chief of this army, and the weapons of choice are prayer, praise, and the Word of God. That's because "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh..." (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). No enemy can stand against these weapons; unless, of course, the enemy convinces us that our weapons are powerless, and we stop using them.

God's army is an all-volunteer organization, so we must enlist. We must tell God we want to be a part of his army of prayer warriors and ask him to put us on high alert so we can be mobilized at a moment's notice. The best part about being in God's army is that he goes with

us into every battle. He says, "Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is he who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (Deuteronomy 20:3-4). He tells us to pray, worship him, and declare his Word, and he will do the rest because "the battle is the LORD's" (1 Samuel 17:47).

You may be saying to yourself, "How can I make a difference in this world?" I'm just one person." But when Samuel prayed on behalf of Israel as the Philistines attacked them, "the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel" (1 Samuel 7:10). Every prayer you pray brings confusion upon the enemy too. If the enemy seems to be winning more and more in our land, it is because we have taken ourselves out of the battle by not praying.



Stormie Omartian is the best-selling author of *The Power of a Praying* series with more than 38 million books sold worldwide. In high demand as an international speaker, Stormie's passion is to help people know God and love him in a deep way. A survivor of child abuse, Stormie brings a deep understanding of recovery issues to her work.

STORMIE OMARTIAN | AUTHOR OF *THE POWER OF A PRAYING* SERIES



Jack Hayford was the founding pastor of the Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, and the chancellor of the King's College and Seminary in Los Angeles. A bestselling author and songwriter, Pastor Hayford penned more than four dozen books and 600 hymns and choruses, including "Majesty." He and his late wife, Anna, had four children and eleven grandchildren.

JACK HAYFORD | AUTHOR, SONGWRITER, AND FORMER PASTOR

We are not going to change our world by employing political strategies. The world will only be changed in one realm, and that is the spiritual realm. That is why the Bible says we are not wrestling with flesh and blood. Prayer alone will bring a spiritual renewal that will change our world. We need to move as people who recognize our time has come and say, "God, we will take this hour, this moment, and move in prayer with power."

The enemy always tries to keep us distracted with one battle after another in our own personal lives. Battles over our finances, health, work, children, minds, emotions, marriages, relationships, or whatever front he is attacking us on can be so all-consuming that we don't have time for much else. I know that he wants us so preoccupied with personal battles that we are always fighting defensively. That way he can wear us out.

Where we go wrong is that we fight from battle to battle and never really enter the war. We think that when we win one battle, we have won the war, and so we stop fighting. On the other side of that, sometimes when we lose a battle, we feel we have lost the entire war, and so we give up. What we must realize is that the war is never over!

The triumph Jesus won when he said, "It is finished" (John 19:30) broke the power of sin, death, and hell once and for all. However, that victory awaits application on earth—and prayer is the warrior's strategy by way of God's assignment. The conflict will not be over until we go to be with the Lord. That is why we must learn to go on the offensive in prayer instead of waiting until something happens and then trying to defend ourselves.

Do you know how fervently you pray when something goes wrong in your life? Well, God

wants us to pray that fervently all the time. He wants us to intercede every day with the same degree of passion we have when we are in the middle of a crisis. The peace that God would like to give us depends upon us doing that.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Praise God as the Lord of hosts and acknowledge his sovereign power and authority.

Tell God that you wish to be a part of his army of prayer warriors and ask him to place you on high alert to be mobilized at a moment's notice. Surrender any personal battles to God. In faith, receive this promise: "The Lord your God is he who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (Deuteronomy 20:4).

Engage in purposeful prayer today and commit to discerning the needs around you, the needs in the body of Christ, and the needs of the world. Engage in fervent intercession for these needs throughout the day. Become a part of the global prayer force involved in spiritual warfare for the sake of the kingdom of God. Your prayer contribution matters in the work of God!

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, we surrender ourselves completely to you and the work of your kingdom. Thank you for your invitation to join you in prayer and be a part of your victorious reign. Please empower our life of communion, confession, and conversation with you. Strengthen our times of prayer and reveal your heart to us as we intercede for the needs of the world and those around us.

The Divine Echo

Tim McCaleb

When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Psalm 27:8).

This verse is often referred to as the divine echo. As God speaks, his words vibrate in the heart of the psalmist who echoes them back to God. It is a prayer of the deep (the Spirit of God) calling to the deep (the heart of man) to seek the face of God. The heart of prayer is answering the God of prayer, and this is the pattern that all the great prayers of the Bible follow. God speaks, and the man or woman of God hears and then prays those words back to God in a divine echo!

Jacob heard the Lord say, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you" (Genesis 31:3). Although when he returned, Jacob encountered many difficulties with the most serious being Esau's coming to meet him with four hundred men. His immediate prayer, which resulted in a great blessing, was an echo of God's words to him.

Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you'" (Genesis 32:9). In these passages, God called Jacob to return, Jacob prayed those words back to God, and God answered. God's calling to Jacob gave him the strength to respond in a wrestling of prayer that lasted all night until he received God's spoken promise.

In a great confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, a significant spiritual battle was won by Elijah as he prayed down fire and later rain (1 Kings 18). Yet, God first called Elijah. "The word of the Lord came to Elijah... 'Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth'" (v. 1). When God called Elijah to pray for rain, Elijah began echoing that prayer until God heard and answered with a mighty outpouring.



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Echoing prayer involves developing an ear to hear the voice of the Spirit. David wrote: "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of your waterfalls" (Psalm 42:7). In other words, the deep things of God call to the deep things in me. The pattern is clear. God calls; I respond in prayer; he responds to my cry, and I respond again in a never-ending spiritual dance. In his teaching on prayer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that children learn to speak by repeating their parents' words to them, and we learn to pray by repeating the words of the Father to him. Deep prayer is a relational rhythm of listening and speaking!

The ability to hear God's voice is developed in seclusion while sitting quietly with him in meditation and reading the Scripture. Jesus used the wilderness to be alone with the Father, and he also instructed us to find a private place such as a closet for prayer. Peter found his solitude on a housetop where the Spirit spoke to him (Acts 10). The Lord instructed Peter to not count anything that he had cleansed as unclean or common. Peter answered, and the result was God baptizing the first Gentiles with the Holy Spirit.

Initially, this type of praying can be difficult because we live in an environment of phones, social media, television, radio, and constant noise, but it is a necessary discipline. As we attempt to quiet our spirits, we will inevitably be distracted. When this happens and we recognize that our minds have strayed, we lay those distracting thoughts aside or write them down, and we draw our minds back to quietness. Most of the time, we may not hear God say anything specifically, but then unexpectedly, he speaks to the inner man, revealing truth, correction, or guidance. We must echo those words to God in prayer, embracing them and accepting them as our own. Until he speaks, nothing is lost as one sits

quietly with him and meditates on his loveliness.

Learning to listen in prayer and echoing God's Word to him is a rich and rewarding experience. Prayer is not as effective when all we do is lay our desires before God without first hearing his concerns. Like Jacob, Elijah, Jesus, and others in the Bible, we pray best when we learn to listen to God first. Echoing prayer is transformational prayer, and those who will slow down and dare to practice it will be greatly changed. He that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says!

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Begin with offering praise to the Lord that He still speaks to his children. How is God speaking to you in meditation, his Word, and prayer? Have you heard his voice or felt his leading recently? Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you spiritual ears to clearly hear God's voice. Ask the Lord to draw you into deeper intimacy and relationship with him. Spend time today in solitude, even if only for a short time, and listen for God's voice.

What have you heard God say to you that you may echo back to him through conversational prayer? Open your heart to God. Honestly and completely share with him what you are hearing and feeling from him. Have you received promises from God? Pray those promises to him in faith, knowing that his will and timing are perfect.

Life in the Spirit

Francis Chan

May our desire to experience more of the Holy Spirit be our starting point, not our endgame. And may we open our hearts and lives to his presence and action more fully than we have ever done before. By the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, we can be a people who live a life of transformation and power—a life that clearly points to the One who deserves all our praise.

You might think that calling the Holy Spirit the “forgotten God” is a bit extreme. Maybe you agree that the church has focused too much attention elsewhere but feel it is an exaggeration to say we have forgotten about the Spirit. I don’t think so.

From my perspective, the Holy Spirit is tragically neglected and, for all practical purposes, forgotten. While no evangelical would deny his existence, I’m willing to bet millions of churchgoers cannot confidently say they have experienced his presence or action in their lives over the past year. And many of them do not believe they can.

A big gap exists between what we read in Scripture about the Holy Spirit and how most believers and churches operate today. In many modern churches, you would be stunned

by the apparent absence of the Spirit in any manifest way. I believe this is the crux of the problem.

If I were Satan, and my ultimate goal was to thwart God’s kingdom and purposes, one of my main strategies would be to get churchgoers to ignore the Holy Spirit. The degree to which this has happened (and I would argue that it is a prolific disease in the body of Christ) is directly connected to the dissatisfaction most of us feel with and in the church. We understand something very important is missing. The feeling is so strong that some have run away from the church and God’s Word completely.

I believe that this missing something in our church experience is actually a missing Someone—namely, the Holy Spirit. Without him, people operate in their strength and only accomplish human-size results. The world is not moved by love or actions that are of human creation, and the church is not empowered to live differently from any other gathering of people without the Holy Spirit. Yet when believers live in the power of the Spirit, the evidence in their lives is supernatural. The church cannot help but be different, and the world cannot help but notice.



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My prayer is that your changed life would produce this kind of astonishment: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

No matter what religious tradition you come from, you likely carry baggage and harbor stereotypes related to the Holy Spirit. Lay aside your baggage and stereotypes, so you can be open to what God wants to teach you. Are you willing to do that?

Some people talk a lot about—even boast of—the Spirit, but their lives do not bear his fruit. Others speak of the Holy Spirit in theoretical or scholarly terms, yet do not experience him at work. Still others ignore him for all practical purposes and, as you might expect, rarely experience relationship or intimacy with the Spirit. Then, we encounter that rare person who doesn’t talk frequently about the Spirit, yet whose life is a powerful display of his presence and activity.

Some of you would like it if I said we were going to find a healthy balance between unhealthy extremes. That is not what we are going to do. Seeking a “healthy balance” of the Holy Spirit assumes that some have too much Holy Spirit and others have too little. I have yet to meet anyone with too much Holy Spirit. Granted, I’ve met many who talk about him too much, but none who are actually overfilled with his presence.

As believers, we can never be “done” with God. He is infinite, and we are finite. There will always be more of his character to discover, more of his love to experience, and more of his power to use for his purposes.

Perhaps the core issue is really about our holding back from giving ourselves to God, rather than our getting “too much” of him. Maybe when a person says, “I’d just like a little God, thank you very much,” she or he is really saying, “I’d rather not give the parts of my life that I really care about over to God, so I’ll just hold on to this, that, oh, and that, too.”

The believer’s life doesn’t work that way. When I read Scripture, I see the truth and necessity of a life wholly surrendered to and dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that his words were not “wise and persuasive” but rather a “demonstration of the power” so that their faith “might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:4–5 NIV). Later in the same letter, he reiterates that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (4:20 NIV).

I am tired of merely talking about God. I want to see God move through me and through the worldwide body of Christ. I know there’s more. We all know there’s more. God has called us to more through the presence and strength of the Holy Spirit. There’s more of the Spirit and more of God than any of us is experiencing.

I want to go there—not just intellectually, but in life, with everything that I am.
(Philippians 4:6–7 MSG).

