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THE POWER OF PRAYER

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DR. BEN CARSON



SENATOR
ORRIN HATCH, (UT)

“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 I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” II Chronicle 7:14

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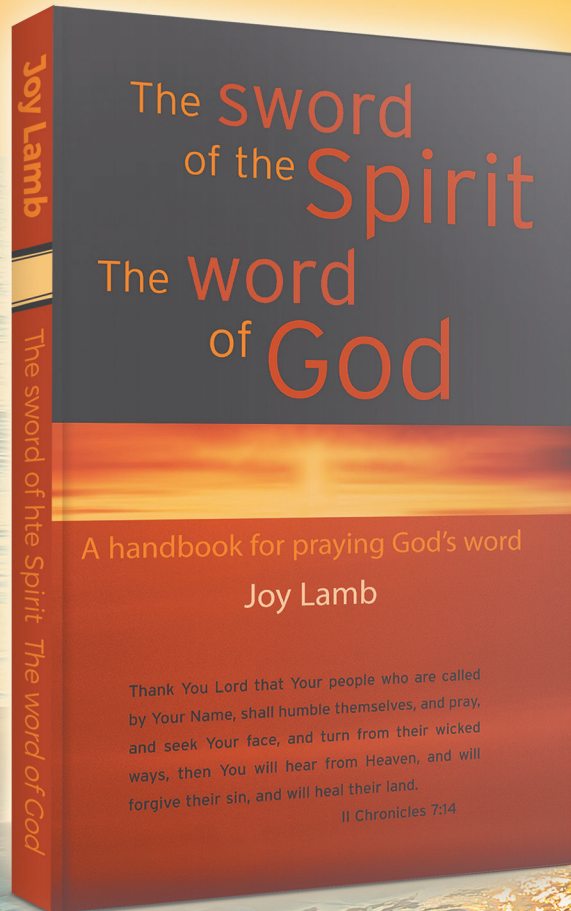
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A handbook for praying God's Word



When confronted with the task of praying for many people with desperate needs, author Joy Lamb asked the Lord what to do. She clearly heard, "Pray My Word, child. It brings healing in all areas. Trust Me and pray My Word."

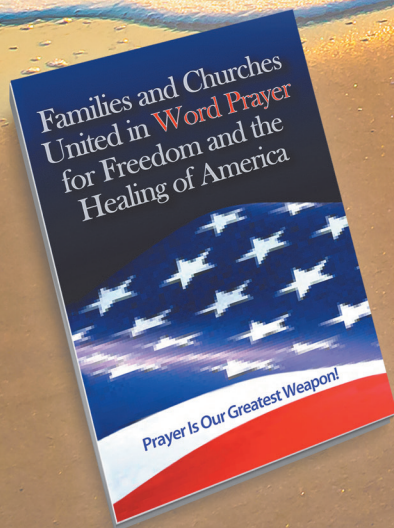
For more than 27 years she has been obedient to that call. Joy, and thousands of readers who use this book, have seen God transform individual lives and communities around the world. Today, Joy is joined by several thousand prayer groups throughout America and the world who pray these Scriptures in unity.

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-- Francis S. McNutt
Director of Christian Healing Ministries

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Can one truly ‘pray without ceasing?’



By Barry C. Black

When I was young, my mother gave my siblings and me 5 cents for each Bible verse we memorized. This motivated us to look for the “low-hanging fruit” of short verses, finding in 1 Thessalonians 5 a treasure trove. First Thessalonians 5:16 states, “Rejoice evermore.” Verse 18 says, “Always give thanks for this is God’s will for you.” Verse 19 tells us, “Quench not the Spirit.” Verse 20 enjoins, “Despise not prophesying.” Verse 22 admonishes, “Avoid the appearance of evil.”

I loved these terse, money-making verses. First Thessalonians 5:17, however, not only provided me with 5 cents but with a question. The text says, “Pray without ceasing.” Three simple words, but what could they possibly mean? I pondered the question: “Is it possible to pray nonstop?”

So, adoration for God can enable you to be continuously aware of His presence, creating a desire to punctuate your days, hours, and minutes with the communion and fellowship of prayer. This adoration can transform sporadic and stammering prayers into a constant and characteristic attitude of reverence and dependence on a higher power.

I was puzzled by this verse, “Pray without ceasing.” Did Jesus pray nonstop? The Bible says (Luke 2) that he was a carpenter for at least 18 years before being baptized by John in the Jordan River. Surely this work prevented Jesus him from continuous prayer, yet this Bible verse challenges us to pray continuously — to bathe our years, months, days and moments with prayer: “Pray without ceasing.”

As I grew and matured spiritually, I began to believe that it is indeed possible to pray nonstop. It’s possible because we can cultivate a spirit that is habitually devotional, keeping our hearts attuned to the transcendent. The Greek word for “without ceasing” in 1 Thessalonian 5:17 is *adialeptos*,

which doesn’t mean nonstop — but actually means constantly recurring. In other words, we can punctuate our moments with intervals of recurring prayer.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American essayist, brings some clarification on this theme in his sermon “Pray Without Ceasing.” Emerson made the following observation: “It is not only when we audibly and in form, address our petitions to the Deity that we pray. We pray without ceasing. Every secret wish is a prayer. Every house is a church; the corner of every street is a closet of devotion” (*Thevalueofsparrows.com*2014/02/02/).

To illustrate further, while in college, I fell in love with the woman I would eventually marry. That romantic experience helped me better frame this biblical command to pray continuously, punctuating one’s life with prayer.

I knew intuitively that it’s possible to love without ceasing, for the presence of one’s beloved engenders recurring adoration. For me, that adoration has continued unabated for decades.

So, adoration for God can enable you to be continuously aware of His presence, creating a desire to punctuate your days, hours and minutes with the communion and fellowship of prayer. This adoration can transform sporadic and stammering prayers into a constant and characteristic attitude of reverence and dependence on a higher power.

I remember fondly an old 1950s Jimmy Stewart movie, “Harvey.” Stewart plays Elwood P. Dodd, an eccentric

bachelor who interacts constantly with an invisible 6-foot-3-inch rabbit named Harvey. Throughout the entire movie, Stewart’s character is aware of interacting unceasingly with his imaginary friend.

The eternal God, our friend, isn’t imaginary. The glory of the sunrise and the majesty of the sunset remind us that He is alive and well. Songwriter Ervin Drake wrote: “Every time I hear a newborn baby cry or touch a leaf or see the sky, then I know why I believe.” This song, “I Believe,” reminds us of the God to whom our prayers ascend, who inspires us to punctuate our lives with joyful and recurring intercession.

You see, it’s possible to keep your mind consciously in God’s presence. Perhaps this is what the psalmist was suggesting when he declared, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praises will continually be in my mouth” (Psalm 34:1). This may also be what the prophet Isaiah is attempting to emphasize when he says, “God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds focus on Him” (Isaiah 26:3).

.....
Retired Navy Rear Adm. Barry C. Black is the 62nd chaplain of the U.S. Senate. Elected in 2003, he became the first African-American and the first Seventh-day Adventist to hold this position. He was formerly chief of chaplains of the Navy, and chief of the Navy Chaplain Corps.



By Vonette Bright

Prayer is the greatest privilege and most revolutionary power available to the Christian, and God’s Word promises us its effectiveness.

You can find information, on any

subject, at the click of your computer keys. Never before in the history of man have there been so many questions with so few answers. That’s because most of the challenges we face are not the kinds where you can simply consult a search engine. Most of our world’s challenges need spiritual answers, and those answers will come only through prayer.

I know beyond a doubt that God moved upon my heart with the realization that through united, specific and earnest prayer, we can move the hand of God. We can have a part in helping to change the world. That is such a powerful thought, and I have seen it work.

The characteristics of prayer

History records no significant movement of the Spirit of God that has not been preceded by a strong emphasis on prayer.

It is difficult to believe God has an answer for national and worldwide needs until we have seen Him provide for our own personal needs. Just as we care for our families and their physical needs, we must exercise prayer as the perfect expression of faith. Once we begin to see answers to our personal prayers, it will be easier to believe God for answers to prayers concerning our country and the rest of the world.

As James states, “The reason you don’t have what you want is that you don’t ask God for it” (James 4:2).

Jesus said, “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14).

I believe prayer could change the tide of violence that plagues our world. There is no limit to the power of God.

We have recorded evidence that great spiritual revivals and national reformations have been ignited and fueled by group prayer.

I pray that the people of this country will unite as a powerful force through prayer.

.....
Vonette Bright is founder of the National Day of Prayer and co-founder of Campus Crusade for Christ.

**“If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”
– Matthew 17:20**

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A nation in need of re-harnessing prayer's power



By Shirley Dobson

Relationship is the core of effective, powerful prayer.

Each of us has been given the ability to come before God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16) at any time to communicate with our Creator. This is one of the truths that makes our faith unique, but it can be difficult for our minds to grasp.

On an earthly level, we are not accustomed to this kind of unlimited access to those in authority, but God is different. We can approach Him in an instant. He wants to hear from us and is pleased when we call. He will never put us "on hold," tell us He will respond later, leave His phone off the hook or let an answering machine take our message.

Jesus Christ wants a relationship with us that is built on time spent in His presence and through reading His Word. On a personal level, we can speak to Him about anything and everything. Yet, although prayer is simple, its principles must be

learned. Even the disciples asked their Master to teach them to pray.

There is no underestimating the importance of prayer in a family or its influence and vital importance in our nation. I feel this very strongly because it was so decidedly absent from my own early childhood experience. The little girl who I once was grew up in a troubled home where daily prayers were unknown, and the sounds of joyful praise were never heard. I'm aware of what family-centered spiritual training can mean to a child because I discovered it for myself when I was about 8 years old.

What a contrast to the rich spiritual heritage of my husband's family. He has often told me how his grandmother used to gather the six children around her for daily devotions. She prayed, "Lord, it is my most urgent request that each of these children will come to know You personally. If one of them fails to make that commitment, it would have been better that I never had been born." This is the priority she gave to her spiritual responsibility. Her prayers made such an impression on Jim's dad that he referred to them throughout his life.

This is the example our children need to see in us. But it is more than a model. Prayer and reverence for God must permeate every aspect of our lives and become a natural part of our life.

We need to learn how to become a people of prayer once again. Then and only then will God hear us from heaven and restore and heal our land. It is certain that many circumstances cannot be changed,

except by prayer. People do not change unless they learn to yield to the Lord as a result of prayers of others who diligently beseech God for their salvation. Prayer can change our hearts, our loved ones and even our society.

As we study the Scriptures — on the truths and promises of the Bible, our attitudes, thoughts and behaviors change. We are cleansed from within, and we are empowered to do battle on behalf of our Lord and the land we love.

As we pray for our nation, we need to let God break our hearts with the same things that break His heart.

The very life and death of Jesus are intercessory prayers for us. By dying for us, He interceded on our behalf before God, our heavenly Father. And as He prayed for us on earth, he continues to intercede for us before the Father's throne:

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Through his death, Jesus showed us the importance of praying for transgressors. By way of example, therefore, He is asking us to intercede in pray for the transgressors of our land.

God is calling us to intercession, but He wants us to be certain that His Word is with us as we pray. His Word brings life, power and faith to our prayers. We must remember that we are not alone when we pray — when we intercede for our nation. There is a band of fellow believers who stand with us, both in this country and

around the world. Jesus prays with us as well, and the Spirit empowers us. The Spirit of God is praying for us, with us and through us.

As we pray for our nation, we need to let God break our hearts with the same things that break His heart, never forgetting to love deeply the people of our country even though some may be involved in gross sins of immorality. The nation will be reached if the godly will remain faithful prayer warriors who walk in love and humility before Him.

What a privilege it is to serve the Lord in the vital ministry of intercession. As Andrew Murray points out, "like Christ, give yourself to God as a sacrifice for men: it is your highest nobility; it is your true and full union to Him. It will be to you, as to Him, your power of intercession. Beloved Christian! Come and give your whole heart and life to intercession, and you will know its blessedness and power. God asks nothing less. The world needs nothing less. Christ asks nothing less. Let nothing less be what we offer to God."

.....
Shirley Dobson is the wife of psychologist and author Dr. James C. Dobson and has served as chairwoman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force since 1991. Through the efforts of her team, more than 35,000 prayer gatherings are conducted by approximately 40,000 volunteers across the country. Several million people participate every year in this call to prayer for our nation, its leaders and citizens. To learn more or to get involved, visit www.NationalDayofPrayer.org.