TODAY’S PRAYER FOCUS

How is the Holy Spirit drawing you into deeper intimacy with God? Pray for a life lived in the fullness of the Holy Spirit that points to Jesus. Pray to surrender your life to the work and person of the Holy Spirit so that you may live in his strength and participate in God’s mission of reconciling the world to Christ. Pray for deeper intimacy and relationship with God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Intercede for a fresh demonstration of the Holy Spirit in the life of your church. Petition God to use your gifts to encourage, strengthen, and bless others in the body of Christ as you fully surrender to his purpose.

Pray for the global body of Christ to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit drawing believers together in unity of heart as we participate in the fulfillment of God’s mission.

"Show Me Your Glory, I Pray"

David Wells

In Exodus, we read of this passionate cry by Moses in response to the Lord's affirmation of him: "And the Lord said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing you have asked because I am pleased with you, and I know you by name.' Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory'" (33:17–18).

This affirmation of Moses takes place in the middle of a very challenging season in his life and leadership. Moses along with his brother Aaron are on a mission to lead God's covenant people to the land of promise so that they may reveal YHWH to the nations. The Almighty blessed his people of promise with the experience of their exodus (deliverance through the Red Sea), provision (miraculous bread and water), and the awesome presence of God on Mount Sinai (where the law is given).

Yet, something happens in the middle of their God-given mission during which they have been experiencing the glorious presence of God. Impatience sets in, and their arrogance takes over. It leads to idolatry—evidenced by a golden calf that they worship and party around.

The Lord intervenes in the middle of a meeting with Moses and the giving of the Law.

He reveals that idolatry is occurring, and in response to his wrath, judgment must follow. Moses shares in the experience of anger and despair. He smashes the two tablets and expresses his shock at the behavior of Aaron and others. Judgment does occur. The question is asked, "Who is on the Lord's side?" The 3,000 who are not on his side are executed.

The time comes to depart from Mount Sinai. The golden calf debacle leads to the Almighty suggesting that Moses and the people may be going alone. Moses intercedes, for the Lord's glory to be revealed and his purposes to be fulfilled. Don't destroy the people of promise! His passionate concern is whether the Lord's presence will accompany them on the wilderness journey, so he appeals for the Lord to go with them and to show him his glory. Moses will not go alone.

In times when the people of God face great spiritual challenges, the call to fulfill our mission for God remains. But we cannot go alone. To fulfill the mission we are called to, we must be conscious of our need for the Lord's glorious presence and power and be understanding of his character and goodness.



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The revelation that Moses receives is not only one of presence and power but also a divine revelation of God's character and the resulting actions he demonstrates.

So, Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. He then rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him. He took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

The Lord descended in the cloud, stood with Moses, and proclaimed the name of the Lord as he passed before his servant: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:4–7).

In Rabbinic Judaism, "The Thirteen Attributes of God" (vv. 6–7) are adopted into the liturgy of Jewish prayer in which YHWH's glorious name is exalted along with his character and goodness.

From his name (1–3):

1. YHWH
2. YHWH
3. EL

Flow his attributes and actions (4–13):

4. Merciful (compassionate)
5. Gracious
6. Long-suffering (slow to anger)
7. Abundant in goodness
8. Abundant in truth
9. Keeping mercy to the thousandth generation
10. Forgiving iniquity (wickedness)
11. Forgiving transgression (rebellion)
12. Forgiving sin
13. Will by no means clear the guilty

To not receive from the Lord his mercy, truth, and forgiveness means guilt remains—the choice is ours! In the face of the rebellion and idolatry of our age, the Lord still calls his

servants to his mission and purpose. As the Moses/Aaron/Joshua/Calebs of our generation, we cannot do so in our power nor be motivated by anger and arrogance. We must have the Lord's glorious presence and power with us as we proclaim his name and demonstrate his character and goodness that we have personally experienced.

"Show me Your glory, I Pray."

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Begin by thanking God for his promise to dwell with his people. Praise him that you not only have his promises but can experience his abiding presence.

Ask the Father to reveal himself and his purposes in your life, in this season. Fully surrender yourself to his purposes and plan, through this time of seeking.

Prayerfully ask God to enable you to know his heart more fully so that you might see his mission in his world and your community. Lean in to receive God's power in your life. Rest in the blessing and promise of his divine presence.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for leaning down to Lord, we thank you for your presence in our lives. We praise you that you are a God who can be felt and experienced. Your presence gives us the greatest joy!

Heavenly Father, we are dependent upon you. You alone are the source of our strength and life. As your people, we are committed to your mission and plan not just for our personal lives but for your world.

Dwell with us as we journey each day in the fulfillment of your mission. We pray like your servant Moses that we do not wish to journey without your abiding presence. Lead and guide us every step as we journey with you and your people.

Awakening from Slumber

Billy Wilson



*"I will not enter my house or go to my bed,
I will allow no sleep to my eyes, no slumber to
my eyelids, till I find a place for the LORD, a
dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob"
(Psalm 132:3-5).*

In many nations, the powerful anointing and passionate pursuit of God in the life of one person has been the beginning of an awakening. Prayer movements on college campuses or in small cottages have become the "dwelling place" of God's Spirit where fresh generations commit to a sacrificial love for God and his Word. The blood of Christian martyrs has served as a covenant commitment to God that awakens some regions of the world.

Scripture is filled with examples like Abram and Sarai, who remained true to God's covenant promises even when all hope seemed to have disappeared from the horizon. The early church disciples spread the truth even when doing so required their last breath and full measure of devotion to birth churches throughout the known world. These are only a few examples that confirm Jesus always seeks a people who will be fully committed to an uncommon, spiritual vigilance—men and women who will not let even the threat of torturous

death keep them from owning their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, we are left to wonder if he is finding them today.

Thankfully, we know the Spirit still calls and chooses a variety of people and places to awaken nations and people groups for Christ. The twentieth century began with God using a former Welsh coal miner and smithy, named Evan Roberts, who sought more of the Spirit of God and was influential in a revival that spread like wildfire all over Wales. A partially blind, uneducated son of former slaves, named William Seymour, trumpeted the message of Pentecost from a renovated livery stable on 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles. Great evangelists like Billy Graham, Reinhard Bonnke, and Oral Roberts, to name only a few, impacted millions around the globe with simple but powerfully anointed messages of salvation, Spirit baptism, and the miracle-working power of God.

We live in a world where spiritual slumber, post-pandemic lethargy, and compassion fatigue have overtaken thousands, plunging today's church into what many consider a season of apathy and ineffectiveness. Only a percentage of former congregants attend church on any given Sunday. Although technology has turned our world into a neighborhood, it has also revealed the entire world is a mission field. The NextGen have been



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born in a storm and lived through multiple storms, but they are awakening and being equipped to storm the gates of hell, restoring a biblical worldview, conquering generational division, driving back fear, and overcoming the negative public perception of the church, caused by the failure of numerous leaders.

Yes, the bad news is that the spiritual condition of our world is at a critical stage. However, the good news is that the church has been here before, and God has brought awakening and revival despite our drama and despair. He has triumphed amid trauma and brought a supernatural harvest from a formerly slumbering labor force.

If you cannot abide a church where mere habit and tradition are substituted for authentic, believing faith, then now is the time to respond to the Spirit's call for united, extraordinary, and persistent prayer. This is the season to restore pure, powerfully prophetic messages from awakened pastors and evangelists filling pulpits after having personal encounters in their prayer closets. More than ever before, we need EVERYONE of the people in the pews to become saints equipped for ministry and service in a hurting, broken, and slumbering world.

Each occurrence of national or continental revival will differ in terms of personalities and details, but one common denominator will always be evident—a sense of hunger, prayerful desperation, humility, and unified seeking God for deliverance. He has never failed to respond in power. That's why during obvious spiritual decline, we have reason for hope today. The pattern still holds true. The possibilities are sure enough to be claimed with passionate certainty. God's promise to Solomon at the dedication of the temple says it the most clearly (and famously): "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicle 7:13–14).

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Acknowledge and praise God for his Word: "... he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:3–4).

Pray that Christ will unite your heart with thousands of other Christians throughout the world in radical intercession for awakening in today's church. Invite the Holy Spirit to ignite, inspire, and lead you into targeted prayer so that the indicators of a true Christ awakening will be realized in every community, church, and region of your nation.

Recognizing the spiritual tide will not easily be turned, confess your willingness to embrace the required sacrifice and ask God for the courage to be ready to fight, decreeing the battle is the Lord's.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, in sincere humility I commit to you that I will refuse to slumber while many nations around the world risk the death of the Christian faith and influence as well as the loss of your blessings. Help me to be bold enough in this hour to step across the lines that sometimes divide your people and together we will boldly unite in persistent, prevailing prayer to make spiritual history in this time of desperate need. We are in need, but you, our God, are in heaven. Thank you that our true Christ awakening will come.

HOW TO PRAY

Pray, then, in this way:
"Our Father, who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven."
Matthew 6:9–10

Godly Sorrow: Key to Repentance

David Ferguson

Godly sorrow produces repentance is a certain promise, a bold declaration. In a day when true life change seems elusive and any Christlike distinction seems lost in our culture, this is good news indeed. While continuing to do the very things we don't want to do, the promise regarding repentance is refreshing (Romans 7:15).

Paul's burden for the Corinthians is not the outcome of repentance. What grips the apostle's heart is the godly sorrow that produces, prompts, and brings forth genuine repentance. He writes, "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:10–11).

An internal work of godly sorrow must occur before evidence of a changed life is seen. A deep, emotional work of the heart must precede changed behavior, attitude, and action. In his first letter, Paul challenged the Corinthians to a brokenness of heart. In his second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle rejoiced with the believers over the positive changes in their lives. Godly sorrow must have done its work in the lives of this early church!

In contrast to the sorrow of the world, godly sorrow is timeless and eternal. In this world, we experience tribulation and trials; struggles and losses take their toll. We constantly deal with the reality of rejection, regrets, disappointments, and pain. The good news is that we're not left alone on this journey. We have the Great High Priest who has gone before us (Hebrews 4:15), who was acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3), and he is even sitting at the right hand of God, interceding for us now (Hebrews 7:25).

Additionally, through the provision of divine comfort,

we can experience blessing amid our sorrows when we receive comfort from God and other people (Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 1:2–4). This sorrow, as deep and penetrating as it is, still can't compare to the power of godly sorrow.

So, what's the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow we experience in our world? First, godly sorrow is his sorrow. This kind of sorrow belongs to God, but it can be revealed, shared, and imparted to the attentive hearts of his children.

The Reason for Godly Sorrow

Godly sorrow speaks of his pain; God's heart actually feels sorrow. You may never have considered it, but our God has experienced the emotion of sorrow. Remember the pain of our heavenly Father as he was rejected by his created hosts (Isaiah 14:12–14)? Recall how our God was betrayed in the garden by the "very good" of his creation (Genesis 3). Remember how God was repeatedly forsaken and abandoned by his people (Exodus 32:7–10)? Surely a sorrow-filled heart was behind these words: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:5–6 NASB).

To experience godly sorrow means to share in the Father's pain—the pain of a loving Father who for us would:

- Watch him who knew no sin become sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Allow the perfect One to be wounded, bruised, and chastised (Isaiah 53:4–5).
- Hear his only Son utter these words: "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matthew 27:46).