By Kay Coles James

Prayer is really kind of odd when you stop to think about it. Whether spoken aloud, or composed in the recesses of your mind, the premise is that you are attempting to communicate with something or someone outside yourself, outside this world!

As a high school senior, I remember thinking, "If I am going to get down on my knees, share my innermost thoughts and feelings, plead to God to help solve all the high school craziness in my life, then I need to know if He is really there, and capable of doing anything about all of my

perceived problems!" Even bowing my head to pray before a meal seemed odd to me. Who am I talking to? What on earth did He have to do with the plate of food sitting in front of me?

Through the ministry of the Billy Graham Crusades, I found answers. He explained that Jesus is real, and worthy of our trust. Dr. Graham challenged me (and thousands of others that night) to give Jesus all rights to my life. He explained that if I took that step of faith, the God of the Universe, through His son Jesus Christ, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, would "take up residence in my life." I had no idea what that meant or how to accomplish it. I just invited Him into my life and determined to sit back and see what happened. Almost 50 years ago, I did just that. And then life happened.

Fast forward.

This is what I now know. God is real. Sometimes life is wonderful and full of happy surprises. Sometimes the hurt,

disappointment and pain seem unbearable. He loves me and cares about the details of my life. Miracles are real. God hears and answers every prayer.

Over the years, I have discovered that the more I know and experience God, the richer my prayer life becomes. As a young Christian, I would present God with my daily requests/demands. If they were not responded to exactly as I had asked, and within a timely manner, I was disappointed, annoyed and sometimes angry. What good is a God that can't or won't give me exactly what I want, when I want it?

After a lifetime of reading and studying the Bible, experiencing God's presence in my life, and seeing His reflection in nature, music and art, my view of God has radically changed. He is not Santa waiting for my prayers to drift up to the North Pole so that he can start fulfilling my wish list. No, he is the great I AM. He is the Alpha and the Omega. The all knowing, all powerful,

all loving, Creator God of the Universe! The more I know God, the more my prayer life changes.

For me, prayer is now far more than a daily ritual. It's quieting myself as I approach the throne and enter into His presence. It's offering up a grateful heart for the many blessings in my life. It's giving praise and thanksgiving. It's seeking comfort for a broken heart or a major disappointment. It's asking forgiveness for the sin in my life. It's seeking divine guidance and wisdom. Its aligning myself with God's will for my life. It's an opportunity to spend time with the God I love, and the God who has demonstrated over a lifetime His real and tangible love for me.

.....
Kay Coles James is an author and former presidential appointee who also served as Virginia's Secretary of Health. She currently serves on corporate boards and is president of the Gloucester Institute, a leadership training center for young African-Americans.

Conversations with God getting past the awkward start



By Daniel Lapin

Some people find that praying comes naturally, but for me that was not true. I am not embarrassed about this; after all, I did not grow up naturally able to navigate a sailboat or cook an omelet. I had to be taught these things. But nobody taught me how to pray.

One thing I had been taught was that praying is not just another word for begging. When they say there are no atheists in foxholes they're not really talking of praying; they mean begging. And begging only corrodes the soul. Either the passer-by carelessly drops a quarter into the outstretched hand or he ignores it and hurries on by. Either way, the beggar is demeaned. By contrast, true prayer is uplifting.

To discover how truly to pray I turned to the Hebrew language, his study of

which the second governor of the Plymouth Colony, William Bradford described this way:

"Though I am growne aged, yet I have a longing desire to see, with my owne eyes, something of that most ancient language, and holy tongue, in which the law and Oracles of God were written; and in which God and angels spoke to the Holy Patriarcks of old time; and what names were given to things at the Creation."

(History of the Plantation of Plymouth, 1651.)

Saying "I pray" in Hebrew is pronounced *ani mitpaleil*. Whereas Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses spoke with God, it wasn't until later that people had to settle for praying to God. From Scriptural context the word for praying evidently really means reconciling or judging. Judging and reconciling are really the same idea. Take two apparently incompatible realities and blend them into a unified outcome.

Furthermore, this Hebrew verb *mitpaleil* is what is called a reflexive verb, meaning it is something I do to myself. Thus, saying "I dress myself" in Hebrew is pronounced *ani mitlabeish*. While it is obvious that I dress myself, it is far less obvious that praying involves something I do to myself. No, not that I pray to myself of course but that praying to God involves judging or reconciling

something in myself.

Judging or reconciling something about me? Yes, reconciling two separate images of me; what I think of me and what God thinks of me. This can be a disconcerting exercise so we must ask what does this have to do with praying. When the Coast Guard must tow to safety a boat drifting into peril, they need to get a good strong tow rope across to the stricken vessel. They first throw or shoot across a light line which the mariners use to haul over the heavy rope that will actually be used for the tow.

In other words, in order to initially make contact a light cord, unsuitable for the ultimate task, must nonetheless be used to launch the process. Similarly, our ultimate intent is to communicate with God, we nonetheless need some way to establish contact and launch the process.

The most effective way to start a conversation with our Father in heaven, is to acknowledge that He has expectations of us. If we just start off with our hopes and expectations of God, we're just begging. But by first focusing on Him, we open communication. There is no communication when that beggar holds out his hand to us. However, if that same beggar attracts our attention by sincerely asking what he could do for us, authentic communication can result.

There is nothing more that God wants

from us than for us each to achieve our potential. Happily, God doesn't expect me to be Moses but He does expect me to be everything He created me to become. Seriously contemplating the gap between His view of me and the inadequate reality is the way to start authentic communication.

This is why both John Adams in March 1798 and Abraham Lincoln in March 1863 proclaimed, not merely a national day of prayer but a national day of prayer and humiliation. Humbling ourselves by openly acknowledging our failure to achieve God's vision of our destiny is a necessary prerequisite for prayer. Only by acknowledging God's expectations of us can we expect God to heed our expectations of Him.

Just like navigation and cooking, knowing the technique makes all the difference. Once I learned this portal to prayer the relief from existential loneliness I felt was palpable. I may have learned late but now knowing how truly to pray, I have made up for lost time. What is more, I embrace opportunities to teach others just how to pray.

.....
Rabbi Daniel Lapin is president of the American Alliance of Jews and Christians and author of the best-selling book, "Business Secrets from the Bible." His website is YouNeedA Rabbi.com.



By Lon Solomon

E. M. Bounds, the great man of prayer, wrote:

"Men are God's method. The church is always looking for better methods; God is looking for better men and women! The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods; He does not come on machinery; He does not anoint plans, but, rather, men and women — men and women of prayer."

He went on to say: "But never have

we had more churchgoers and fewer true saints. And it is prayer that makes saints. Holy character is formed by the power of real praying ... We must learn anew the worth of prayer. We must enter anew the school of prayer."

The saints of old constantly referred to a place they called their "prayer closet." It wasn't a literal "closet," but rather, a private place where they got on their knees in secret and met with God. It was a place where they humbled themselves before God, and confessed their sins before God, and pursued hard after God. It was a place where they (2 Cor. 7:1) "perfected their own holiness in the fear of God."

It was a place where they poured out their hearts in intercession. It was a place where they lingered, and persevered, and contended for their souls as well as the souls of others. It was a place where the carpet was worn down where their two knees fit. It was a place of earnestness

and fervency (Ps 63:1; Lk 22:34).

This is in contrast to our modern "prayer-lite." Praying while we're shaving, or putting on our make-up, or sitting in traffic, or falling asleep between sentences at bedtime. Sure — this is praying. But it is not powerful praying! It is not earnest, prevailing, fervent prayer. Serious prayer, that accomplishes serious things for God, is serious work.

Over the past several years, the Lord has been speaking me deeply about this in my own life. And He has also been helping us begin to build a coalition with like-minded pastors across the metro Washington area. One of the outgrowths of this new prayer coalition has been the Washington Prayer Gathering, held on the past two Columbus Days (2014 and 2015 — and planned for 2016) on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

People who love Jesus gather there from every denomination, racial group and ethnic background to worship the

Lord. And then we pray — for ourselves, for our churches, for our city and for our nation. And we beg God for mercy and ask Him to send revival. I urge you to plan to join us in 2016.

But it is not one, large, public prayer event that will move mountains for the Lord. Rather, it is constant, daily, private "prayer closet" sessions that will do so. And weekly times of God's Church gathering to pray and seek His face.

I believe that the greatest sin of the modern church is our prayerlessness. The Lord has convicted mine, and I hope He will do the same for you.

Let's remember: those Christ-followers who make the mightiest impact on their world for the Lord — and who see the mightiest answers to their prayers — are the ones who are the mightiest in their "prayer closets."

.....
Rev. Lon Solomon is senior pastor of McLean Bible Church.

Prayer can profoundly change everything, slowly, or from one minute to the next.

Prayer in the times of mountaintops and valleys



By Tim Scott

I can still remember the day that I fully gave my life to Jesus Christ. It was on Sept. 22, 1983. I had just turned 18 and was attending a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting at Presbyterian College. That day, one of my teammates — JR — held an altar call. Something was different. I went down, got on my knees and prayed. I told God about my greatest need. I needed for Him to love me unconditionally, accept me and guide me the way a father does.

I know in my heart that something special happened during that prayer. When I stood up, I had found my heavenly father. From that day forward, the importance of prayer has become clearer for me, and the results even more powerful.

Prayer, that simple ongoing conversation with our heavenly Father, has led me through the mountains and valleys of life. The most jarring personal low point since the death of my mentor when I was 19 years old came earlier this year — the tragic massacre at Emanuel AME in Charleston, South Carolina.

That June night, churchgoers were killed in cold blood by a young man whose heart was filled with hate. This unimaginable act took the lives of nine men and women, each mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters and friends. The Emanuel 9 are now forever etched into our state's history, and we continue to mourn for them and the future they all should have had.

But even in the midst of that dark time, we saw nine families, still reeling from grief and pain, show us the true power of faith. During the bond hearing for the man who was accused of murdering their loved ones, they shared three simple words: "We forgive

you." They stood in that courtroom and displayed for the world the absolute best of who we are as Americans. Upon watching this, I immediately thought of the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6, which states, in part "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The day after the shootings, I was also heartened to see the outpouring of support from folks around Washington as part of a prayer vigil on the Capitol grounds. People wanted to come together as a community and pray for the victims, their families and our beloved state. Members of Congress, from both sides of the aisle, staff, South Carolinians and those who had Charleston on their minds and in their hearts, paused to weep with and pray for us.

Because of the nine families and their strength, we saw our state come together perhaps as never before — with faith serving as the glue. I knew then, that with the power of prayer and the inspiration given to us by the families, that our city and state would work every single day to replace hate with love, pain with kindness and hostility with good will.

As I returned to Washington, I felt the love and support of my colleagues,

I know in my heart that something special happened during that prayer. When I stood up, I had found my heavenly father. From that day forward, the importance of prayer has become clearer for me, and the results even more powerful.

who shared that Charleston was a part of their prayer lists and morning devotionals. This reinforced to me that, as we debate important issues that determine the future of our nation, prayer is a powerful North Star in Congress. In fact, in my Washington office hangs a print depicting the first prayer in Congress. It reminds me that prayer is one of the important foundations that helps me work on behalf of our fellow Americans. I think of that first prayer, and one of the things they prayed for was that "Be Thou present, O God of wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them

to settle things on the best and surest foundation."

As we continue on that journey to build a better nation, I am constantly touched when a family or group will ask if they can pray for me. It is always a humbling moment, because with all of life's issues, they ask to pause to pray for me. And when they ask me if I have any special requests, nine out of 10 times, I ask them to pray for wisdom. I believe that remains the most important thing anyone can put on their prayer list for public servants at all levels. With wisdom from God, we can continue to bring people together, address the major issues facing America and ensure our great country remains a city on a hill. That should be all our prayers.

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Sen. Tim Scott (@SenatorTimScott) is South Carolina's junior senator. He serves on the Finance Committee; Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee; Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee; and the Special Committee on Aging. He is also a longtime member of Seacoast Church in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, and a former member of the church board.



Parishioners at the Emanuel A.M.E. Church Sunday, June 21, 2015, in Charleston, S.C., four days after a mass shooting that claimed the lives of its pastor and eight others. (AP Photo/David Goldman, Pool)

Calm amid the chaos of troubled Ireland



By Roma Downey

I grew up in “the troubles” of Northern Ireland. It was a terrible time of bombs exploding and gunbattles raging in our streets. Sirens wailed, soldiers marched, and I will never forget the fear that would come over us when — once again — we had to evacuate our school.