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As we consider God's experiences of sorrow, it ought to soften our hearts with compassion and bring us to quiet brokenness. After all, why did God allow all the experiences described above? Gratefully, he did so for a relationship with you and me. God watched his son beaten and crucified and chose this great sorrow for our salvation. We then must ask why God had to send his Son to die and experience this great sorrow. Christ had to die for our sins. Therefore, it was our sin that contributed to God's sorrow. Our sin hurt Jesus, and it is our sin that has broken the heart of God. What a contrast! The world's sorrow focuses on our grief and what we've experienced. Godly sorrow shatters this self-focus, and challenges a heart to ponder: What have I done to the Father and his Son?

The Receiving of Godly Sorrow

The Father is ready to vulnerably reveal his heart and his pain, but he only trusts his sorrow-filled heart to those who can be still enough to know him. Those who are busy or preoccupied will miss him. Those who are cavalier or think lightly of their sin will not hear him. Sorrow is not a rational concept that is to be dissected, discussed, and debated as doctrine. It is a personal experience between the Father and a loved one, a tender issue of the heart, an emotional issue of the soul.

Godly sorrow comes by way of the Spirit's conviction and my confession. Only the Spirit can convict (John 16:8), and only I can confess (1 John 1:9; James 5:16). The Holy Spirit will fulfill his role of convicting me of selfishness, pride, disrespect, or other specific offenses toward God and others. Then comes our part—genuine confession. We must say the same thing about our selfishness, pride, or disrespect that the Father says. We must acknowledge more than mere intellectual agreement of wrongdoing or a volitional voicing of regret. Confession is our emotional expression of godly sorrow. With a humble spirit and a contrite heart, we voice our agreement with the Father's sorrow:

- God, your Son was the One who was wounded for my transgressions, my selfishness, and pride.
- Your Son was bruised for my iniquities, criticalness, and disrespect.
- God, against you and you only have I sinned.
- Because of my sin, you had to hear those soul-piercing words, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me?"

Confession from this kind of heart ushers in godly sorrow. No longer is there self-defense, pretense, or posturing—only a broken and contrite heart.

The Results of Godly Sorrow

The results of this kind of frequent encounter with God

bring both internal and external changes. We no longer must grit our teeth and try to be different. Change comes gently and supernaturally because the love of Christ starts to control or constrain our lives (2 Corinthians 5:14). These loving encounters with a God who has experienced sorrow produce the power to change us. A grateful rejoicing occurs when we experience true, godly sorrow because our confession frees us of guilt. Godly sorrow also produces joy in being forgiven, and grateful thanksgiving ushers me into worship.

Godly sorrow produces repentance—changes that make me more and more like Christ. An experience with God's sorrow makes a lasting impression on our lives because we have been with him. Having entered the fellowship of his sufferings, having shared intimately with him in his sorrow, we can never be the same again!

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for God to prepare and soften your heart to receive from him. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any hidden sin in your heart. Acknowledge your willingness to surrender to him for true transformation.

Godly sorrow comes by way of the Holy Spirit's conviction and our confession. As the Holy Spirit reveals sin and failure, confess those to Jesus, repent, and ask for his forgiveness. Thankfully receive his forgiveness and power to transform you into the image of Christ.

As you have confessed and repented of anything separating you from intimacy with God, ask the Holy Spirit to transform your love into the love of Jesus Christ.

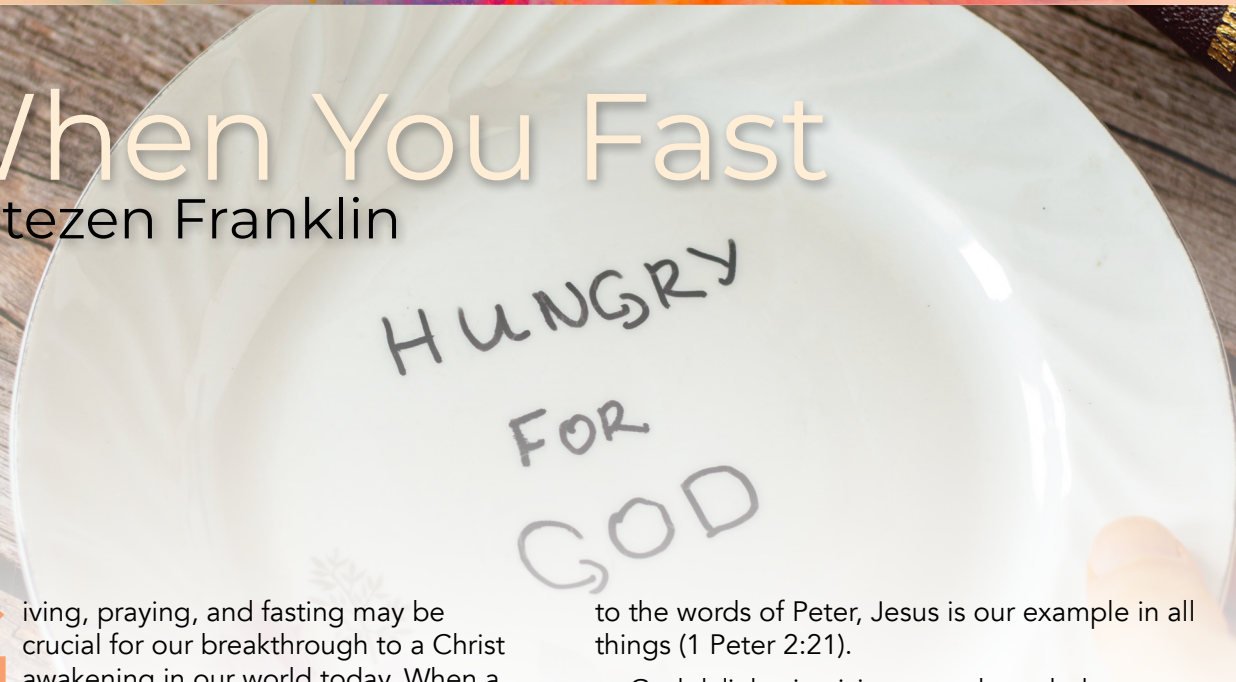
TODAY'S PRAYER

Jesus, show me how to love the things you love. In faith, I'm trusting you for an ongoing transformation of my love. Please change the love of my heart into the love of your heart.

After having confessed and being cleansed from my sin and failure, I thank you for granting me a deeper experience of intimacy with my heavenly Father. I rejoice in this experience of a fresh encounter with God and freedom from guilt. Thank you for giving me the fullness of joy that comes from being forgiven and transformed.

When You Fast

Jentezen Franklin



Giving, praying, and fasting may be crucial for our breakthrough to a Christ awakening in our world today. When a believer practices giving, praying, and fasting together, they create a type of threefold cord that is not easily broken (see Ecclesiastes 4:12). Because we have so many misconceptions about fasting, we will primarily focus on it.

First, we need to clarify what biblical fasting is not. Fasting is not merely going without food for a period of time. That is dieting—maybe even starving—but it is not fasting. Nor is fasting something done only by fanatics. I really want to drive that point home. Fasting is not to be done only by religious monks alone in a cave somewhere. The practice of fasting is also not limited to ministers or special occasions.

Simply stated, biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. Fasting has always been a normal part of a relationship with God. As expressed by the impassioned pleas of David in Psalm 42, fasting brings one into a deeper, more intimate, and powerful relationship with the Lord.

Fasting Is for Everyone

Perhaps you are thinking, I still do not know how fasting can really be for me. According to the words of Jesus, fasting is the duty of every disciple and every believer. When addressing the Pharisees, regarding why his disciples did not fast, Jesus noted there would be a time in which they would fast (Luke 5:34–35). Jesus fasted, and according

to the words of Peter, Jesus is our example in all things (1 Peter 2:21).

God delights in giving rewards, and when you practice giving, praying, and fasting in your life, he will “reward you openly” (Matthew 6). A good example of such an open reward can be found in Daniel’s life. While in Babylonian captivity, his fasting—even partial fasting of certain foods—brought about the open reward of God, who blessed Daniel with wisdom beyond that of anyone else in the empire.

Later, Daniel was grieved and burdened with the revelation he had received for Israel. He ate no choice breads or meats and drank no wine for three weeks. Then he described the angel, who had been delayed by the prince of Persia for twenty-one days but was sent with the answers Daniel sought. His fast broke the power of the delayer and released God’s angels, so God’s purposes could be revealed and served (Daniel 10). Whether we desire to be closer to God or need great breakthroughs, fasting is truly a secret source of power.

Fasting Brings Fresh Vision

Fasting keeps us sensitive to the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live holy. We will never walk in the perfect will of God until we seek him through fasting. When we present our bodies in this manner, we open ourselves to hearing from God. We will prove or discover his good and perfect will for our lives. Paul was fasting when God called him and shared the assignment for his life (Acts 9:7–9). Peter was fasting on the rooftop when God gave him a



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new revelation and called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). Fasting prepares the way for God to give you fresh revelation, fresh vision, and clear purpose.

In the book of Joel, the Lord said that he was going to pour out revival after a fast. Israel was in sin, and God was calling his people to fast as a people in repentance (Joel 2:15). Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was in a critical situation. He was a God-fearing king, who found himself surrounded by a powerful enemy army. Annihilation was certain without the Lord's intervention. All of Judah fasted, even the women and children. Amid the whole assembly, God told Judah exactly how that enemy would approach and exactly what they were to do in response. Do you want God to tell you what you need to do at this time in your life? Fast, worship, and seek him.

Fasting Exalts God's Priorities

How do we free ourselves from our desires to know God's priorities? Fasting causes us to take the sword of God's Word and separate what we "want" from what we "need." We have no higher authority than to know the heart of God for a situation we are facing. Fasting, praying, and feeding on the Word of God puts that sword in our hands and positions us to discern the difference between our thoughts and God's thoughts.

Fasting Leads to Sanctification

Fasting is an excellent means of sanctifying ourselves. Sanctification is practicing purity and being set apart from the world and sin. It is allowing the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus in what we do, what we think, and what we desire. If we are to see God do wonders in our midst, we must confront sin in our lives.

In Joshua three, God was about to lead his chosen people against the enemies of God, but they could not stand if they were not holy. This is clearly seen in the contrast between Israel's supernatural victory against the city of Jericho (Joshua 6) and their defeat by the tiny army of Ai after Israel had sinned by having stolen things in their midst (Joshua 7).

Why do we need to sanctify ourselves? We have no place in our hearts for pride. We have no place in our hearts for complacency. If God has blessed your life, you are critically in need of sanctifying yourself. Beware of being a member of the First Church of the Frozen Chosen. Do not let the blessings of the past interfere with the blessings of the future. The blessings of the future will be greater than anything he has done in the past.