On more than one occasion, we experienced “near misses,” ducking down behind cars on the way home from school. One time, I even found a bullet hole in the hood of a coat I was wearing after I hid behind a tombstone as a gunfight raged around me. I was 11 years old and had been at the cemetery laying flowers on my mother’s grave.

My childhood was a time when no one in Ireland took security for granted. It was a time when we prayed like we meant it because we sometimes felt it was only

in God that we could find help in time of trouble.

It was during those turbulent years that I learned to pray, and those prayers have carried me through my life with all its joys and sorrows.

While my father died when I was young — as did my mother before him — he gave me a truly great gift. For he taught me how to pray.

He would huddle us around the dinner table every night, and — without fail — he would pray.

He prayed with thanks for the blessings we received, and he prayed for strength and protection in the challenges we faced. His praying made our home a refuge in the middle of the chaos that surrounded us, and he taught us that we must not take prayer for granted.

Some of the most precious memories of my childhood are of slipping my little hand into his, as we prayed together. He taught me that God was always there, that God is the one person who we can always rely upon, and God is the calm in the storm raging around us. He can grant us “peace that passes all understanding” and we can “cast all our cares upon Him for He cares for us.” When we prayed, we were less afraid. When we prayed, we felt calm.

Ours was a faith tested by war and fear.

Thank God that war ended long ago, and the people of Northern Ireland no longer live in fear. My faith is a comfort to me, and I pray today — every day — because my father took the time to teach me to pray. It is part of my daily practice. To create a space for grace to take time to be still and to be with God.

These days, I no longer live in a war zone. Many years ago, I moved to America. I love this country and am grateful for the opportunities I have found here. We live in a time where we are seeing technological and medical progress. A time where almost any impossibility seems within our reach. We live in a world where cars will soon drive themselves, where great and historic diseases seem to face an inevitable demise, and where instantaneous communication makes a planet filled with 7 billion feel smaller than ever before. Social media allows us to share our lives with those we love, and to be inspired by those we’ve never met.

Yet, suddenly — almost from nowhere — we seem also to be living in a time of nearly unprecedented global chaos.

Conflict and pain are inflicting millions, wars wage on every continent, and the worst evil of all time seems to be lurking in the shadows of the places we once thought to be the safest. We feel horror and disbelief as we weep for Paris. We

watch with broken hearts as the beauty of the Greek islands is strewn with the clothes of fleeing refugees. Fear seems strangely close.

We turn to prayer.

The truth is that when crisis comes, we do always pray. It’s our knee-jerk reaction.

Once Jesus decided to teach his disciples about prayer, and he began with these four words, “and when you pray” One of those words really strikes me. It’s the word, “when.” He doesn’t say IF you pray. He says WHEN you pray; for he expects us to be praying.

C.S. Lewis said regarding prayer, “I pray because I can’t help myself. I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God, it changes me.”

Let’s begin there. At least we can pray, at least we should pray, and in our prayer we may find that elusive peace that the world longs for. Let’s pray that we do.

Roma Downey is a celebrated Emmy- and Golden Globe-nominated actress and producer best known for “Touched by an Angel” and “The Bible” series. She is executive producer of MGM/Paramount’s epic reimagining of the classic story “Ben Hur,” and is president of Light Workers Media.



By Luonne Abram Rouse

Prayer is sacred intimacy. Spending hours and days with God while making decisions in marriage and building familial relations is blessed and admirable. A practice of praying has been meaningful to people throughout human history.

In the Biblical book of Genesis, the fourth chapter and verse 26, the words according to the King James Version reads: And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.

Prayer is intimacy with the Greatest Transformer that is possible throughout

The intimacy of prayer in sacred marriage

all of existence. Wisdom, discipline and understanding shall be ushered into familial relationships as the family prays together and in separateness of family members there are individual prayers for the entire family. Marriage and family ministry teaches the functional aspects of prayer for the purpose of guiding the relational benefits of prayer.

FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF PRAYER

Functional aspects of sacred intimacy has to do with asking and receiving. Prayer as revealed in Matthew the 7th chapter is “asking, seeking and knocking”, in order to receive. Key to intimate communication with God is wisdom and understanding of the intent of God, so as to be disciplined in living in agreement with sacred principles. (1 John 5:14-15)

The image of glorification is the desirable outcome for couples and families. Praying to do no harm, sacred intimacy promotes the desire to please God (Colossians 3:1). The need to know the will of God through prayer is an Old Testament (Jeremiah 29:12-13) instruction, too. Couples and families are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians

5:17) as the intentions of God are revealed.

RELATIONAL BENEFITS OF PRAYER

There are relational benefits of prayer. Jesus prayed in sacred intimacy (Matthew 26:41). The first benefit of prayer is in fulfillment of the will of God. The benefit of sacred intimacy is an everlasting communion providing abundance of wisdom (James 1:5) for persons asking (James 4:2) and striving to be free of troubles in this world. (Psalm 34:6)

Marriages and families are threaten by day-to-day occurrences. Praying is the most intimate means of power (Jeremiah 33:3) and can transform lives, including the lives of the hopeless (Romans 10:13,14). Thus, sacred intimacy ought to be in every home and taught at least in the manner that Jesus taught the original disciples as revealed and given in Matthew 6:9-15. This kind of intimate relation yields benefits in the name of the one, who influences people to seek the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25:31-46) and live guided by the Holy Spirit (Roman 8:26-27). Families are meant to be healthy, loving and strong. The great path to meeting daily

necessities, forgiving others, defeating evil and pleasing God (Hebrew 11:5-6) is through sacred intimacy of prayer.

Sculptured prayer shall be done by people of faith in all places and in all times. (1 Timothy 2:8) Sculpture prayers in truth. There is wisdom in connecting John 1:14; 14:6; 18:37 and Proverbs 23:23 with Psalm 119:72, 127 and 162. My wife, Maria, and I are blessed in a marriage that is protected and anointed by intimate prayer. Clients, church members, newlyweds and persons engaged to be married have numerous times requested to have what is considered a model marriage. Their desire is for a haven of peace with love, joy and the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) So, they ask: “How may we have a model marriage? It is in the intimate relationship with God that perfection is to be made.

Luonne Abram Rouse is a United Methodist Pastor, LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist) and executive board member of the American Clergy Leadership Conference. He is also a Fellow-AAPC, Adjunct Professor.

The power of the 10-second prayer

“God, I’m asking You not to let these men die.”



By William “Jerry” Boykin

Dasht-e Kavir, Iran — April 24, 1980 — 22:30 hours.

I stood watching in disbelief as flames reached skyward into the darkness of the Iranian desert. The Delta Force was here — in this remote spot about a 100 miles from the Iranian capital, Tehran — because we’d been directed by President Carter to rescue 52 American diplomats being held by a group of radical students at the U.S. Embassy in the capital. This was a refueling stop before we made our final night assault on the embassy to bring our fellow Americans back to their

families and to an American public that was eager to welcome them home.

Now our hopes had turned to disappointment and desperation as we gazed at the burning wreckage of an Air Force C-130 and a Navy RH-53 helicopter, which had collided on the ground after refueling. As the helicopter pilot had attempted to reposition after completing his refueling from fuel bladders in the C-130, he’d lost his equilibrium — he “went vertigo,” in aviation lingo. Lifting off, he’d lost control and crashed into the C-130, slamming into the top and left side of the cargo plane. The eruption was immediate; aviation fuel exploded in the helicopter, engulfing the C-130 in a massive ball of high-octane fire.

Initially, I turned to run as I felt the heat and saw pieces of metal flying out into the desert. But I didn’t go far, only a few steps, before I became fully aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit. I even sensed Him calling me to stop and turn back toward the wreckage. I spun around, knowing that an explosion would come quickly when the fuel in the C-130 finally ignited. Then the reality hit me: Forty-five Delta Force men were trapped inside the wreckage with no way out and no chance to survive the fire. And I could not help them.

My plea was sincere. They needed a miracle, and there was no time for a great oration or for the promises of what I would do in return if God would come through for them. There wasn’t even time for me to go through my normal routine of thanking God for everything He’d already done for me in the past....

Only 18 hours earlier, I had stood with these men in an old Russian MiG base in Wadi Qena, Egypt, as we prayed for God to go with us on this mission. I’d led the prayer that morning before we launched the operation, petitioning God to keep His hand of protection upon us. And now I was watching those same men die a fiery death while I stood helplessly by.

It took only seconds before I instinctively began pleading with God for the lives of these men. My prayer was that of a desperate man who knew that only

God could save those 45 souls in that wreckage. “Oh God,” I pleaded, “please spare them! They trusted You, Lord! In Jesus’ name, bring them out alive. God, I’m asking You not to let these men die.”

It was all I could do — and the most important thing I could do.

My plea was sincere. They needed a miracle, and there was no time for a great oration or for the promises of what I would do in return if God would come through for them. There wasn’t even time for me to go through my normal routine of thanking God for everything He’d already done for me in the past, or for telling Him what a worthless sinner I was (as if He didn’t know). And no time for pomp or style or fancy words. Those men needed this miracle now.

So, there it was, my 10-second prayer. And it was all I had to offer. “Over to You now, God.”

Suddenly, the right troop door of the C-130 opened. I could barely see through the flames, but instantly I saw the miracle take shape. Forty-five men jumped one by one through those flames and out onto the desert floor, then ran from the crash like a redbone hound on the scent of a raccoon.

“Yes, Lord — thank You, Lord! You are so awesome, God!” I spoke the words aloud as I ran to greet these men and to help direct them to the safety of the other C-130s some distance away.

Does God hear and answer every prayer we pray as believers in Him? Yes. Sometimes His answer is “yes,” sometimes it’s “no,” and many times His answer is, “Wait.”

All things are done — and all prayers are answered — according to God’s loving grace and His will in our lives. We may not understand His plan or His reasons for how our prayers are answered, but rest assured God has a plan. Many times I have found significant opportunities for those 10-second prayers, sustaining my life and faith and pushing me forward to fulfill the plan He’s set out for me.

And that plan definitely includes an ongoing relationship between you and Him that is marked every day by your prayers ... and His answers.

Lieutenant General William “Jerry” Boykin (U.S. Army ret.), was one of the original members of the elite Delta Force. After a military career of 36 years, he now serves as executive vice president at the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C.



Sunday, November 6, 2016 is . . .

Prayer Force One SUNDAY

The Sunday Before We Elect Our Next President

Save The
Date!

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall 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."

II Chronicles 7:14



Then
Participate!

"Prayer Force One Sunday is not an event, but a date. We are asking every individual Christian, every home, and every church, ministry and denomination to participate in their own way. To find out how you can become involved in your own community, please visit our website listed below."

Senator Ed Moore, (OK-Ret.)
President, Prayer Force One



www.PrayerForceOne.com

Prayer changed the trajectory of my life



By Ben Carson

I grew up in a home that offered daily proof of the power of prayer. I look back at the remarkable experiences of my life, and I know without question that my mother's daily prayers interceding on behalf of my brother and me changed the trajectory of our lives. Raised in dire poverty in inner city Detroit and Boston, the options available to me were limited. But my mother fully understood that through prayer and petition, we could present our requests to God whose power is limitless.

During her prayer time, God impressed upon her the importance of

education. She herself had little education. But she knew that it was the key to a better life. She prayed for wisdom on how to help us escape the bonds of poverty and crime that surrounded us. God's counsel during my mother's prayer time changed the course of my life. Mother required my brother and me to read books and to write written reports on each book. A deep love of learning and discovering new ideas was born.

I can recall time after time, when the power of prayer changed my life for good. There was a time in my youth when I had an erratic and violent temper. It is to God's glory that prayers were answered so completely that today, there is no trace of that angry youngster. He is so far from who I have been in the last half century that the mainstream media finds it hard to believe that he ever existed. But those who have experienced the power of prayer know that when God fixes a problem, he doesn't just do a paint job. He fixes the problem.

I am only one of many whose lives are marked by the power of prevailing prayer. The great ministers John and Charles Wesley attribute the positive direction of their lives to the determination of their mother to spend time with

God in prayer. In spite of the daily demands of raising over 10 children at any given time, Susanna Wesley's prayers served as the guiding force in the lives of John and Charles Wesley.

Just as God transforms the hearts of young men through prayer, prayer can be the tool to transform communities and the leadership and direction of nations.

The need for prayer and the divine guidance, protection and benefit that prayer provides is as needed today as it has ever been. I believe that prayer changes the hearts and minds of people who are prayed for, that prayer changes the circumstances for the impoverished and downtrodden, and that prayer changes the strength of those who intercede in prayer for others. Just as much I believe we grow closer to God as we pray. I also believe we grow closer to those for whom we pray, and we grow closer to those with whom we pray.