David was a man after God's heart, yet he cried out for sanctification (Psalm 51:10). We need a sanctification of motives. We need a sanctification of desires. We need a sanctification of attitudes. We need a sanctification of the right spirit. We need a sanctification of our flesh. Through prayer and fasting, we can set ourselves apart and position ourselves for a Christ awakening.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

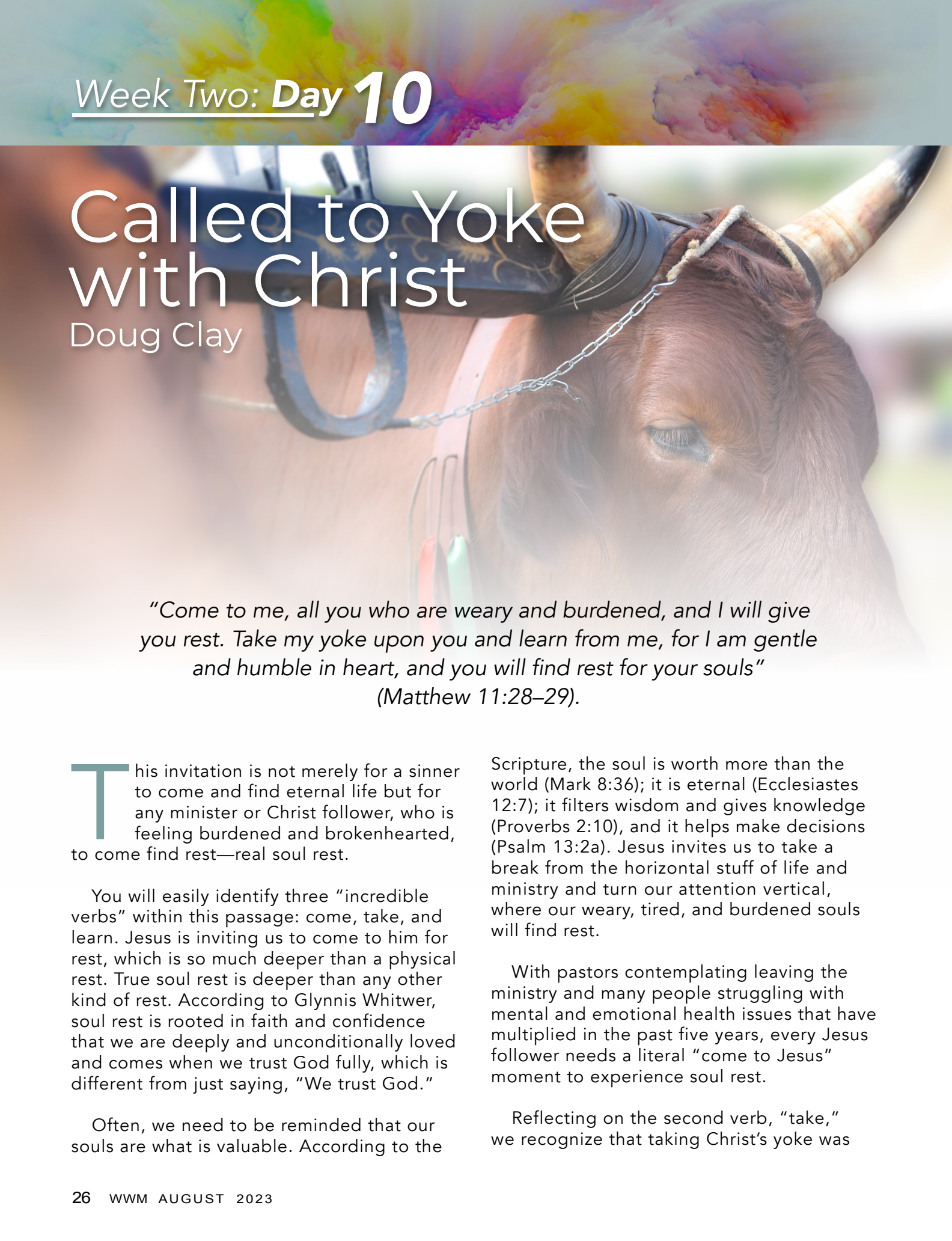
Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal himself to you in the practice of fasting. If you have never fasted, ask the Lord to give you strength and wisdom to experience this spiritual discipline.

If you are dealing with strongholds or excessive burdens in your life, as you fast, ask God for clear direction and strength to trust him and follow him where he leads. Believe in him for spiritual breakthroughs and complete freedom.

Pray and ask God to direct you on how to fast. Trust him for insight to feast on his Word as you commit to pushing away food while in a season of fasting. Jesus is our sanctifier. As you fast, seek God for a sanctifying touch that sets you apart for service and deeper intimacy with him.

PRAYER

Oh God, we thank you for your provision of food and the power to set it aside as we seek you. We offer ourselves to you in thanksgiving through fasting. As we dedicate ourselves to giving, praying, and fasting, please turn our hearts toward you and make us more aware of your presence. Empower us to receive strength as we wait on you.



Week Two: **Day 10**

Called to Yoke with Christ

Doug Clay

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"
(Matthew 11:28–29).

This invitation is not merely for a sinner to come and find eternal life but for any minister or Christ follower, who is feeling burdened and brokenhearted, to come find rest—real soul rest.

You will easily identify three "incredible verbs" within this passage: come, take, and learn. Jesus is inviting us to come to him for rest, which is so much deeper than a physical rest. True soul rest is deeper than any other kind of rest. According to Glynnis Whitwer, soul rest is rooted in faith and confidence that we are deeply and unconditionally loved and comes when we trust God fully, which is different from just saying, "We trust God."

Often, we need to be reminded that our souls are what is valuable. According to the

Scripture, the soul is worth more than the world (Mark 8:36); it is eternal (Ecclesiastes 12:7); it filters wisdom and gives knowledge (Proverbs 2:10), and it helps make decisions (Psalm 13:2a). Jesus invites us to take a break from the horizontal stuff of life and ministry and turn our attention vertical, where our weary, tired, and burdened souls will find rest.

With pastors contemplating leaving the ministry and many people struggling with mental and emotional health issues that have multiplied in the past five years, every Jesus follower needs a literal "come to Jesus" moment to experience soul rest.

Reflecting on the second verb, "take," we recognize that taking Christ's yoke was



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REVEREND DOUG CLAY | GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT OF THE USA ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

an invitation to partnership. Yet, this means releasing control and letting him set the pace for our lives and ministries.

Please be warned of the dangers of yokes other than Christ's such as:

- Yoking to self, which says, "I want control. I trust myself more than God."
- Yoking to others, which leads to pleasing others at all costs and stunts leadership growth.
- Yoking to success, which is spiritually dangerous, tempting individuals to take the credit rather than directing it to God.

Success in life or ministry is not God's endorsement of your character; it is the revelation of his character. I believe the Bible essentially describes success when speaking about Uzziah—"As long as Uzziah sought the Lord, God gave him success" (2 Chronicles 26:5).

Staying in sync, being yoked with Christ, is critical for seeing ourselves accurately. We're less likely to compare ourselves to somebody else's ministry or talent when we're synced with Jesus. We understand the place that we have in the body of Christ and our current assignment.

"Learn," the third verb is an invitation for us to have a divine perspective on our current assignment, whether it is a call to prayer and intercession, public or speaking ministry, personal evangelism, or any number of market-place, government, education, or other ministry arenas. We must reflect on the question, "Is this a job of convenience or a place of calling?"

Finally, be encouraged that one of the benefits of being yoked with Jesus is living with the understanding: that he is praying for you. "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours" (John 17:9, see also vv. 11 and 15).

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Praise and thank God that his protective strategy for our lives and ministries is the Holy Spirit, who lives within believers, the Word of God in our hands and hearts, and Christ himself at the hand of the Father praying on our behalf.

Confess any opposition you may be facing that you are struggling to master. Ask the Lord to remove any unrealistic expectations you or others may have established that you feel are causing you any depression or extreme discouragement.

As these are being released at your altar of prayer and you are sensing new freedom to be yoked to Christ, note this in your journal or Bible beside Matthew 11:28-29 as a visible marker or reminder with today's date beside it.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Loving Master and Savior, Jesus Christ, I'm so thankful the life and ministry you have given to me is not something that you have sentenced me to endure. Thank you for calling me to enjoy a life of consistently being baptized in joy and a heart filled with pleasure for the assignments you have placed in my life. The greatest privilege in the world is to see your will be done in my life and to be called by you to advance your kingdom on earth.

Preparing Your Child for for the Road Least Traveled

Terri Snead



As you cradled your soft, rosy-cheeked newborn in your arms, do you remember what you were thinking? No doubt there were thoughts of amazement and adoration and perhaps a little apprehension. You certainly were not thinking, “Precious gift of God, I want you to know that your dependency upon me is only temporary. My God-given responsibility from this day forward is to prepare you to leave home.” Sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? At that moment, you couldn’t imagine ever turning loose that bundle of joy. And yet, that’s exactly your mission: to daily build into your child’s life, to equip her to one day chart her course as she moves out into the world. That’s your role: to equip your child to leave spiritually confident, optimistic, and hopeful about what God has in store for his or her future.

This sounds counterintuitive, but parents who are serious about living out their calling as disciple-makers must selflessly take care of themselves. Think about the flight attendant’s

instructions that are given to every parent traveling with small children: “If the cabin should lose pressure, your oxygen mask will drop from the ceiling. Be sure to put on your mask before attending to your child.” The same principle holds true in disciple-making. If you want to pass along God’s love, grace, and compassion to your children, you must experience these first in your life. If you want to impart a faith that’s vibrant, relevant, and meaningful, pursue that kind of faith on your own. Make faith a priority and then out of gratitude for God’s work in your own life, share the same with your children.

As you focus on taking care of yourself as a parent, if you’re married, be sure to make it a priority to keep your marriage strong. As your child sees the strength of your marriage relationship, it gives him or her the freedom to grow and the foundation to embrace a relationship with Jesus. If Mom and Dad’s marriage is strong—not perfect, but strong—that gives the child permission to do the job



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that God has given them to do: grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically. And remember, no matter what your marital status, God has not called you to be a perfect parent with perfect children. He has called you to be a faithful parent, equipping children to become all they can be in him. Here is the next step in your pursuit of a vibrant, personal faith.

A divine perspective is critical to our missional role as parents because effective disciple-makers are always careful to affirm a child's identity. These parents intentionally confirm the identity that God has declared to be true about their children. Affirming a child's identity means understanding who God has created them to be and what the Scriptures say about who they are in God's eyes. Scripture teaches three essential truths that will lead your child to embrace an accurate view of how God sees them.

- **I am created in God's image.** Children need our confirmation that they did not simply descend or ascend from the monkeys or the slime of the ocean. They are a special creation, made in the likeness of God.
- **I am fallen but not worthless.** Our children need constant reminders that (just like their moms and dads), they are fallen and sinful, but they are also worth the gift of God's Son. Our works are worthless; we are not.
- **I am supremely and sacrificially loved.** Our children need affirmation of how much they are loved and to what lengths God was willing to go to show them he cares. God has entrusted you with his precious "gifts." Let him remind you to cherish these gifts.

As you help your child navigate this busy, craze-filled world, be careful not to miss some of the real secrets of how to be a successful

disciple-maker. Do not let good things distract you from the best things.

George Mueller, a nineteenth-century minister, orphanage director, and author, was asked about his secrets for success. He answered, "As I look back on my life, what I see is that I was constantly brought to crossroads in my life—crossroads which demanded a choice of which way I should go. As I was brought to those crossroads, I believe the key to my success is that I seemed to have consistently chosen the least traveled path."

The road for parenting is broad. It is a wide path where many travel. Let's be sure to model a vibrant faith of our own so that we are equipped to affirm a child's God-given identity and then launch them onto the road least traveled.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Offer thanksgiving to God for the blessing of your family and those who mean so much to you.

Pray for a renewed sense of faith in God and his power. As your faith increases, commit to imparting that faith to your children, grandchildren, or the other children God has placed inside your sphere of influence.

If you are a parent, pray for your child or children to experience God's fullness in understanding their identity as being created in God's image and beloved by God. Pray for open doors to affirm their identity in Christ.

If you are married, ask God to give you the grace to trust him to see his plan for your home. Pray for God's grace to equip you to love your spouse as he loves them. Ask God to give you the insight to know how to best support your spouse in their journey with Jesus.

Prayer as a Spiritual Discipline

Benjamin Feliz



Prayer as a spiritual discipline is the communication of constant love with the supreme being we love more than we can describe, and who loves us unconditionally. As St. Augustine said so well, “Full and true prayer is nothing other than love.” We have no reason to enter prayer awkwardly or ineffectively. Nor is there any need to seek a select language to impress God, as if this was possible. How we pray depends on our perception of God and our relationship with him. Praying to a God with whom we have no intimacy—as if God is a distant, disinterested, or absent being—can be an exercise in frustration. Prayer as a discipline is the opposite of this. It is an action the author of Hebrews describes when he invites us to approach God with confidence “. . . because we have a high priest who has compassion for our weaknesses and leads us to the throne of grace where we obtain mercy in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:15–16).

Many types of prayers and ways of praying exist. If we approach prayer as a loving communication with the Creator, we can conclude that no form of prayer is wrong, better, worse, higher, or lower. The most common forms of prayer include petition, confession, intercession, and thanksgiving. In the Bible, we have many examples of each. All of them

are important to express our needs and feelings to God, according to what is happening in our lives when we pray.

We may approach God as a son approaches his father, dependent upon him for provision. Jesus instructs us to ask him and assures us that if we ask according to God’s will, we will receive an answer (Matthew 7:7–8).

We can approach God with a heart of confession and vulnerability, with confidence and without fear. David’s prayer in Psalm 51 is a good example of confession from a leader in trouble. “I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight” (vv. 3–4). In the New Testament, John assures us 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).

Intercessory prayer for a leader is a joyous responsibility. Though those we serve ask us to intercede for them, intercession is not only for the ministry or leaders but also for the whole church. One ministry in which all believers should participate is intercessory prayer. Dietrich Bonhoeffer shared, “Intercessory prayer is the purifying bath into which the individual and the



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BISHOP BENJAMIN FELIZ, DMIN | MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA, AND THE SPANISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN GENERAL PRESBYTER

community must enter daily.”¹ Essentially, the greatest need in the world today is for believers to intercede before the throne of God. The church is blessed with the incomparable power of prayer to an all-powerful God!

Thanksgiving is another type of prayer that should not be missing in our discipline. The Bible exhorts us to “give thanks in everything; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Being thankful is an act of humility and a way to express to God our full recognition that all that we are and all that we have, beginning with life itself, we have received by his grace and not by our own merits. Thanksgiving should be more than a form of prayer for the leader. It is a way of life—a life of gratitude.

Prayer is a mark of great spiritual leadership. In both the Old and the New Testaments, leaders used by God were marked by lives of prayer. Their prayers are recorded as a testimony of what God can do when we cry out to him. Prayer is our heavenly resource for trials on Earth. The history of the church is full of godly men and women who dedicated their lives to the ministry of prayer.

Prayer is nothing more than a continuous and growing relationship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is particularly true of ordinary prayer. The sick and poor come to ordinary prayer as freely as the healthy and rich. No one has any leverage here.

We should never be discouraged by our lack of prayer. In time, the desire to pray will lead to practice, and practice will grow the desire. Even our prayerlessness must be given to God.

Let us not toil too hard at prayer. “There are those who work so hard in their endeavor to pray that they get spiritual indigestion.” The mothers and fathers in the wilderness spoke of “spiritual gluttony” as a sin. If you don’t have a habit of prayer in your life, don’t try to start with twelve hours a day. Take a few moments and use all your energy in them.

Let us learn to pray even when we live in wickedness. Let us pray in the midst of our internal

struggles with sin. Sin separates us from God, but trying to hide it pushes us further away.

In the beginning, it is wiser to seek the common experience of prayer than divine revelations and ecstasies. These ecstasy experiences can overwhelm and distract us from the true purpose of prayer.²

TODAY’S PRAYER FOCUS

Approach prayer as loving communion with the Creator. Come to your heavenly Father in the posture of worship and confidence, knowing he is waiting to be with you through prayer. If you are praying today in petition, confession, intercession, or thanksgiving, surrender to God as a child approaching a father, trusting that if we ask according to his will, he hears us, and we have the petitions we ask of him.

Take time today to intercede for leaders and those God has placed in the body of Christ to shepherd and care for others. Ask God to strengthen these leaders and minister to their needs and the needs of their families. Pray for your leaders to have wisdom and be sensitive to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to grant each leader deeper intimacy with him.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come to you today with confidence that you love us and desire to commune with us through the discipline of prayer. Receive our petitions and our praise. We are thankful for all your blessings and grace to us.

Anoint and bless the leaders in your church. Strengthen each of them and their families and draw them ever closer to you. Give them wisdom and discernment to follow your direction in all they do.

¹ Richard Foster, *La Oración: Verdadero Refugio del Alma* (Miami, FL, Editorial Caribe, 1994), 239.

² Foster, 16–18.

Into God's Hands

Clayton Endecott

"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus prays essentially the same prayer three times that night though perhaps at points with more pressing words. "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done" (vv. 40–44). In preparation for the cross, we are given insight into one of the most intimate and relational trinitarian moments where Jesus labors in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

When we read this in Mark's gospel, we see that this prayer is very personal. The son calls out to God by name in great sorrow, falling to the ground. ". . . Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:3; see also Luke 22 and John 18).

The longest prayer of Jesus is recorded in John 17, which is rich with last-days sentiment and a prayer for the church to be in unity. Jesus' most famous prayer moment is his exemplary prayer, teaching us how we should pray in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. As we approach the calendar celebrations of the triumphal march, the betrayal, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension, the church would do well to walk through all the prayers of Jesus. This would prepare our hearts for our

consequent, annual celebrations concerning the life of Jesus. A praying Jesus is an accurate portrait of our Lord upon the earth.

Consider this prayer, "Let this cup pass from me...your will be done," in openness and seriousness today. Read this short prayer a minimum of three times as two of the Gospels indicate that Jesus did. Take time to wait between each short prayer time and each quotation of Jesus' prayer. It is important to contemplate that most of our lives do not compare in any way to the brokenness, shame, and suffering of Christ, which he did in all innocence for our sins. Still, what are you going through? What are you avoiding? What are you hoping will just go away or that God has an eloquent, beautiful, and powerful answer for, so you do not need to suffer through it any longer?

Pray this prayer as a cathartic release of your life and your circumstances, pouring out your trials, tribulations, and your sufferings. While you petition God for pardon and victory, commit yourself to him, "Nevertheless, Lord, no matter how things turn out, no matter what I go through, I release my life into your hands. May your will be done." We often hear the instantaneous prayers of proclamation ring with a triumphalist clatter in



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BISHOP CLAYTON ENDECOTT | WIDER EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST GENERAL PRESBYTER

the face of this prayer of Jesus, the son of God. He shows God to be eternal, to be the same, to be sovereign, to be who he is full of love, knowing the final story, and being with us to the end. The testimonies of Eastern Europe during the time of the Iron Curtain days were made clear to me as some of us were invited to travel from regal city to city and from village to village in 1989. The triumphant Azusa Street Revival mindset with which I was raised in the United States was tempered with the multiple stories of historical accounts of the suffering saints of Eastern Europe during the days of oppression, imprisonment, and death for their Pentecostal faith. Suffering in Eastern Europe has most recently returned. Week after week as I meet with pastors in those areas, I hear the testimonies of faithfulness. Though they suffer, they trust God, knowing his will is their greatest victory.

What touches me in the Gethsemane prayer is the awe and trust in an almighty Father that Jesus in his earthly life proclaims. The intimacy Jesus invited Peter, James, and John to participate in that night is lost to them as they sleep. They too would soon need this prayer at different points in their lives. A prayer of trust, a prayer of faithfulness, a prayer of indifference, committing all things into God's hands and not our desires. This kind of prayer makes pain, brokenness, failure, sickness, and death transient. It moves our physical bodies and current difficulties into the kingdom realm and brings permanence, wholeness, goodness, and effectiveness into our lives.

Prayer brings the kingdom of God into our daily life as a church and individually provides forgiveness, healing, and goodness. In prayer, we begin to taste the sweetness of heaven and leave bitterness behind. Prayer is liberating; it sets us free from the control and restraints of the past and present, and it moves us into heavenly places so that even in moments of struggle we begin to taste victory. In this kind of prayer, we begin to be shaped not by our past but by his kingdom and for our future. Prayer delivers us

from the tyranny, control, and constraints of the world and liberates us to the calling, destiny, and the good and great will of God for our lives. When we pray, we begin to be formed in the freedom of God's love, and we are shaped in his image for his glory. When we pray we begin to experience God in the here and now and join him in a transforming process to become what he had planned for us from the beginning.

But prayer is also a commission, a call to serve and persevere. Prayer enables us to be his kingdom power on earth, to obey his call and commands. Through prayer, we can begin to live a godly life in the here and now and to serve him fully no matter the cost. In our prayers, our tongues become a living testimony that we begin anew in every prayer to taste, see, touch, and tell the great things of God from history, the church, our current life, and the things to come. Prayer opens the realm of the prophetic. Even in the worst times, a reality where things that are not yet, we do not know, and we have not yet spoken will begin.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Begin by praying, "Let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, your will be done." This opens our hearts to fully surrender to God's will for our lives even if we presently do not fully understand his will. Contemplate the way Jesus prayed this prayer. Consider the brokenness and suffering of Christ, borne for us.

Ask God to empower you to confidently trust his plans for your life, understanding his motives for us are always perfect. Release anxiety and fear to Jesus. Committing yourself to him, receive God's touch of faith and confidence in his goodness. Receive the Holy Spirit's anointing to surrender all things to him, trusting that he who has called you will be faithful.

Christ in You

Gabriel E. Vidal

*"I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end, he will stand on the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him with my own eyes; I, and not another" (Job 19:25–27).*

The definition of hope is an expectation or belief in the fulfillment of something desired. Hope is a very important part of our mental equilibrium. We need to have hope to live as much as we need food and water.

In many cases hope challenges logic and could be used to overcome many obstacles in life. Christopher Reeves said, "Once you choose hope, anything is possible." Perhaps, one of the reasons for so many divorces is due to the lack of hope. Once one or both lose hope, it is practically over. Hope is indispensable for our survival.

Abraham is a model of faith and hope. Despite the realities that surrounded him, "no distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised" (Romans 4:20–21). Christian faith and hope, like Abraham's, are based on the faithfulness to God.

As the apostle Paul wrote of his struggles, "Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him, we have set our hope and he will deliver us again" (2 Corinthians 1:9–10).



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A few months ago, I visited one of our pastors. I asked him how many times he ate per day, and he said mostly once a day. The average salary of this pastor is \$15 dollars per month. This country is going through very difficult times. A few days after my visit he sent me a text: "Hello brother, God is faithful." How can this pastor still have hope, making that kind of money and living the way he lives? It does not make sense. But as Paul said, "We have set our hope, and he will deliver us again," referring to Christ. We must understand that for those who believe in Christ Jesus, hope is not irrational, but rather is based upon God, who has proven himself faithful. And he has always been faithful.

How wonderful are the words of Job! Despite his physical situation, in spite of the condition of his soul after losing everything he had, he still possessed enough hope to say: "I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end, he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes; I, and not another" (Job 19:25–27).

Where does that come from? It comes from a deep-rooted faith that surpasses every understanding or circumstance. This is something we need today. We have lost the influence of that kind of faith.

Let's return to Christ and do not rely upon our own strength. For our hope, does not depend on any circumstance but in him, and him alone. Let us understand well what Paul said when he declared to the Colossians, "To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Thank God for the blessing of his hope! Through his promises, we can pray in faith and believe all he has for us. Prepare your heart to receive a fresh infusion of faith and hope!