Our leaders once walked in the full understanding of what it meant for this nation to be founded based on Judeo-Christian values. There was a time when our leaders joined everyday citizens by humbling themselves and praying for the nation.

I am encouraged because on the campaign trail, I have met thousands of fellow Americans who understand in real and tangible ways the true power of prayer and the importance of praying for our nation and our leaders. I believe that the success of my campaign is because of Americans praying for me, my family and my campaign staff every day. I am humbled and grateful to receive those prayers.

During times of crisis our nation turns to prayer in moments of silence and in ceremonies. I long for a day when we as a nation grasp prayer by leaders and the citizenry as more than just symbolic reverence but as genuine appreciation for the favor which God has lavished on our land.

I take God at His word. I know that America will hear from heaven and God will heal our land when we seek his face and humble ourselves in prayer.

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Dr. Benjamin Carson, Sr. was director of pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center for 29 years. He is currently running for the Republican presidential nomination.



By Mark Batterson

In the first century B.C., a severe drought in Israel threatened an entire generation. In desperation, the people asked a Jewish sage named Honi to pray for rain. What he did next became legend, as recorded in the Talmud. With the faith of Elijah, Honi drew a circle in the sand and prayed this prayer: "Sovereign Lord, I swear before your great name that I will not leave this circle until you have mercy upon your children."

As his prayer ascended to heaven, rain descended on the earth. Ultimately, Honi the Circle Maker was honored "for the prayer that saved a generation."

Our prayers should not be timid. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Approach the throne of

grace with confidence." Translation: God honors bold prayers because bold prayers honor God. Truth be told, the greatest tragedy in life are the prayers that go unanswered because they go unasked.

It's the story of Honi that inspired me to write "The Circle Maker." And that book has inspired some bold prayers. I've met NFL coaches who are circling their stadiums; congressmen who are circling the Capitol; realtors who are circling their listings; and students who are circling their schools. One of my favorite stories is the man who decided to circle his bank, praying for a financial miracle, until the police showed up! Be careful what you circle!

The physical act of circling isn't what's important, though there is biblical precedent. The Israelites circled Jericho thirteen times over seven days before the walls came down.

Circling in prayer is less about a geometric shape, and more about persistence in prayer. Sometimes you have to pray through until you break through. And when you do, you discover that prayer is the difference between

the best you can do and the best God can do. Prayer is the difference between you fighting for God and God fighting for you. Prayer is the difference between letting things happen and making things happen.

In 1996, my wife and I started pastoring National Community Church. It was small group of nineteen people, but we prayed bold prayers. Nearly two decades later, NCC is one church with eight campuses in the Washington, D.C. Metro area. God has blessed us beyond our wildest dreams, but that certainly isn't a testament to us. It's a testament to the power of prayer.

On a hot August day in 1996, I felt prompted to pray a circle around Capitol Hill. It was inspired by the promise in Joshua 1:3: "I will give you everywhere you set your foot." That 4.7-mile prayer walk was the catalyst for the miracles God has done since. It's no coincidence that we own several properties right on that prayer circle — Ebenezer's Coffeehouse (201 F Street, NE), the Miracle Theatre (535 8th Street, SE), and the Blue Castle (770 M Street, SE).

Of course, it's not about buildings. Technically speaking, you can't go to church because you are the church. The greatest miracles are the thousands of people who have discovered the transforming power of God's grace in those physical spaces and places! Each one is an answer to prayer!

James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask."

What do you need to start circling in prayer? Maybe it's your children; a situation at work; or a God-ordained dream. Or perhaps, it's one of God's promises. One prayer can change anything. One prayer can change everything. Go ahead and work like it depends on you, but make sure you pray like it depends on God.

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Mark Batterson is the author of The New York Times best-seller, "The Circle Maker," and founder and pastor of the National Community Church, with eight locations in DC and Northern Virginia. One of the church's core beliefs is that the church ought to be the most creative place on the planet.



Advancing Religious Freedom Around the World

"It's a great honor to prayerfully support the extraordinary work of Hardwired. These peaceful warriors work powerfully to advance dignity and freedom in the face of religious oppression, which, as the world sees, is escalating every day.

So often, the heartbreak we see is overwhelming. We look away and ask, "What can we do?" We can pray and act in support of all who are being persecuted.

Please take the time to hear the stories of people who need our help. Among countless others, my heart and tears are moved by a courageous young Yezidi woman named Bazi. During her visit to America, which Hardwired made possible, our community hosted an event for her and continues to cover her in prayer. Her purpose in visiting our country was an appeal to Congress to take immediate action to stop ISIS.

Last year, with your prayers and Hardwired's efforts, Sudanese Christian Meriam Ibrahim went from a death sentence to freedom. But many others, like Asia Bibi in Pakistan, still need our prayers and support.

Whatever your political beliefs, whatever your religious tradition and faith, nothing can stop you from visiting www.hardwiredglobal.org and joining people of every belief in supporting Hardwired's work to end unimaginable cruelty. Together, we truly can create meaningful change for the people who need our help.

During this holiday season, please know your passion, your humanity, your prayers, and any possible financial support are able to make an enormous difference. Please give hope and a voice to people who are being stripped of their humanity."



Kathy Ireland
CEO/Chief Designer, ki WW
and Hardwired advocate



Would Congress have taken steps to prosecute and stop ISIS if they had not heard from one of the young girls enslaved by an American jihadi?



Do you know why Muslims mobilized a grassroots effort to defend Meriam Ibrahim's religious freedom when she was sentenced to death in Sudan?



Do you think Nepal would be a secular country today if Christians had been unable to convince others of the importance of religious freedom in the new constitution?



Can you imagine what Iraq would look like today if we had spent the past decade inspiring more leaders to defend one another's religious freedom?



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Prayer: The source of peace, joy and perspective



By Sarah Young

Over the years, people have asked me about my daily prayer practices. Prayer is so much a part of who I am that it's quite a challenge for me to answer that question. Nonetheless, I will try.

I get a head start on my day by praying before I get out of bed in the morning. Soon after I get up, I go into our sunroom, where I pray at length for readers of all my books. Then I read the day's entry in *Jesus Calling* and pray specifically for all those who are reading it, including readers of the children's version. After that, I continue praying while I walk on the treadmill in our sunroom. All of this happens before I have breakfast. My prayers continue throughout the day in various ways — interwoven with my daily routines.

I also like to pray with other people — especially my husband and close friends. I have a dear friend who helps teach a weekly Bible study to incarcerated women. Before she makes the long drive to the prison, she comes over to pray with me in the sunroom. This provides encouragement for both of us. Our prayers give her confidence as she prepares to go to the prison, and she assures me that I am an integral part of the Bible study through my prayers.

It is important for all of us to take time to quiet our minds and communicate with God. The more hectic our lives, the more we need this time to connect with Him. Sometimes it helps to have a special place in your home where you can be still and pray without interruptions. As I've mentioned, the sunroom in our home is that special place for me.

One reason people neglect prayer is that it may not lead to the desired outcome quickly (if ever). But prayer can

bring about results that are unexpected and even more wonderful than getting the answer we had hoped for. Prayer changes us as we communicate with God — gradually transforming us into the ones He designed us to be. Also, as

stress and anxiety. It is wise to ask Him to help you see things — including your problems — from His perspective. It's so comforting to know that God is with you in the midst of your difficulties.

Jesus Calling grew out of my personal prayer life, my many years of writing in prayer journals. As soon as this devotional book was published, I started praying daily for readers, and I have never stopped. Over the years, my prayers for the readers of all my books have increased — in length and in scope.

we pray, we are reminded that He is in control.

A sense of nearness to God is perhaps the most delightful blessing you can receive through praying persistently. Another benefit is relief from

Jesus Calling grew out of my personal prayer life, my many years of writing in prayer journals. As soon as this devotional book was published, I started praying daily for readers, and I have never stopped. Over the years,

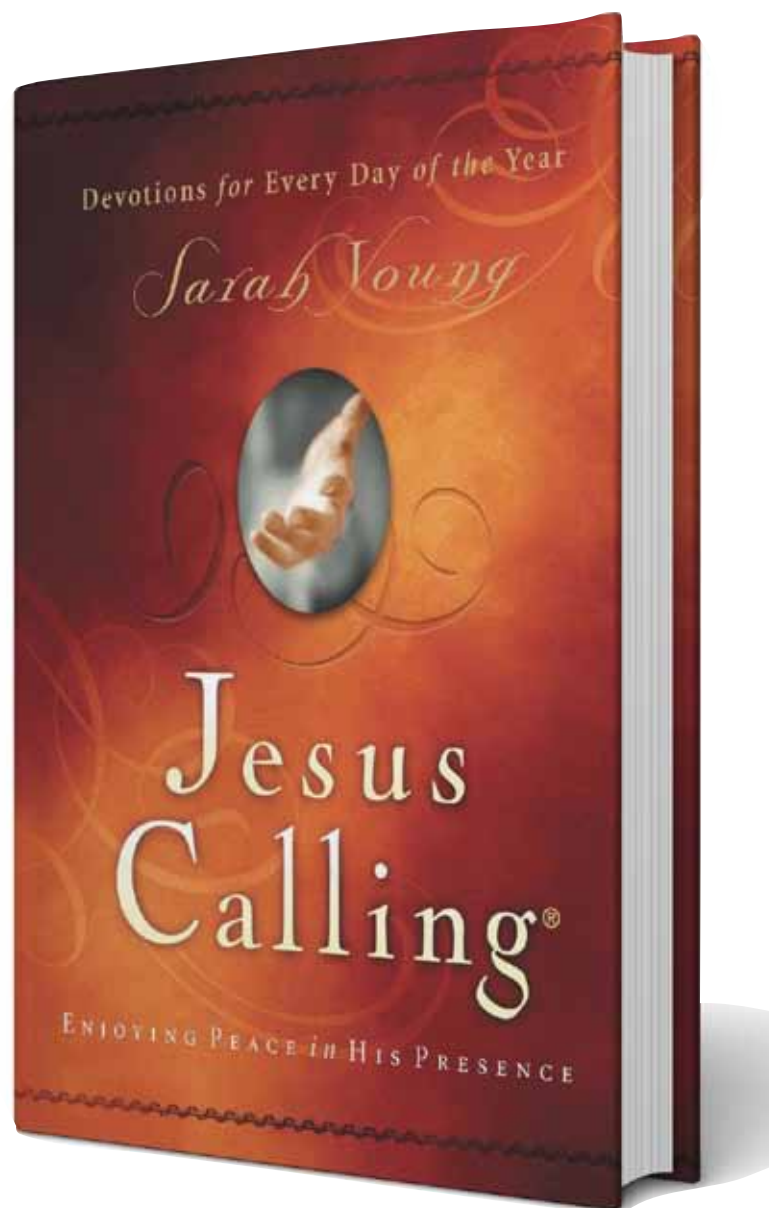
my prayers for the readers of all my books have increased — in length and in scope. These prayers have grown to the extent that I now consider them one of the main responsibilities (and pleasures) that God has for me each day. I plan to continue this practice as long as I am alive and able.

A vital part of prayer is giving thanks to God. As I have spent time in His presence — praying, reading Scripture and writing — the importance of thankfulness has been impressed upon me more and more. This theme is reflected in my devotional books. Since this is the Thanksgiving season, I'd like to share an excerpt from *Jesus Calling* on this theme. The excerpt below is written from the perspective of Jesus speaking to you, the reader:

"Walk with Me along the high road of thanksgiving. To protect your thankfulness, you must remember that you reside in a fallen world, where blessings and sorrows intermingle freely. A constant focus on adversity defeats many people. They walk through a day that is brimming with beauty and brightness, seeing only the grayness of their thoughts. Neglecting the practice of giving thanks has darkened their minds. How precious are My children who remember to thank Me at all times. They can walk through the darkest days with Joy in their hearts because they know that the Light of My Presence is still shining on them."

As you ponder the place of prayer in your life, I encourage you to give thanks to God daily and intentionally. Something that has helped me for many years is keeping a Thanks Book — a notebook where I jot down each day a few things that I'm grateful for. As you give thanks to God more and more, be on the lookout for an increase in your joy.

Sarah Young's devotional writings are personal reflections from her daily quiet time of Bible reading, praying and writing in prayer journals. With sales of more than 15 million books worldwide, "Jesus Calling"® has appeared on all major best-seller lists. Sarah's writings include "Jesus Calling,"™ "Jesus Today,"™ "Jesus Lives,"™ "Dear Jesus," "Jesus Calling® for Little Ones," "Jesus Calling® Bible Storybook," "Jesus Calling®: 365 Devotions for Kids," and "Peace in His Presence" — each encouraging readers in their journeys toward intimacy with Christ. Sarah and her husband were missionaries in Japan and Australia for many years. They currently live in the United States.





By Jim Liske

The most famous prayer in the Bible is the one we call the Lord's Prayer. The people Jesus chose to be his closest friends and followers asked him how they could pray like him — with power. They had grown up in a time with plenty of ritualistic, public prayer but few visible results. As they had followed Jesus, however, they had seen a man who prayed in private and was a conduit for miracles of healing and transformation.

Many elements of the prayer would have sounded very familiar to Jesus' disciples: the worship of God as their heavenly father, the confession of errors and the supplication for daily needs. But some parts of Jesus' prayer were unique. Instead of asking God to bless their own plans, Jesus asked God to bring the values and realities of his kingdom into their broken world. Jesus also asked God to accomplish

his purposes and allow them the privilege of joining his work.

The Lord's Prayer shows us that when we communicate with God, it's not primarily to "change his mind" about something but to allow him to change us. As we seek God in habitual, private prayer, allowing our focus to dwell on his leadership and will, we find our hearts and wills increasingly aligned with his. When we ask God to change our spouse or child, he makes us better partners and parents. When we pray for our enemies, we develop hearts of forgiveness and empathy. When we pray for the struggling, he inspires us to serve.

In my years serving as the head of Prison Fellowship, the organization Chuck Colson founded in 1976, I have witnessed the transformative power of this kind of prayer in the lives of men and women behind bars. When prisoners really begin to pray, asking God's kingdom to invade their prison cells and turning away from the thoughts and behaviors that landed them in prison, they change.

In one way prisoners have an advantage over you and me when it comes to prayer: Prayer takes time. That's one thing you and I have in short supply, but incarcerated people have in abundance. Prison is infinitely boring. Every day is the

same, and a prisoner's thoughts can get stuck in an endless loop of self-loathing, "what-ifs" or resentment against the world. But by using that surplus time to pray like Jesus, incarcerated people can be delivered from their own selfishness and shame and enabled to focus on God's fresh vision for their lives. To ask God's "kingdom to come and will be done" for an incarcerated person means asking for forgiveness and offering restitution. It means to stop breaking the law and help catalyze a cycle of renewal and redemption.

Prison Fellowship helps teach many prisoners to build new lives based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. They are trained to be disciples. (This is nothing new, by the way; among Jesus' closest friends and followers were former prostitutes, embezzlers and the like.) As part of their training, these men and women are encouraged to study and practice Jesus' life of prayer.

Sure enough, praying like Jesus helps to change their thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. After they are released, men and women who have been involved in this intensive, faith-based programming are far less likely to commit a new crime.

When prisoners pray, learn to love their enemies and seek God's will for their lives,

the prisons and all who live and work in them are safer. Prisoners' families see real change in their loved ones. The justice system is more effective. That all happens because prayer doesn't change God, it changes us. It happens because God's kingdom is a place of peace and hope, and he brings it through hearts and lives that seek to partner with him in making it happen. Prayer can change the world if the one who prays allows it to change him first.

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, he taught them to ask for their needs to be met so that they could be the agents of his restorative work to the ends of the earth. When we pray as he did, that God would give us all we need to serve and love, our families, our neighborhoods and our world are all restored. When those behind bars pray for their victims to be healed, their cellmates to be safe and the correctional officers to be blessed, their behaviors change to disrupt the prevailing prison culture and usher in God's peace.

That's the power of prayer.

Jim Liske is president and CEO of Prison Fellowship, founded by Chuck Colson, the nation's largest outreach to prisoners, former prisoners and their families.



By Brenda Hunter

Prayer is like breathing. I breathe prayer in, and I breathe prayers out to a heavenly Father, believing that He hears every word and that, on His timetable, He will respond. As part of our daily ritual, my husband and I begin our day with prayers lifted high for family, friends, ourselves. Throughout the day I breathe out short prayers, feeling peace settle in my soul.

As a psychologist in private practice, I pray that I will be a conduit God uses to touch my clients' lives. Sometimes when I listen to their heartbreak and feel their pain wash over me, I whisper internally, "Lord, help me," and a question

or comment comes to mind. Other times as I am about to say something, I hear an internal voice caution, "Don't say that." I have, on rare occasions, felt the strong presence of the Holy Spirit in my office and wondered if my clients, some unbelieving, felt a presence as well.

I could not do my work without the power of prayer. Clients sometimes come with such angst — a history of abuse, betrayal by a lover or a spouse, cancer, depression, chronic pain. The list goes on. Sometimes they weep; sometimes they rage. Often they need help with the transitions in their lives.

While I feel privileged to hear their stories, I realize that I am only human and that my knowledge and training make me, at best, a witness to their grief and a counselor. For them to move forward, they must make new choices. And, unbeknownst to some, God is waiting in the wings of their lives to help.

I learned about the power of prayer 18 years ago when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I will never forget the morning my husband and I sat at our

kitchen table in the throes of decision making about which treatment plan to pursue.

My surgeon had told me that if I did not follow his protocol, I would probably be dead within 10 years. Yet, I desperately wanted to find a different path. That morning I prayed the prayer of King Jehoshaphat in the Old Testament who, when he was surrounded by vast armies of Moabites and Ammonites, cried out to God, saying, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." Within two weeks I had found the physician who guided me back to health.

More recently, I have witnessed the power of prayer in my husband's life. One summer's day Don fell, running across the grass. Within four days he was having facial seizures. He had a subdural hematoma and the neurologist could not control the bleeding into his cranium.

That was in July. By December Don's CAT scan showed the bleeding had not stopped and the pressure on his brain was so severe he listed to one side when he walked. One physician even told me to

prepare to put him on life support.

Each Sunday of that month my sweet husband asked the healing prayer team at our Anglican church to lay hands on his head and pray for him. Oh, how he loved their earnest prayers! After four weeks Don had another CAT scan and this one looked better. Then the neurosurgeon said, "Let's wait a few months and take another look."

That was four years ago. Recently, my husband's internist said, "Don, I have younger patients who have had as severe a concussion as you, but none have come back like you have. You need to thank the man upstairs." We do. We give thanks. We pray. We breathe.

Brenda M. Hunter, Ph.D., is a psychologist and internationally published author of twelve books, including "Home by Choice," "In the Company of Women," "From Santa to Sexting" and "Staying Alive," a comprehensive primer on fighting cancer.

The healing presence of the Holy Spirit

The intense intimacy of connection



By Art Lindsley

Many of the cultured despisers of religion in our day wonder, why is there all this concern about prayer? After all, is belief in God not merely wish fulfillment at best and a mild dementia at worst? I suppose if God did not exist we would have to come up with an explanation for the prevalence of religious faith. But such psychological charges beg the question of whether there is a God or not.

Is there evidence that God exists? Contrary to the new atheists (Harris, Hitchens and Dawkins), there is overwhelming evidence of His existence. There is no space to rehearse that evidence here. But just suppose, for the sake of argument, there is such a case for the existence of a God who desires a personal relationship with us, then what place would prayer have in that worldview?

C.S. Lewis puts the options starkly. He says that if Christianity is false it “is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

Note that faith in Christ, if true, is of infinite importance. In such a faith, what would be the center, the most important thing about it? In the history of the church, various contenders emerge: faith, thanksgiving, repentance, faithfulness, freedom and love. A case could be made for each one of these. Yet at the root, all these involve a responsiveness to God, invocation, calling on His name. The Lord’s Prayer is an example of this. It is rightly central in many worship services.

This prayer begins, “Our Father, who art in heaven.” Although it might seem bland and ordinary to us today, when it originated it was radical and offensive. In Jesus’ time, the name for God in Hebrew, Yahweh, was not written with the vowels present because it was so holy that it could not be

pronounced. Transliterated, it was YHWH — only consonants. It (the four letters) is called the “Tetragrammaton.” Even today, many Jews, when they write about God, write it as G-d, again because He is so transcendent and holy that He should not be approached in an intimate and personal manner.

By contrast, Jesus, in addressing God as “Father” in prayer, did something unique and controversial in his day. Joachim Jeremias argues that there is no parallel to anyone addressing God as Father in prayer before, during or after Jesus’ time until A.D. 974 in Italy.

Jesus repeatedly addresses God as “Father” and encourages us to do the same. This promise of an intimate relationship with a loving Father encourages us to bring not just occasional things or major concerns, but everything to Him. Jesus tells us to “Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened.”

Just as earthly fathers give their children good things to eat and not harmful things, so will God give good things to those who ask. If we ask him for a loaf, he won’t give us a stone. If we ask him for an egg, he won’t give us a scorpion (Luke 11:11-12). In fact, Jesus promises in an unqualified fashion, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:13). With that kind of promise, no wonder believers are so intent on prayer.

J.C. Ryle, an Anglican bishop from the 19th century (1816-1900), wrote a classic chapter on “Prayer” in his book “Practical Religion” that may be the best summary of the importance of prayer ever written. Ryle gives numerous examples of the power of prayer in Scripture:

Nothing seems too great, too hard, or too difficult for prayer to do. It has obtained things that seemed impossible and out of reach. It has won victories over fire, air, earth and water. Prayer opened the Red Sea. Prayer brought water from the rock and bread from heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still. Prayer brought fire from the sky on Elijah’s sacrifice. Prayer turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. Prayer overthrew the army of Sennacherib. Well, might Mary, Queen of Scots say, “I fear John Knox’s prayers more than an army of 10,000 men.” Prayer has healed the sick. Prayer has raised the dead. So long as Abraham asked mercy for Sodom, the Lord went on giving. He never ceased to give till

Abraham ceased to pray.

When you see these examples, it is no surprise that believers pray. In fact, there are many throughout history who are models of prayer. It is said that John Wesley (founder of Methodism) would regularly pray four hours a day.

Martin Luther prayed an hour a day, and on particularly busy days prayed two hours because he needed closeness with God even more. However, you cannot count the value of prayer merely by the time spent. If you just measure prayer by a stopwatch, you miss the main point — intimacy with God.

Nothing seems too great, too hard, or too difficult for prayer to do. It has obtained things that seemed impossible and out of reach. It has won victories over fire, air, earth and water. Prayer opened the Red Sea. Prayer brought water from the rock and bread from heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still. Prayer brought fire from the sky on Elijah’s sacrifice. Prayer turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

That’s why there is such a stress on the danger of neglecting prayer. Jesus tells his disciples to watch and pray lest they succumb to the weakness of the flesh (Matthew 26:41). The Apostle Paul warns us to beware when we think we are standing lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:12). Many people fall in private before they fall in public. There is a tendency for prayer to drive out sin or sin to drive out prayer. Ryle writes:

Bibles read without prayer, sermons heard without prayer, marriages contracted without prayer, journeys undertaken without prayer, residences chosen without prayer, friendships formed without prayer, the daily act of prayer itself hurried over or gone through without heart — these are the kinds of downward steps by which many a Christian descends to a condition of spiritual palsy or reaches the point where God allows him to have a tremendous fall.

Thus, believers stress the

importance of prayer in all kinds of circumstances. This is not merely a duty, though, but ought to be a matter of desire. When believers throughout the ages have experienced an encounter with God, they find it not only unforgettable but something that increases their desire to pray.

On New Year’s Eve in 1740, John Wesley and a number of others were praying late into the night, and he said that God came down in a special, powerful way and they were amazed. They began to sing the “Te Deum,” a hymn of praise, to God.

I had a similar experience when I was part of a Young Life leadership house. We had various leaders for this high school ministry living together. Almost every night, we would read Scripture together and pray before going to bed. One night, we read Acts Chapter 2 (about Pentecost) and got down on our knees to pray. All I can say is that God came down and rested on us from 11:30 p.m. till 4 a.m. The presence and power of God was so strong that we didn’t want to move — just bask in His presence. I have had many other touches of God’s presence but never so much or so long. Each of the people present that night went on to extensive ministries around the world.

The experience and power of prayer are part of the evidence for the reality of God’s existence. You might expect arguments from reason, history, ethics and correspondence to aspirations in personal and public life. But one empirical way to test the truth of faith in Jesus is through the experience of prayer. Many have come to faith as a result of an encounter with God. Ask for the Holy Spirit’s presence, only watch out, you might get it.

C.S. Lewis said, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun is risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” It is the way faith comprehensively fits with reality in thought, practice and experience that has compelled so many believers to pray.