Surrender your anxiety, fear, and worry into God's hands. Receive his presence and power that fills you with hope and trust in the plan of God. Ask the Father to fill you with faith and know that he hears you when you pray.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise you for the promises we have in your Word and for your faithful love for us. We believe your Word promises us that you make all things work together for our good when we love you and are called according to your purpose. We receive a fresh outpouring of faith to trust in your perfect will for our lives. We wait in expectant hope for all you have for us!

WHAT TO PRAY

This is the confidence
which we have before Him, that,
if we ask anything according to His will,
He hears us.
And if we know that He hears us
in whatever we ask,
we know that we have the requests
which we have asked from Him.
1 John 5:14

A Spirit-Empowered Church

Alton Garrison

If you ask a variety of people across denominational lines the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the church, you will receive a wide range of answers. I believe the strongest doctrinal case for the purpose of Spirit-empowerment is carrying out the transformative mission of God among both the unchurched and stagnant, uninspired believers. With the challenges facing the church today, we cannot rely on our own ingenuity, intellect, and human effort. God has not abandoned us to that fruitless recourse; but when we take hold of the Spirit as power, he fully equips and emboldens us to present hope to a lost world.

The Holy Spirit helps us to be more than we are. He empowers us, and the same Spirit that rested on a murderer, turning him into a deliverer; on a shepherd boy, turning him into a king; and on a long-haired womanizer, turning him into a judge, does not momentarily “rest” upon us. The Holy Spirit stayed with fishermen and turned them into disciples. He converted a religious murderer, indwelt him, and enabled him to write much of the New Testament. And most notably, the Spirit lived in and through a carpenter who was the Savior of the world. He empowers every believer

who accepts his saving grace and humbly makes himself available to be used by God.

The Holy Spirit will also help you say more than you know. Emboldened by the Holy Spirit, Peter may be the best example of this. Right after the Spirit fell in the upper room, he stood up from among the eleven disciples, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd in a Spirit-inspired speech. The results were nothing short of miraculous; they baptized and added three thousand people to the church that day. The Holy Spirit helped Peter beyond his ability, and the listeners went from wondering what it could mean that the believers were speaking in other tongues to asking, “What should we do?” to receiving Christ. That same inspiration and empowerment are what enable us to share the gospel effectively.

The Holy Spirit also helps us do more than we can. Before commissioning us to share the gospel, Jesus promised us power. He said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Spirit’s power is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise



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that those who believe in him would do the same works he did ... and even greater. Examples of God's power encourage us to believe for the supernatural. After the Holy Spirit fell, the disciples performed many miracles, including but not limited to healing the sick, casting out demons, and discipling untold thousands. Unlike Spirit-touched heroes of the Old Testament, who momentarily enjoyed his power, the believers in the Acts two church experienced the lingering, indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Building on a First-Century Blueprint

The first-century church was founded in prayer. In Acts one, we read that Jesus' church development, core team consisted of Peter, James, and John (the big three), the rest of the remaining disciples, his mother and brothers, and several women who helped support his earthly ministry. They all joined together in prayer. The results of this prayer and founding blueprint were nothing short of miraculous.

Imagine these things being true in each of our churches: the church received the Holy Spirit willingly, demonstrated power supernaturally, was led effectively, prayed fervently, fellowshiped regularly, taught sound doctrine consistently, preached the gospel passionately, shared resources liberally, and grew exponentially.

This last result was a consequence of all those factors that preceded it. We read that they had a sense of awe as they saw the Spirit move on the disciples, enabling them to perform miraculous signs and wonders. (And if you do not think that sharing their property, possessions, and finances with those in need was a miracle, you try it!) Their days consisted of worshipping together, sharing meals with great joy and generosity, praising God, and enjoying the goodwill of their community. As they lived this organic, Spirit-empowered life, God exploded their numbers.

What Empowerment Is and Is Not

Experiencing a Spirit-empowered church

means understanding that our relationship with Christ goes beyond mere belief or the washing away of sins. (These are the means through which Christ makes a relationship possible, but a life of following him and knowing him intimately yet awaits.) It is not about doing more for God, performing at a higher level, or even experiencing signs and wonders. It is about knowing him.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Give thanks to the Lord for the promise and outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower you and your church to participate more fully in the transformative mission of God, reconciling the world to Christ.

If you have not yet received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, pray to receive all God has for you today. Surrender every part of your heart, soul, mind, and body to God so that you may be transformed and empowered to serve. If you have previously been filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, pray for a renewed inflowing (and overflowing) in your life.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower you to experience the person of Jesus, so that you may know him more fully. Completely surrender to God's plan and purpose in and through you.

PRAYER

Jesus, you are the Holy Spirit Baptizer. We surrender to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We submit all that we are to you and ask for a renewed outpouring of your Spirit. We proclaim our complete dependence upon you. Overflow both in and through us. Empower your church for ministry to the lowest and least, the broken and the beggar, the sick and the blind. We wait in expectation for your Holy Spirit outpouring!

On Our Knees

Doug Beacham



Change will come to our lives and our communities when we have a common resolve to corporately join before the face of God to be reconciled from sin and to seek his will for our future. This change will come when we experience both times of confession and repentance, admission of sin, and a decision to live life differently. Let's look, with perhaps a fresh perspective, at our need for God's abundant grace.

"If my people, who are called by my name, will 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 will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

The Sin of the Elder Brother Syndrome

No story confronts us with the Father's love like the parable of the prodigal son and his older brother. In this illustration, Jesus contrasts God's boundless love with the total ineptness of human affection. Both the prodigal and his brother needed the embrace of a forgiving father and a sense of "coming home." The younger brother undoubtedly needed the grace of a father after he came to his senses. He had selfishly

demanded from his father, squandered precious gifts, and lived a life of self-indulgence and rebellion. The difficult point of the parable, however, is the older son, who believed that by "staying at home" he deserved priority treatment. His refusal to join the celebration revealed his flawed understanding of the father's love. It also exposed the brother's pride because he considered himself more worthy than his prodigal sibling.

Knowing God has called us (the church) to unity and that the Father sees no distinction of sin, we must acknowledge the sin of the elder brother. The church today often looks much like this older sibling. In fact, the "elder brother syndrome" has caused us to resist God's love rather than rejoice in seeing it lavished upon penitent prodigals. This syndrome opens the door to anger, bitterness, jealousy, and complaint. Old resentments, rooted in pride, intensify our withdrawal from God and his family and deepen divisions that dishonor and wound others.

The elder brother's self-reliance reveals a spiritual poverty that closes the door to communion with the Father and fellowship with his family. Like the elder brother, we have hardened our hearts against those



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who have left us and wanted to come home. We have often failed to demonstrate that God is full of grace and mercy. Instead, we have manifested a spirit of legalism that is based on works. We remember offenses and forget the love and generosity of the Father.

Consider your need for confession and repentance from the “elder brother syndrome.”

The Sin of Judgmentalism

We have read our Lord’s warning not to judge lest we be judged yet have judged. We have judged unbelievers, hindering their entrance into the kingdom of God. We have judged faults in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have often emphasized outward appearance, rather than the condition of the heart. Our judgmentalism has excluded people from the church. Judgmentalism has broken our fellowship with other members of the body of Christ. It has caused us to confuse personal convictions with the eternal principles of God’s Word.

Judgmentalism has given birth to the sin of hypocrisy and put people into bondage to traditions instead of freeing them to minister. We have often overemphasized the negative while neglecting positive ministries such as worship, witness, and service to others.

Consider your own need for confession and repentance from judgmentalism.

The Sin of Spiritual Pride

The original sin was pride. Lucifer exalted himself against God and brought sin into the universe (Ezekiel 28:11–19). The sin of pride was introduced into the human family when Adam and Eve yielded to Satan’s temptation. Man still exalts himself and declares his independence from God. This temptation often seduces the church.

Pride deceived us, so we have tried to accomplish God’s work in our strength instead of in the power of

the Holy Spirit. We have sought our glory instead of giving all glory to him. Pride has caused us to contend with one another rather than edify the church. It has caused the heavens to be as iron and the earth as brass, rendering our labors unfruitful.

Consider your need for confession and repentance from pride.

TODAY’S PRAYER FOCUS

Thank God for the forgiveness of sins made possible through Jesus Christ.

Pray for God’s help to confess and repent of any spiritual pride that may be in your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see others as Jesus sees them.

Petition God to fill you with his love for the prodigals, who are outside of a relationship with Jesus. Ask God to transform your heart into his heart and image so that you may love as Christ loves.

As you intercede for prodigals, ask the Holy Spirit to give you opportunities to love and minister to those who have wandered away from Christ and are lost. Many of them may be on the edge of turning back to the Father. Seek God for his wisdom to know how to reach those in need.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we confess and repent of the pride that has separated us at times from your people and kept us from experiencing your fullness. We turn from the sin of pride and judgment, and we ask for you to fill us with your heart of love and righteousness. Jesus, make us instruments of unity in the body of Christ, so we may realize the fruit of your prayer that we may be one.

Give God a Blank Page

Kay Horner

// “Give me a blank page” were the words God spoke into our spirits as a group of pastors and ministry leaders gathered to fast, pray, and listen for his voice. We long for a fresh Christ awakening and a global harvest of souls, but we must understand that some things are not ours to organize or orchestrate. Jesus’ words were very clear: “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The triune God brought the world into existence by the Word of his mouth, and in Christ, everything is held together (Colossians 1:15–17). Apart from him, we cannot order or structure anything. His Holy Spirit—*pneuma*, breath, or wind—blows wherever he wishes (John 3:8). We can gather all our human plans and scripts, but he may blow them all away with one swish. On the other hand, when the Spirit breathes afresh into our souls and the atmosphere of our ministries, we will gather rather than scatter (Luke 11:23).

The wind is blowing as God is calling to the north, south, east, and west for his sons and daughters to come home. They will lift their eyes and cock their heads to hear. Some will recognize his voice and hasten to come. Others will strain to hear above the surrounding noise and distractions vying for their attention. Concluding they must have imagined a call; they will continue going about their way unaware they have missed the moment of his visitation. However, we cannot afford to despair.

The winds of his Spirit will continue to blow, transforming lives in God’s perfect timing.

In the Esther narrative, we see an orphaned Jewess, her cousin Mordecai, and other diasporic Jews in the Persian empire about sixty years after Cyrus had issued the decree for God’s exiled people to return to Jerusalem. Remaining in this pagan environment, forced Esther to face some generational pages that would require some divine revisions as she offered Yahweh a blank page.

The first clue of the generational pages in Esther’s life story is revealed when we are told of Haman’s heritage as “the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite” (Esther 3:1, 10). This subtly linked him with the Amalekites—the first enemies to attack the Israelites when they exited the wilderness of Sin.

Amalek, which means to travail, vexation, and sorrow, is symbolic of our flesh that always begins to rear its ugly head when we are on track to fulfilling God’s purpose and destiny for our lives. Consequently, Moses reminded the people, “When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!” (Deuteronomy 25:19).

Amalek was a descendant of Esau and, therefore, Abraham, so flesh and blood brothers are fighting against one another. Likewise, our struggles with the flesh often are empowered by those generational things or experiences handed to us within our family—biological



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KAY HORNER | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE AWAKENING AMERICA ALLIANCE

and spiritual. Hurtful things written on the religious pages of our lives can be as detrimental to our spirits as physical and emotional abuse.