The Rev. Dr. Art Lindsley is vice president of Theological Initiatives at the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics where he oversees the development of a theology that integrates faith, work and economics. Formerly president and senior fellow at the C.S. Lewis Institute, he is an editor and contributing author for the recently released book, “For the Least of These: A Biblical Answer to Poverty.”

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Step by step through a day in conversation with God



By Star Parker

Prayer is a conversation with God.

I've grown to believe it's really this simple.

So upon waking up each day, I start the day in prayer because I say out loud, "I want to thank you, Lord, for this day and for another privilege and opportunity to serve You."

The first words He says back are in my bathroom.

"You are the light of the world" the beautiful picture reads. I clipped and framed it from a free calendar years ago.

Matthew 5:14 is really small under this scripture, so I usually don't read that part because my reading glasses are nowhere close by.

As I make my way downstairs to brew my coffee and do the dishes from the day before, I'm usually talking to Him the whole time about what kind of light I can be today.

This is the point where I realize I should check my calendar to see what my assistant has booked me to do that day.

God says the same thing many mornings in response to me because the stone plaque over my coffee pot is Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight."

Next, I sit down with my coffee and my Bible and start to read the Psalm and Proverb for that day.

My daily Proverb reading King Solomon outlined in 31 chapters, one for each day.

For my daily Psalm, I depend upon Tyndale House, which published "The One Year Book of Psalms" with devotionals written by William J. Petersen and Randy Petersen, a book I have now

read through year after year and just recently downloaded on my phone to lighten my suitcase.

Because yes, this is my daily morning routine even when on the road (all except the wall scriptures and the dishes).

Others, some perhaps having gone much deeper with understanding Christ than I, may believe that prayer is much more complicated. And that's OK with me.

I know a lot of people that others know too, and we each have unique yet special relationships and ways we communicate with one another.

I recently attended the funeral of a mentor of mine from The Heritage Foundation and, after listening to those who knew him well, I'm convinced that he has a comedian star in his heavenly

In fact, the Lord is so intimate in our details that He told Jeremiah to tell us, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give you a future and a hope."

One secret that many, many people for many, many generations from many, many backgrounds from all around the world have discovered — is that God tucked all of the answers to all of life's questions and problems and joys and prayers in the Bible.

But sometimes, unless you have developed a habit to daily read it, God can seem very hidden and very silent.

One beauty of prayer is that it can always change.

One beauty of God is that He does not. I can guarantee that my prayer the

come in, to Lord how can I pray for the personal needs of each and every one of Cure's 3,500 donors today?"

Prayers change because life on this side of eternity is constant change.

But our hope and future is on the other side of eternity, and I have grown to believe that the author prayer never changes.

His answers are always in His word.

God's revelation to Elijah after enduring exhaustion he poured out his heart in prayer according to 1 Kings 19:11?

"Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord! And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks into pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an



crown, but I knew him 20 years and don't recall him ever telling me any of those jokes.

Maybe the real difference in sorting through distinctions and characteristics of prayer between folks who seek God though prayer is in the way God chooses to speak back.

One can pray and pray and pray yet think their prayers are not even being heard or answered.

Oh, trust me. God has heard and has answered all of your prayers.

day after I chose to leave welfare was very different from my prayer the day after my 14-year-old daughter died. Or my prayer two years later upon the birth of my first grandchild.

(And now I have two grandchildren, so added to my prayer list is for enough grandmommy kisses to share. And for a husband to share life and prayers with.)

Even prayers for my business have changed from "Lord, please let this one donor check of the month clear the bank before the ones I've written against it

earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

.....
Star Parker is founder and president of the Center for Urban Renewal and Education (urbancure.org) and black-communitynews.com, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. She is also an author, news commentator and nationally syndicated columnist with Creators.



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The smart money bets on the reality of prayer



By Chuck Stetson

Does prayer work, or is prayer a fantasy?

When I grew up in the 1960s and went to high school, chapel attendance every day and twice on Sunday was mandatory. We did not sit down to eat without saying a prayer first. Thus, I grew up in a world where prayer was important.

There have always been skeptics about prayer. I like what Anglican Archbishop William Temple once said, “When I pray, coincidences happen. When I stop praying, coincidences stop happening.” That is a statement that everyone I talk with understands. It is also my experience.

For the skeptic, I believe that Blaise Pascal, the French mathematician, physicist and philosopher who lived from 1623 to 1662, got it exactly right when he presented “The Wager.” It was a groundbreaking proposition in that it charted new territory in probability theory and marked the first use of decision theory, and anticipated future philosophies including existentialism. It was set out in section 233 of his

Pensees, published after his death.

In “The Wager,” Pascal posited that humans all bet with their lives either that God exists or that He does not. Based on the assumption that the stakes are eternal if God exists and that there is at least a probability that God in fact exists, Pascal argues that a rational person should live as though God exists and seek to believe in God. If God does not exist, such a person will have only a finite loss, perhaps some pleasures or luxuries forgone, whereas if He actually does exist they stand to receive infinite gains represented by an eternity in heaven and will have avoided the infinite losses of eternity in hell.

The Wager uses the following logic set out in Pensees, part III, §233:

1. God is, or God is not. Reason cannot decide between the two alternatives.
2. A Game is being played ... where heads or tails will turn up.
3. You must wager (it is not optional).
4. Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing.
5. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is. ... There is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain, a chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and what you stake is finite. And so our proposition is of infinite force, when there is the finite to stake in a game where there are equal risks of gain and of loss, and the infinite to gain.
6. But some cannot believe. They should then “at least learn your inability to believe” ... and “Endeavour then to convince” themselves.

Pascal asks the reader to analyze mankind’s position, where our actions

Prayer also does something beneficial. It recognizes that we need to be humble. If we don’t need anything, we can have lots of pride and treat people badly. If we are truly needy, and I haven’t yet found anyone who isn’t needy at some level, humility might be a much better approach. We need to respect others, acknowledge that we don’t know everything, ask for forgiveness when we have misbehaved toward others and ask for guidance.

can be enormously consequential but our understanding of those consequences is flawed. While we can discern a great deal through reason, we are ultimately forced to gamble.

The same argument would seem to apply to prayer, which in essence is an acknowledgment of God, but even more so a God that is involved in the every day. This is beyond the deist God who does not get involved in the day-to-day. This is belief in a God who does get involved in the day-to-day.

In other words, what is the upside and what is the downside of faith? The upside is huge. The downside? There is no downside. Thus, even if you are a skeptic, why would you not consider prayer?

Prayer also does something beneficial. It recognizes that we need to be humble. If we don’t need anything, we can have lots of pride and treat people badly. If we are truly needy, and I haven’t yet found anyone who isn’t needy at some level, humility might be a much better approach. We need to respect others, acknowledge that we don’t know everything, ask for forgiveness when we have misbehaved toward others and ask for guidance. What person doesn’t need guidance in the future? You don’t need guidance only if you are in control of everything and you know exactly what is going to happen.

Thus, prayer offers us some great opportunities with no downside and can help us get right with the world, confess our mistakes, ask for guidance and be humble.

My mentor, Tommy Davis, was one of the most successful investors in Silicon Valley for over four decades. The most valuable lesson that he ever taught me is not to take risks. That is why, in his view, he was more successful in his overall results than other venture capitalists in Silicon Valley. Tommy could have as big a win as anyone, but he avoided losses like the plague, and thus on average did much, much better than his peers.

With this kind of upside and no downside, why would anyone not at least try prayer?

.....
Chuck Stetson is CEO of the Stetson Family Office and of Essentials in Education, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to closing the gap between what students need to know and what they are being taught.

To be healed, first forgive others



By Walter Wang

Shortly after Halloween in 2005, I was told I had fourth-stage nasopharyngeal cancer and had only one year to live without treatment. To make matters worse, it was only ten days before I had closed a \$330 million leveraged buyout of my company J-M Manufacturing.

My wife, Shirley, and I were devastated, but we decided to tell our children. That night, with tears in my eyes, I climbed into my 6-year-old daughter’s bed while she lay sleeping, and said, “I’m so sorry; I may not be able to walk you down the aisle.”

It was very tough. We went through all the phases — anger, denial, depression ... what else could we do? The only

thing we could do that night was pray.

Somehow the next morning a peace came over us. We said to one another that whatever it is that God wants us to walk through, we will have to walk through, and that He will walk with us and carry us through.

We decided the best place for my treatment was Queen Mary Hospital in Hong Kong, where the best nasopharyngeal cancer treatment was being done. In Hong Kong we learned the cancer had spread to the base of my skull, and that I would need 195 hours of chemotherapy and 34 radiation sessions, each lasting 37 minutes.

We didn’t have many friends in Hong

Kong. I got together with an old college friend named Vincent, and another friend, Richard, who visited Hong Kong from Malaysia. While Vincent and Richard were about to flag a taxi, Vincent stopped to help a stranger who was lost. He gave her directions and even called ahead to make sure someone was waiting for her.

Richard was a very busy man but that day he was impressed with how Vincent would have that kind of compassion to stop in the middle of the street and help someone. He prayed asking God for this compassion. Amazingly, God told

In gray, tired America

Motown doctor prays for a nuptial storm



By Michael T. Ross

Palpable anxiety looms as November gales buffet our Great Lakes shores. In this pivotal moment, was there anywhere amid these United States that a citizen was able to stand united and proud, cheerily awaiting relatives, sons and daughters, little ones, brothers and sisters, and all in the family for a Thanksgiving to remember in 2015?

Who does not notice how gray, tired and gasping Uncle Sam has become? Not a glimmer of cheer, let alone a smile does he shine to remind us of tender times when he stood resolute in virtue and towering in strength to raise us up tall and steady — our hearts thundering in applause.

It's an ill feeling that tramples our

appetites and gathers us in a strange way more like sick people in a waiting room than family reuniting in love and eager for turkey together, and then some pumpkin pie. Did we dare pray?

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with
brotherhood

From sea to shining sea!

In the gloom of darkness, there's nothing like a spark of light. Call it what you will. In truth, we hunger for the faintest glint of Providence. Sullen moments of trepidation, sometimes seasons of despair, punctuate months and years along the storied path of our still-great homeland. Think of the weary pilgrims leaving merciless Mother England only to face harsh times of poverty, disease, division and persecutions in Plymouth.

In 1630 fresh waves brought the mighty Arabelle bearing its weary lot as the Massachusetts Bay Colony aspired to dream again an impossible dream. In a radiant image painted with words borrowed from Jesus, lawyer and preacher John Winthrop encouraged the seafarers to till the soil of hope and become a shining city on a hill.

With fervent heart, he admonished

fellow travelers "to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God ... always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body."

As an emergency physician pressing the flesh in Metro Detroit, ministering to the wretched afflictions of families, children and suffering communities, I feel the intimate passion that raised this nation and that grieves the rivers of blood spilled in the blind alleys and sulking silos of urban isolation. I know too painfully well how critically ill is our gasping Uncle Sam as his soul bleeds out on the nation's stretcher. The eleventh hour nears. In the din of our distress, we hear a requiem dirge, a remorseful threnody for our once-thriving nation. Still, a chord of vibrant verse summons a chorus of heavy hearts in wistful harmony:

O beautiful for glory-tale
Of liberating strife
When once and twice,
for man's avail
Men lavished precious life!
America! America!

God shed his grace on thee
Till selfish gain no longer stain
The banner of the free!
"God shed his grace on thee!" we
sing with one mind, one heart, rising
to our feet. We pray one body that this
may be.

In the dark Detroit unease one

November night, a newborn wails in the threadbare stillness of an unwed home. No love story is there here of a mom and dad beaming as they plan a life together — no lullaby tonight. Let us ask our Lord that a Motown mom will dare to pray to make a married household with her man and their little one. Just imagine that Marriage Motown 2020 could exist just five years hence with couples marrying by the tens of thousands and married households sprouting everywhere. Will we imagine a nuptial storm of love sweeping our Great Lakes and spreading sea to shining sea? Dare we pray that America will rise again?

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with
brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

Dr. Michael T. Ross, M.D. is a Detroit area emergency physician and founder of Defending Our Fathers House (DOFH.org), a nonprofit advocating for marriage and family life. Dr. Ross sees great hope if America addresses the collapse of family, a major cause of illness, trauma, childhood suffering and our moral and economic decline at home.

HEALED

From page C20

him to stay in Hong Kong to be with us. Originally, he declined, saying he had a flight the next day. But God said, "Won't you do this for me?" And he thought to himself, I'd better listen; the last thing I need is to be struck by lightning.