When Saul was confronted with giving God a clean slate by destroying the Amalekites, he failed the test of trusting God for some unknowns (1 Samuel 15:9–21). You'll recall he spared Agag and the best of the flocks and herds, so Samuel declared those familiar words:

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Later, David faced the Amalekite influence at Ziklag, and although he and his men recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including their wives and children, pages continued to be filled with generational conflict (2 Samuel 1:8–10). Sadly, some of us have read and reread these unwanted and unnecessary pages for so long that we tend to view the storyline as who we are rather than how we are bound.

The second piece of evidence is uncovered as the writer shares Mordecai is related to Saul, a son of Kish and a Benjamite (Esther 2:5; 1 Samuel 10:21). Mordecai refused to put a pen in the enemy's hand by bowing and paying homage to an Agagite, an authority figure other than Yahweh. However, Haman added his evil page written in the story of hatred being passed through the generations by having an edict issued for the destruction of Esther and her people the Jews.

Although Yahweh's name does not appear in the Book of Esther, she had to allow him to be the ghostwriter of their story. She, her maidens, Mordecai, and the Jews humble themselves through fasting and praying in sack-cloth and ashes—symbolic of repentance. Afterward, this queen of Persia became an emboldened Jewess giving God a blank page as she appealed to King Xerxes, even at the risk of her life ("If I perish, I perish" [4:16]).

The once powerless orphan found favor. Haman was hung on the gallows intended for Mordecai. Esther and Mordecai were elevated in the kingdom. God empowered them to write and release a divine revision of their death edict. God's people were rescued, and the Jew's generational slate was temporarily cleaned of Amalekite persecution.

Our enemy, Satan, is the accuser of the brethren and the father of lies. He always writes fictional narratives,

but Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). His story says, "If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31a–32). Will you give God a blank page and allow him to continue writing salvation's story through you? You do not have to fear the unknown because Paul told the Corinthian believers:

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God (2 Corinthians 3:3–5).

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Praise God for sending Jesus to be the author and finisher of your faith. With thanksgiving, acknowledge that he is the only One with the authority to write or rewrite your story—not even your past personal experiences unless they are aligned with God's promises and destiny for your life. In prayer, surrender every aspect of your life to him so that he may give his best to you. Ask God to cover you daily in his protective armor and strengthen your faith, so that you may trust his handwriting even when you do not fully understand his plan.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, my life is a blank page that I offer to you. You are the author of my story. I hold nothing back from you. Lord Jesus, I ask you to fill me with greater faith to trust your plan as I draw closer to you. I desire all you have for me! As your Holy Spirit moves in my life and empowers me to walk more closely with you, teach me to abide in your presence. Give me spiritual eyes to see where you are leading and spiritual ears to discern your voice. Fill in the blanks of my life with your perfect will.

Throw Down Your Staff

Mark Batterson

Living a life of Spirit-empowered adventure will require leaving behind the routine, the humdrum, and the status quo. A life of empowerment may mean turning loose of things that make sense or fall in line with human standards. A life with the Spirit means we're on a divine exploration, following the path that God has laid down for us, even though we oftentimes don't know where we are going when we begin. Sometimes following that path requires great risks. While at other times, it means we respond to the simplest promptings in our heart. Either way, we know that we are living for God's glory because we are choosing to follow his promptings.

Every summer, I take a six-week preaching sabbatical. The reason is simple. It is so easy to get focused on what God wants to do through me that I totally neglect what God wants to do in me. So, I take off my sandals for six weeks. I go on vacation. I go to church with my family. And for several weeks during the summer, I just sit with our congregation, taking notes and singing songs like everyone else. My sabbatical is one way I keep the routine from becoming routine. But it's about more than just taking off my sandals. Let me explain.

Shortly after telling Moses to take off his sandals, God gave Moses one more curious command. He told Moses to throw down his staff. Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff,"

he replied. The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground, and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake, and it turned back into a staff in his hand. "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you" (Exodus 4:2–5).

A shepherd's staff was a six-foot-long, wooden rod that was curved at one end. It functioned as a walking stick, a weapon, and a prod used to guide the flock. Moses never left home without his staff. That staff symbolized his security. It offered him physical security from wild animals. It provided his financial security—his sheep were his financial portfolio. And it was a form of relational security. After all, Moses worked for his father-in-law.

But the staff was more than just a form of security. It was also part of his identity. When Moses looked in the mirror, he saw a shepherd—nothing more, nothing less. I think that's why Moses asked God to send someone else. "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11). I love the way God answers his question by changing the focus. God says: "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12). That doesn't really seem like an answer to Moses' question, does it? But I think it



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was God's way of saying who you are isn't the issue; the issue is whose you are!

Has God ever called you to throw something down? Something in which you find your security or put your identity? It's awfully hard to let go, isn't it? It feels like you are jeopardizing your future. And it feels like you could lose what is most important to you. But that is when you discover who you really are.

I agonize with you because I know how tough it is to throw down a staff. It was so hard to throw down my scholarship at the University of Chicago. It was so hard to leave the security of friends and family and move from Chicago to Washington DC. But the only way you discover a new identity is by letting an old one go. And the only way you'll find your security in Christ is by throwing down the human securities we tend to cling to.

Counterfactual theory is a branch of history that asks the what-if questions. So here's my counterfactual question: What if Moses had held on to his staff? I think the answer is simple: The shepherd's staff would have remained a shepherd's staff. I don't think God would have used Moses to deliver Israel. I think Moses would have gone right back to shepherding his flock.

If you aren't willing to throw down your staff, you forfeit the miracle that is at your fingertips. You must be willing to let go of an old identity before you take on a new identity. That is what happens to Moses. This is a miracle of transformation. Not just the staff turning into a snake, but a shepherd of sheep turning into the leader of a nation. Moses had to throw down the shepherd's staff for it to be transformed into the rod of God.

As far as we know, this is the first miracle Moses ever experienced. If Moses had held on to the staff, he would have forfeited all those miracles. He would have spent the rest of his life counting sheep.

Where do you find your identity? What is the source of your security? Is it a title? A paycheck? A relationship? A degree? A name? Nothing is wrong with any of those things as long as you can throw them down.

If you find your security outside of Christ, you have a false sense of security, and you have a false sense of identity. As long as you hold on to your staff, you'll never know what you could have accomplished with God's help. Let me remind you of this: Your success isn't contingent upon what's in your hand. Your success is contingent upon whether God extends his mighty hand on your behalf.

So, let me issue a challenge. Throw down your staff and discover the adventure on the far side of routine.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Worship God for his goodness, love, and divine plan for your life. Pray for the courage to release those things that have held you back from full surrender to God. Embrace faith to step into more of God's power, purpose, and peace.

What God is doing in you is always bigger than what God is doing through you. Pray for spiritual insight to see what God desires to do in you and ask for increased faith to surrender to his work.

Pray for courage to find your identity in Christ alone. Submit those things in your life that would take the place of your identity in Christ. Release your job, education, wealth, or even your ministry as your identity. Your new identity is that of the beloved of God!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting and unfailing love. We recognize your blessings and gifts to us must not become our stumbling blocks by allowing them to become more important than our identity in you. We embrace our identity as your beloved, and we rejoice in you, surrendering our wealth, relationships, career, families, and all we possess to you.

The Love of the Father

Clayton Martin

Let us consider the love of God the Father for lost humanity as presented in Luke 15. Jesus' audience included tax collectors, other notorious sinners, and the Pharisees with the religious teachers of the law, who were concerned that Jesus associated with sinful people. Jesus spoke about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and the lost sons—all revealing humanity is lost but can be restored to God, the loving Father.

He tells the parable of a father who had two sons. The younger went to his father and asked for his share of the estate. According to B. H. Young, this son was asking his father to die because to demand an estate from a living father was equivalent to saying, "Father, I wish you would drop dead."¹ This son insulted his father and made him terribly ashamed. Based on the culture, the father should have rejected his son's improper request and even punished him, but he allowed his sons to take advantage of the estate before his death and divided his property between them.

According to their cultural values, the elder brother should have corrected his younger brother for showing such disrespect, but he "quietly receives his double portion of the inheritance, doing nothing to bring reconciliation."² Both brothers deeply wounded their father.

Just imagine the brokenness that was created in this

family as the younger son packed everything he had and left for a distant country, separated from family, home, and community. He severed himself from every relationship and became a prodigal, who promptly sold his portion of the estate and wasted the money. Before long, he became destitute and desperate as a famine swept across the land. He went and hired himself to a citizen of that country who probably just intended to chase away this Jewish boy when he sent him to go feed his pigs. A Jew being with swine was unthinkable, but the young man was so hungry that he even desired to eat the food that belonged to the pigs. No one gave him food.

What a terrible condition—no money, no food, no security. He was exiled from family, friends, and home! Lost and terribly lacking, "He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have bread...and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father..." (Luke 15:16–18).

The young man decided that he would return to his father's house. He realized that he had sinned against heaven or God as well as his father. He wanted to become a hired servant, who would be paid wages and provided food and shelter. Instead of staying in a far country, he acted on his decision to return home. Although unsure of how his father would respond, he sought reconciliation.



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BISHOP CLAYTON MARTIN, DMIN | CARIBBEAN AND ATLANTIC OCEAN ISLANDS GENERAL PRESBYTER

When his father saw him, he had compassion and ran to meet him, fell on his neck, and kissed him (v. 20). Filled with love and concern, the father humiliated himself by running to meet his son. By his actions, he sent a clear message of love to his son as well as to onlookers. The son had a change of mind he said, "I have sinned and I am not worthy to be called your son" (v. 21). He stopped there; he no longer wanted to be a hired servant. Just imagine the excitement as the father sent his servants for the best robe, a ring, and sandals. He also gave instructions that the fattened calf should be killed and a feast held with much celebration. The young son is restored to his father. The broken relationship is healed.

When the elder brother returned home and heard that his brother had returned, he refused to join the celebration. "He had no feeling of compassion for his younger brother, who needed forgiveness and acceptance."¹ How he resented his father's great joy for this wayward brother. He had remained at home with his father, but at that point, he showed anger and resentment. This loving father humiliated himself again in front of everyone when he went outside to discuss the matter with his son. The elder son also appears to be lost. He does not have a heart of compassion, and neither does he understand his father's love.

What is your conclusion to this story? I think that we were born with the attitude of these fallen sons with wrong thoughts, words, and deeds—separated and alienated from God the Father. Glory be to God that he has shown his love, grace, and mercy by giving Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. Oh, that everyone would come to themselves, arise, and in faith, return to the Father. He waits to welcome everyone who truly repents and returns. We can only know the fullness of his presence when in humility and sincerity, we truly turn our lives to him. When we have wandered away from our loving, heavenly Father, we should arise and return. In his presence is where we belong. "See what manner of love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1).

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Do you have family and friends who, like the son in Luke 15, are far from the father? Through prayer, intercede for them now. Pray for doors to open in their lives, for God's love to be displayed, and for God's forgiveness to be accepted. Ask God to soften their hearts and open their eyes to see his plan for their lives through a relationship with him.

Pray and ask God to send laborers into his harvest field. Petition God to prompt the heart of someone to share the love of Jesus and the message of the gospel with your friend or loved one who is apart from Jesus. Pray today for the Holy Spirit to minister through you that they might come to know Christ.

If you are reading this devotion today and you feel you have wandered away from the heavenly Father (or if you've never known him), turn to him now. Confess to him any sin and actions contrary to God's word and will for your life. Fully embrace his forgiveness and acceptance, receive his transformation, and be born into a new life with Christ.