He cancelled his plans and lived in a hotel nearby for the next five months, visiting me and praying for me every day through the long hours of chemotherapy. God was not only helping us, he was changing those around us for the better.

While Richard was praying for us, he said that what is critical to healing is forgiveness. Jesus forgave you for your sins, so you need to forgive others. Grudges are carried wherever you go, even if you haven't seen the offender for a long time. You need to pay off that debt like Jesus paid for your trespasses, he said. I said I didn't have a long list of offenders, but I did have a short list. I wrote

three names, prayed and forgave them in Jesus' name.

After that prayer I felt a strong energy flow through me. I'm usually a serious guy, but I began to laugh, roll and shake the bedsheets for ten minutes. Afterwards, I felt light as a feather and joyous.

The first 96 hours of chemo had been devastating. I could hardly sit up. I said, "Please don't cook because it makes me nauseous." But after this "holy" encounter, my next round of 96 hours was very different. I expected to be nauseous, but instead I was hungry. Being away from the U.S., I missed pizza. We ordered pizza and had a pizza party in my room when the doctor came in. He was shocked.

Our friends came and asked why are we so happy when I was dying. We said we're happy celebrating life — every moment in life — we've got today, we've got people we love and we've got pizza. We're grateful.

Next was radiation, which was going to be tough. You burn from the inside

out, your throat is covered with sores and your neck turns black oozing with pus. The doctors wanted to insert a feeding tube, but I refused.

Richard thought I may not need radiation but rather more faith, but Shirley wanted me to do everything the doctors wanted, and said that only if God told the doctors I did not need to go through radiation, would she be okay with that plan. They argued. That night Shirley prayed, "I repent for arguing with Richard. God, at the end of the day it's your will whether Walter lives or dies," she said, "not mine."

Remarkably, the next day the doctors told us that the scans came out so well that they were changing the course of radiation and I would not have to radiate through my brain.

Two weeks after the radiation, the doctor asked me how much pain I had on a scale of one to ten. I said six. But after he looked into my throat, he was amazed at how well I was doing. He said compared to other cases he would rate my pain level ... a one.

He said he had never seen such progress after two weeks. He begged me to tell him my secret. I said the only thing I do is pray; this was the power of prayer.

When we were leaving to go home, we thanked the doctors, and they said "Don't thank us, thank your God."

God had taken care of my company without my control, too. While I was in treatment it did so well that we were able to repay half of our debt in six months.

Normally people aren't grateful they get cancer, but I am grateful that my experience with cancer brought me closer to God and strengthened my faith. Today, I am happy to say, ten years later, I remain cancer free.

Walter Wang is president and CEO of JM Eagle Inc., the world's largest manufacturer of plastic pipe.



TRUTH

Scriptural references...

- If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:31b-32
- When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. John 16:13

Suggested prayers...

- God of all truth, we ask that self-evident truths become self-evident once again in America.
- We ask You, Father, to grant Americans the wisdom to discern truth from deception. Defend us, Sovereign God, against forces that would divide, deceive and redefine this country. We cannot compete with these forces in the natural, Lord, they are too powerful. Only in You and with you will the victory be won.

~~~~~  
“It was for the love of the truths of this great Book {the Bible} that our fathers abandoned their native shores for the wilderness. Animated by its lofty principles they toiled and suffered till the desert blossomed as a rose. The same truths sustained them in their resolutions to become a free nation; and guided by the wisdom of this Book they founded a government.”  
President Zachary Taylor – February 21, 1849

MARRIAGE

Scriptural references...

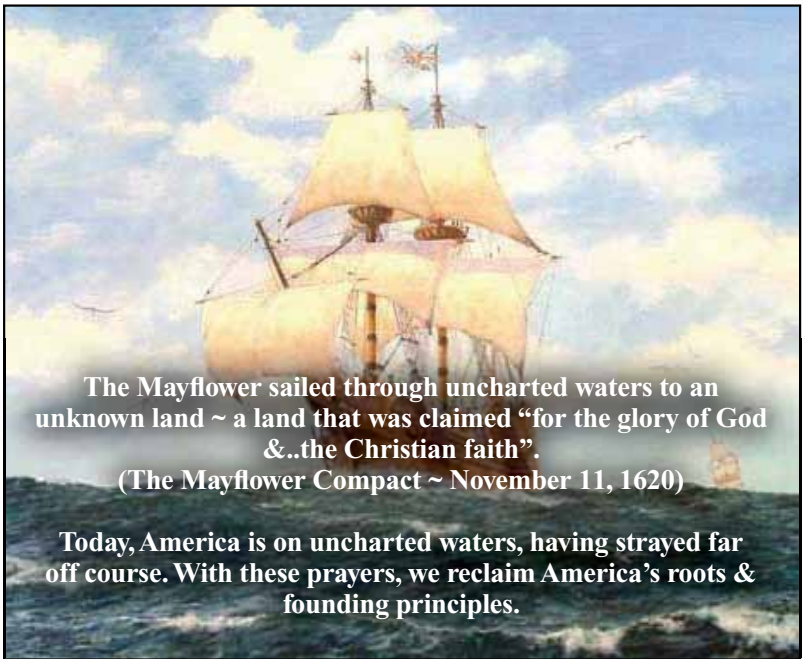
- Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church. Ephesians 5:31-32
- Let marriage be held in honor among all....Hebrews 13:4a

Suggested prayers...

- Father, we pray for Your hand to be upon the healing and restoration of marriages and marriage in America. Thank You for the stability, the security and strength that comes to husbands, wives, children and the country through healthy marriages and stable homes.
- Lord, You have said that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Our homes are prey to forces that would divide and destroy marriages and families. You are the healer. You are the peacemaker. You are the Author of love. You are the love that transforms our hardened hearts to hearts of flesh. Reveal Your life giving power in and through our marriages. Please move us to a deeper and fuller understanding of love.

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“The institution of marriage is, of course, at the very foundation of our social organization, and all influences that affect that institution are of vital concern to the people of the whole country.”
President Theodore Roosevelt – January 30, 1905

~~~~~  
“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”  
President John Adams - October 11, 1798



Research reveals that 80% of American Christians are unsure how to pray. The American Prayer Initiative provides a starting point.

In response to deep concern over the direction of America, several noted women of faith created this national prayer initiative to appeal to God for His aid in reclaiming, redeeming, and rebuilding our country on her Constitutional roots and founding principles which were borne out of scripture.

With a simple click on AmericanPrayerInitiative.org, one email a day will be sent to your inbox with suggested prayers for the day.

Or you can go to the AmericanPrayerInitiative.org website for a printable summary of the entire month's suggested prayer topics. God Almighty is on the other end of our prayers, waiting for “we the people” of America to return to Him.

Do you have 2 minutes a day to pray for America?

~ One prayer topic for each day of the month, repeated each month ~

|                              |                          |                             |                          |                              |                           |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1<br>Thanksgiving            | 2<br>Humility            | 3<br>Repentance Forgiveness | 4<br>Leaders             | 5<br>The Law                 | 6<br>Justice              | 7<br>Domestic Tranquility      |
| 8<br>The Common Defense      | 9<br>The General Welfare | 10<br>Blessings of Liberty  | 11<br>Rights             | 12<br>Life                   | 13<br>Liberty Freedom     | 14<br>The Pursuit of Happiness |
| 15<br>Virtue                 | 16<br>Ethics             | 17<br>Truth                 | 18<br>The Church         | 19<br>The Poor               | 20<br>The Family          | 21<br>Marriage                 |
| 22<br>Manhood Womanhood      | 23<br>Relationship Race  | 24<br>Youth Education       | 25<br>Culture Media Arts | 26<br>Economy Business Labor | 27<br>Health Care Healing | 28<br>International Relations  |
| 29<br>Immigration Immigrants | 30<br>Citizens Voters    | 31<br>Vision                | Printable Prayer Summary |                              |                           |                                |

LIBERTY ~ FREEDOM

Scriptural references...

- Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. II Cor 3:17
- Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1

Suggested prayers...

- Lord, we know that liberty itself is hanging in the balance in America. We petition You to unleash the power of Heaven to help us, protect us and come to our aid. Infuse in our leaders a profound understanding and respect for their vow and their duty to protect liberty in this country. May they never take our liberty for granted. May we never take our liberty for granted.

~~~~~  
“Our Founding Fathers did not invent the priceless boon of individual freedom and respect for the dignity of men. That great gift to mankind sprang from the Creator and not from governments. The Founding Fathers, with superb genius, welded together the safeguards of these freedoms...”
President Herbert Hoover – August 10, 1954 - his 80th birthday

CITIZENS ~ VOTERS

Scriptural references...

- Upright citizens are good for a city and make it prosper, but the talk of the wicked tears it apart. Proverbs 11:11
- We will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Ephesians 4:14
- If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.... James 1:5

Suggested prayers...

- We ask you, Lord, to awaken in the American People a desire to know the true principles upon which this country was built, and draw us to Your vision for the restoration of our beloved country.
- We ask for leaders and a citizenry who understand our accountability before You for every vote we cast, or do not cast. Help us to wisely evaluate every candidate and policy against your Word. Give us radar to know when a candidate or policy is counterfeit to the true founding principles and Constitutional roots of this land, borne out of faith in You and Your word.
- We ask for the wisdom to discern truth from spin and deception, and to vote as You would have us vote.

~~~~~  
“Now more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature...If the next centennial does not find us a great nation...it will be because those who represent the enterprise, the culture, and the morality of the nation do not aid in controlling the political forces.”  
President James Garfield – July 4, 1876



# What the Pope's prayer means to me



**By Lawrence Ventline**

*"Pray for me."*

**P**ope Francis asked the faithful to pray for him when he was elected and introduced as the pontiff March 13, 2013.

Pope Francis guides billions of the Catholic faithful, among others. He knows the power of prayer.

From 1990-92 Jorge Mario Bergoglio was cast out to Cordoba, 500 miles from his familiar Buenos Aires. Here, the future pope learned to pray. His exile at the hands of his Jesuit superiors was perceived by Cardinal Bergoglio as rejection due to apparent division he seemed to stir among his peers. In solitude and inner darkness,

like that told of by John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Cardinal Bergoglio forged a stellar faith.

His solitude and belief in the power of prayer blossomed when he personally accepted an enduring interior and dark night of the soul. The cross of Christ became his mantra of mourning and eventual divine mercy for all manner of peoples on the periphery and edges of life.

Like him, in some way, my own reluctant pastoral assignment, which I have learned to lovingly accept, finds me with a full yet tired heart and body at day's end where I minister on the streets near downtown Detroit. It has earned me the title of "Ninja Priest" from my colleagues.

The humble scholar that Francis is today emerged from his fervent and long prayer each day amid a clashing culture of the scriptural way of God competing with a culture of "me, myself and I."

Prayer is a humbling experience and may explain the pope's choice of lifestyle. The humble, highest-ranking churchman from Argentina lives in a modest guest room at Vatican City. Francis dines in soup kitchens and rides in a modest vehicle.

Prayer often leads to an attitude of contrition. "I am deeply sorry," the pontiff recently said to victims of sexual abuse.

Francis knows families are the foundation and "first school of society." "May I" must accompany one's request for permission or agreement. Francis knows the power of asking to do something and to be of service. Communion with God in prayer is lifting one's voice, heart and mind to God. Watching and witnessing Pope Francis pray inspires me.

Like a good teacher Pope Francis offers families three tips for effective home life: "Seek permission, say 'thank you' and ask for forgiveness."

Such "hints and helps" to strengthen the American family were declared at the Pope's Valentine's Day service Feb. 14, 2014, when marrying is in full swing in parishes everywhere. At that service in St. Peter's Square for 10,000 engaged couples, Francis said: "In the Our Father prayer we say, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Married couples may also learn to pray, 'Give us this day our daily love, teach us to love each other, to care for each other.' The more you entrust yourselves to the Lord, the more your love will be forever able to renew itself and to overcome every difficulty."

The courtliness, courtesy and communion with God in prayer can be heavy like boots. However, when intimacy and connection with God finds oneness over time and prayer practices, the encounter is akin to spouses

savoring a special "fresh datelike" conversation with each other and their children. Reminders to say "I'm sorry," "thank you" and "may I?" will make all the difference in marriage and family, according to Francis. I agree.

Pope Francis is a practitioner of prayer. He urges his flock to "move forward."

"Let go of anger, and never go to bed angry," is my advice to individuals, couples and families. Forgiveness like Francis' is this marriage mender's prescription for a peaceful life.