PRAYER

Father God, we acknowledge that each of us can be prodigals who have hurt your heart, rejected your love, and wandered away from home. Away from your presence, we struggle to survive. It is not your will for people to perish, so by your Spirit, intervene so that all lost humanity would come to our senses, see ourselves, and seek to be purged by the rich, powerful blood of Jesus. Oh, the joy we find when we come back into your loving arms into a right relationship with you, dear Father.

¹ B. H Young, *The Parable: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 136.

Power or Holiness

James Kolawole

"...why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:12).

We discern from this verse that biblical miracles require biblical holiness! This conviction was rooted in the minds of the apostles, who without batting an eye, interchanged power for holiness and vice versa. They deemed the demonstration of power as synonymous with the multidimensional manifestation of holiness. Are the two concepts poles apart or related? Can there be genuine Pentecostal fire without holiness? Is possessing biblical holiness without its intrinsic virtue possible? These are pivotal questions begging for honest answers.

A Certain Man

Let us focus on the man who was born lame from his mother's womb (Acts 3:2). This faceless and nameless man's condition made him a liability to others. Furthermore, he survived daily at the mercy of others because they had to physically carry him from pillar to post. Worst of all, his condition had reduced him to a beggar for more than four decades (Acts 4:22). Sadly, this is the deplorable condition of many overwhelmed souls.

"Such as I Have, Give I Thee" (Acts 3:6)

When the lame man saw Peter and John en route to the temple, he asked for money, which was not his dearest need! Ignoring his request, they gave him something better. Noticeably, after Pentecost, Peter (alongside John) was not presuming whether he had power or not. He was assured of this power in his life. He knew what he had and was vocal about it. He boldly declared that the lame man should: "Look on us" (Acts 3:4). The man was possibly looking in the wrong direction all the while and had to be redirected by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Apostolic Hands

"And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" (Acts 3:7).

Many people lay empty hands on expectant heads with little results, but this is contrary to the apostolic experience. The hands of the apostles were loaded hands. Anointed hands. Trusted hands. "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people..." (Acts 5:12). The Bible is inundated with this reality. "And



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BISHOP JAMES KOLAWOLE | AFRICA GENERAL PRESBYTER

God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul" (Acts 19:11).

The lame man was not only lifted from the disability in his life, but he was supernaturally strengthened and divinely enabled when he encountered the power of Jesus. Hence, he did what he previously could not do. This private encounter captured the attention of the public. He was once pitied but now became the object of citywide bewilderment. Peter responded to the onlookers, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" (Acts 3:12).

Fundamentally, God was praised for the staggering miracle and not Peter or his companion John! What was the formerly lame man's response? "And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:8). That needs to be accentuated. After the life-transforming wonder, worship was flowing ceaselessly out of the man to THE HOLY ONE and not flowing to the disciples! They didn't overtly or covertly confiscate this glory for themselves. Could this quality be lacking in the contemporary church? Is the lack of unselfish humility one reason too many experience the visible shortfall of this power? God could trust Peter and John with this power. Can he trust the modern church with this dimension of his glory?

These apostles made publicly apparent that holiness (on earth) is synonymous with power! To shun holiness is to shun Pentecostal power! To ignore holiness is to ignore heavenly power!

The psalmist declared, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Psalms 62:11). This degree of power is exclusively reserved for the Almighty, but believers—holy believers, consecrated believers—may become his conduits.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOCUS

Offer thanksgiving for God's presence in your life. Seek him today for an ever-deepening experience of his power and presence. Pray to become an instrument God will use to bless, encourage, strengthen, and minister to others. Recognize God's desire to work in us to conform us to the image of Christ and fully surrender every aspect of your life to him at this moment.

As you desire to be used in the service of God's mission, ask him to work through you to accomplish his will. Petition Christ for an infusion of faith in your life and trust God's power to work in and through you. If you sense that your desire to be recognized is a hindrance to God's work through you, pray for God to enable you to surrender any desire for recognition or accolades when serving his mission. Ask Jesus to hide you behind his cross so that he alone may be seen and glorified.

PRAYER

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we long for your presence and power to minister in your church and to those in need around us. We submit ourselves fully and completely to all you desire to do in and through us. Infuse your church with faith as we submit to you. We pray to see the gifts of faith, miracles, and healing at work in your body. We submit any desire to be recognized for our work, and we place all focus on you, Jesus. We pray in faith, anticipating your power and presence to work in and through us for your glory alone.

Jesus Still Heals

Brian Sutton

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better, she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering (Mark 5:25–29 NIV).

Wow! Jesus healed this woman, and he still heals today! In this remarkable narrative, Jesus was approached by a woman who had nothing to lose because she had lost everything. Her physical infirmity had not only cost her all her material wealth, but it had isolated her from religious life, relationships, and happiness. She was desperate to touch Jesus, the Healer. Her desperation led to her faith, which led to her healing.

The woman with the hemorrhaging issue pushed through the large group of people following along with Jesus on the journey to the home of Jairus. He was one of the synagogue leaders who had requested Jesus come to his home to touch and heal his sick daughter. They were physically pressing against Jesus as they walked. Suddenly, Jesus felt

healing virtue flow from his body. Immediately, he stopped walking, which created a human traffic jam! The question Jesus asked next confused the unknowing and unperceiving. "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30). This was such a strange question to those accompanying Jesus. They replied, "You see the people crowding against you, and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" (v. 31). However, the touch Jesus received from this desperate woman was reciprocated by the powerful touch of the Healer. Her touch was no ordinary touch, but his touch for her could only be given by the Great Physician.

Although Jesus knew who touched him, when the desperate woman was confronted with the question, "Who touched me?" she openly admitted it was her unclean hand that touched him. Because she knew Jewish law, she knew by



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touching someone she would make them unclean. However, she was unaware that Jesus could not and cannot be contaminated. His touch will only decontaminate! He cannot be made sick; he can only make well. “Your faith has made you well,” (v. 34) was the proclamation that her touch of faith was being met with his touch of healing virtue.

While this testimony of healing from scripture is true, we also know Jesus is still the Healer of our bodies. Though we presently live in a fallen world, marred by sin, Jesus has overcome death, hell, and the grave. He is the provider of healing for our physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. When we reach out to touch him in faith, we do so asking in accordance with his word and his will. Jesus is still our Healer, and he is still accessible through prayer.

The biblical promise of “by his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5) has not changed. To pray for healing does not come with a guarantee that we will always be healed in this life. If everyone everywhere was always healed when we prayed, no one would ever die. Though it is not always God’s will to divinely heal in every instance in this life, we forfeit opportunities to commune with Jesus, pursue his will in faith, and receive his healing touch if we do not pray.

If you need to be healed today, reach through the doubt, fear, anxiety, lack, worry, and crowds to touch Jesus in faith. He will touch you back. He is the Healer, and as we reach in faith, believing that he can heal us according to his will, he is always reciprocating our touching him with his overwhelming touch of love for us.

TODAY’S PRAYER FOCUS

Do you or someone close to you have a physical, emotional, spiritual, mental, social, or other need today? Jesus is still the Healer! If you need healing, go to God in prayer now and ask him to heal you. Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who

seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8 NIV). Tell Jesus your need and surrender it to him. Ask him to deliver to you the same healing virtue he gave to the desperate woman in Mark’s gospel account.

If you are praying for someone you know, possibly someone in your family or a friend, who is sick and in need of healing, ask God to heal them today. Pray for God to increase your faith in him. After you have requested for him to heal, give praise and adoration to Jesus that he is our Healer. Thank him for all He has done and all he is going to do.

When you have prayed for healing, leave the need in the hands of Jesus and stand in faith that his will is going to be accomplished. Praise him each day for supplying your need and continue to ask him in faith believing for healing. Prayer is more than only petition and intercession; it is also communion and conversation. No prayer is ever lost or wasted. Like the persistent widow, described in Luke 18:1–8, continue to pray for healing. Enlist others to join you in praying for healing for you or whomever you are praying for (James 5:14–16).

PRAYER

Jesus, I believe you are the healer of our souls, bodies, emotions, minds, and whole beings. Nothing is impossible for you. Increase our faith today and anoint our prayers as we press through the crowd of doubt to touch the hem of your garment for healing.

We submit our wills to your will, and we pray in faith for healing. Jesus, we also pray for those who are sick among us. For your glory and your kingdom’s sake, send an outbreak of divine healing throughout the world. Through this healing, draw unbelievers to experience your healing power, the forgiveness of sins, and the reconciliation of hearts to the heavenly Father.

We praise you for being our Healer. Empower your church to walk in faith today, trusting ultimate healing will come through the full culmination of your kingdom at your return.

WHITE WING MESSENGER

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. All things were made through Him and for Him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through Him the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of believers. He is the empowering presence of God in the life of the Christian and the church. The Father has sent His Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that He died in our place. The believer's sins are forgiven by the shedding of His blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christ-like life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

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About the Church of God of Prophecy

The Church of God of Prophecy is a vibrant, worldwide body of believers, united in worship, working hand-in-hand to share God's love and a message of hope to the brokenhearted. The organization has more than a million members and more than 10,000 ministers, worshiping in more than 10,000 churches or missions in 135 nations of the world.

Church of God of Prophecy Core Values

- Prayer
- The Harvest
- Leadership Development
- Biblical Stewardship
- Service

Vision Statement

Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit

Mission Statement

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with passion for Christian union.

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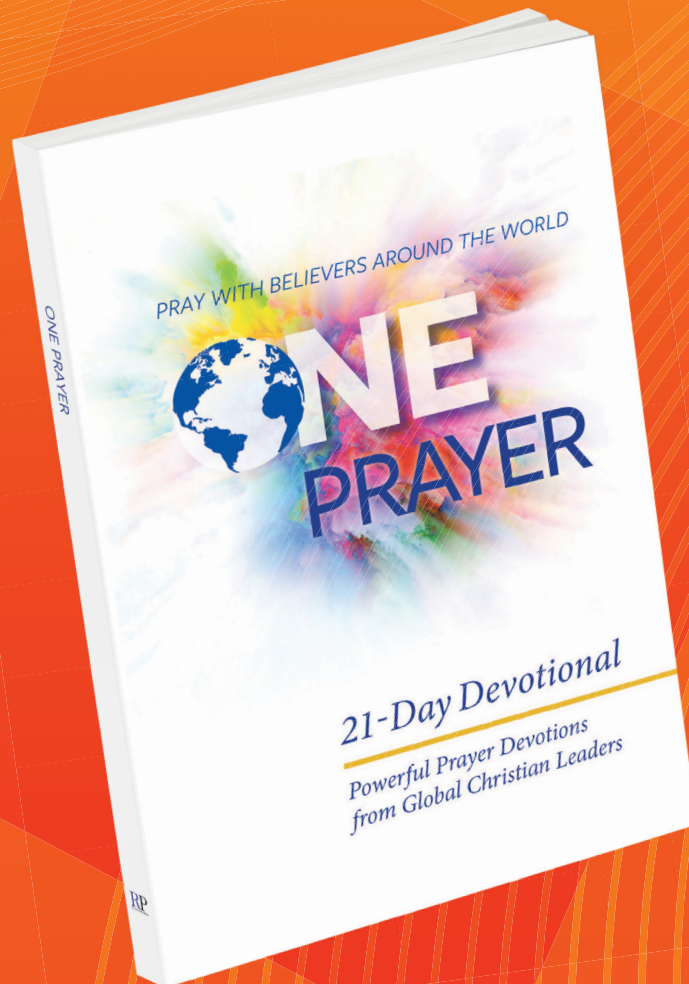
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