It's all about the power of praying often as Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, urges in the greatest story ever told in the Bible about Jesus, the anointed one.

Prayer is thanksgiving, adoration, praise of God in hymns and songs, for example, and supplication that causes one's soul to stir, sing and shout for joy as that deepest part of us blooms big and is emboldened. Eucharist is a Greek word that means "thanksgiving."

All done with a grateful heart, an attitude of gratitude, a pure prayer.

Thanks be to God.

*Father Lawrence Ventline, D.Min., Ph.D., of Detroit has been a Catholic clergyman for 40 years. An author and a board-certified professional counselor and fitness and nutrition specialist, he is a former long-time religion writer for The Detroit News.*

## Helping Muslims fall in love with Jesus



**By Jerry Trousdale**

Since birth, they had known the sounds of prayer — the call to prayer and recitations from the Koran — 14 repetitions in five daily prayers. That was prayer.

But all that has changed for a simple church of about 35 West African Christians from Muslim backgrounds. Today, these new Christ followers

gather on Wednesday evenings to break their midweek fasts together and enjoy a night of Bible stories and joyful, energetic prayers. Each new year, they commit three weeks to fasting and prayer. One Friday every month is committed to a half night of prayer together. On the last day of every month, many of them go out to find neighbors and pray for whatever needs they may have.

For these Christ followers, prayer is much more than an exchange of Muslim rituals for Christian liturgies. Now prayer is a privileged and intimate conversation with the Creator God who loves them and often responds with a miraculous exclamation point.

This transformation of several Muslim families began more than a year earlier when they observed something odd. An unpleasant Muslim community nearby had dramatically changed. Husbands began to treat their wives as equals. Personal feuds were forgiven.

Children became more obedient to parents. And people broke the power of addictions and began to prosper.

The local imam and a sheikh observed this phenomenon and decided

**But after we finally said "yes," somehow the impossible became possible, because in God's economy it is always "not by might but by His Spirit." God always does the heavy lifting.**

to investigate what had happened. They found that the changed community had been introduced to a Discovery Bible Study of the stories from creation to Christ. No one taught them what the Bible meant. They discovered the principles themselves from the

narrative, and then were challenged to obey whatever each of them had learned about the God of the Bible.

Within weeks, this Muslim community began to see powerful changes in their lives. They were learning to be thankful, to pray, to encourage one another, and to share with others what they were learning about God. The process continued as whole families became Christ followers. Obeying God's Word brought changes, and prayer supplied the power, as people were falling in love with Jesus.

Now their neighbors were jealous, so they adopted the same approach to the Bible —with the same outcomes.

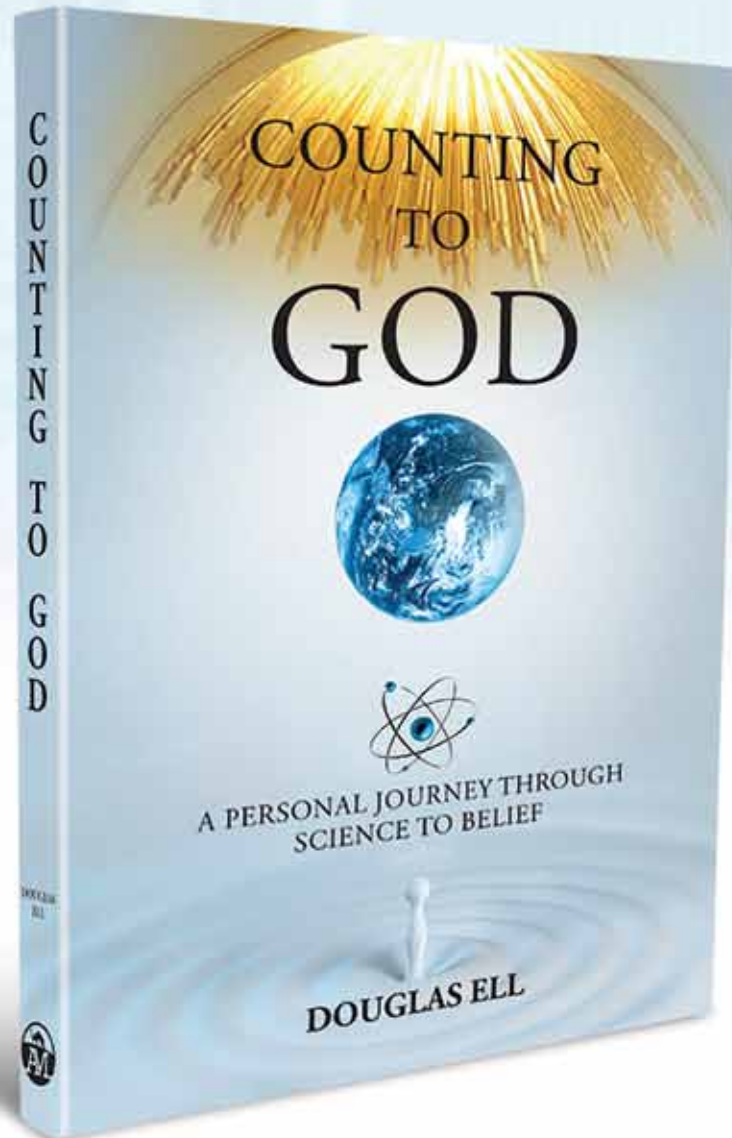
Over the past 10 years, this story has been repeated across the Muslim world. Hundreds of courageous men and women train tens of thousands of emerging leaders to pray, obey and encourage others to do the same.

» see **MUSLIMS** | C26



# KNOW THAT GOD IS!

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# MUSLIMS

From page C24

Today, with the horrific tragedy in Paris still in our minds, it is tempting to dismiss hundreds of millions of Muslims as a hopeless cause. But that would be another tragedy because the story above continues to expand. Leading the procession toward the God of love are good-hearted, former sheikhs, imams and even a surprising number of former Islamic terrorists. I aspire to the levels of prayer of these people that I have met. When they pray, God moves.

Over the 45 years since my wife, Gayle, and I first served in Africa, there were many times that the Lord nudged us to take on challenging tasks that felt far beyond our capacities. But after we finally said “yes,” somehow the impossible became possible, because in God’s economy it is always “not by might but by His Spirit.” God always does the heavy lifting.

Our process has been to first seek God’s will in prayer and then seek God’s provision, because Gayle and I never felt equipped for the challenges. But we have discovered that when God invites us to partner with Him, we have a role to play. But in the end, His fingerprints not ours, are everywhere on the outcomes.



ILLUSTRATION THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Today, CityTeam Ministries is beginning to see these kinds of movements happen in the Americas. Discovery Bible studies are finding fertile ground among students, co-workers, extended families, sport teams, refugees and neighbors — and in places such as homes, workplaces, dorm rooms, community centers, coffee shops, and even jails and human trafficking hotels.

Thousands have joined Discovery Groups among the Hispanic population of the South San Francisco Bay. In places like Nashville, South Philadelphia and San Jose, churches are initiating Discovery Groups as a way to help people outside the walls of their churches embark on journeys of discovering God and following His plan for their lives.

We have great hope for these initiatives because we know of at least 4,800 Muslim-background churches in Africa that are continually praying for these disciples making movements to sweep across America. It truly begins and ends with prayer.

*Jerry Trousdale is director of International Ministries for CityTeam Ministries. He is the author of “Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love With Jesus.”*

## Interfaith Prayers for Peace



Interfaith leaders, as Ambassadors for Peace, promote dialogue and prayer in Jerusalem for the Universal Peace Federation’s Middle East Peace Initiative.

As our world faces unprecedented challenges, the voices, action and prayers of the world’s great spiritual traditions are needed now more than ever. May the wisdom, depth and insight of the world’s religions be manifest in harmony, mutual respect and cooperation throughout the world.

The Universal Peace Federation (UPF), an international and interreligious network of individuals and organizations, including representatives from religion, government, civil society and the private sector, is dedicated to achieving world peace. An NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, UPF supports the work of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of interfaith peacebuilding, peace education, and the strengthening of the family.

Find out more about how we can support each other. [www.UPF.org](http://www.UPF.org)





# The wall separating faith and public life must be torn down



By Orrin G. Hatch

Our history tells us that faith and public life are complementary parts of American life. But invocation of the “wall of separation” between church and state has become shorthand for a particular narrative about the history and status of religion in American life. This narrative is wrong. The idea that the Constitution

Jefferson himself acknowledged that the Virginia statute broke with the practices of other states. At the time of the adoption of the First Amendment in 1791, about half of the 14 states then admitted to the Union had an officially established church or allowed municipal governments to establish such a church. Moreover, every single state sponsored or supported one or more churches.

Simply put, the idea of a rigid separation between church and state is without any basis in our history or laws.

The First Amendment says, quite simply, that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” On its face, this language affects only one actor, Congress, not states and local governments, and not individual citizens.

At the time of its adoption, the First Amendment’s establishment clause neither created an individual right to be free from religion nor limited the power of the states to establish religion; it simply limited Congress’

a wall of separation between church and state.” A structural limit on federal power was transformed into an individual right to be free from religion.

The conventional wisdom peddled by advocates for stringent exclusion of religion from the public sphere is that aggressive enforcement of their vision of the establishment clause enhances religious freedom. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. The erroneous wall-of-separation doctrine narrows the role of religion in public discourse, fueling the view that religion is a private matter rather than a fundamental precept of American civil society and leading many to fall prey to the disturbing claim that religious freedom doesn’t extend much further than the church door.

Such an approach undermines religious liberty and limits the ways in which faith enriches our society. It counsels government to avoid any perceived entanglement with religion

— not only denying religious organizations the same opportunities afforded to secular counterparts, but limiting also accommodation of religious practice at the core of the right to free exercise. It tells the religious believer that in order to participate fully in public life, he should cabin and hide his religious devotion.

While the addition of principled jurists to the court has turned momentum against previous excesses, the thrust of the court’s misguided establishment clause jurisprudence remains dominant. As we seek to protect religious liberty for future generations, we must restore a proper relationship between faith and public life.

.....  
Senator Orrin G. Hatch, Utah Republican, is the former chairman of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the current chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance.

**At the time of its adoption, the First Amendment’s establishment clause neither created an individual right to be free from religion nor limited the power of the states to establish religion; it simply limited Congress’ ability to choose a preferred religious sect.**

creates a “wall of separation” between church and state traces back to Thomas Jefferson, and generations have been led to believe that his view reflected the dominant attitude of the Founders toward religion in public life. But Jefferson’s position, as embodied in the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which he wrote, was in fact a novel approach that represented a decidedly minority viewpoint in the early republic.

The dominant model at the time was embodied by the 1780 Massachusetts Constitution drafted by John Adams, which protected religious liberty while at the same time instituting a “mild and equitable establishment of religion” that enshrined “Christian piety and virtue.” In Adams’ view, as articulated by one scholar, “the notion that a state could remain neutral and purged of any public religion was ... a philosophical fiction.”

ability to choose a preferred religious sect. This restriction on favoring one particular sect over another at the federal level made eminent sense for a new nation composed of states with a wide variety of religious traditions and approaches to established religion.

For a century and a half, this understanding of the establishment clause endured with little challenge. Unfortunately, religion was not spared from a liberal, activist Supreme Court that spun wildly out of control in the mid-20th century. In *Everson v. Board of Education*, the court jettisoned the traditional understanding of the establishment clause, asserting that “the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another.”

The court cited Jefferson to “erect





# Faith's role in America



By Rand Paul

Americans often take for granted that our country was born of a religious people. We sometimes discount the importance of religion as the stabilizing force that allowed us to proceed in relative calm from the chaos of war to an enduring nation guided by faith and the rule of law.

One of the media's favorite questions to politicians is: "Do you believe America is a Christian nation?" Well, it is of course a historical fact that we were founded by a religious people, most of whom were Christians. But if one tries to expound on that point, even to acknowledge its historical significance, some immediately want to paint you as an intolerant believer in theocracy.

The media so often dumbs down the debate that the general public fails to appreciate how uniquely fortunate we were that our American Revolution was the exception to the rule played out repeatedly in world history — bloodshed, violence and enduring chaos.

Among revolutions, America's was extraordinary in that once we threw off the yoke of the King, we didn't also cast off our traditions. We kept our religious faith. We maintained a thousand year history of English common law. We considered our revolution to be a continuation and natural progression of the battle for individual rights that began at Runnymede in 1215.

Consider, for example, how the American Revolution differed dramatically from the French Revolution.

In America, we fought to be free of the British King but we maintained our several hundred year tradition of limited governmental power and we kept our bedrock religious faith. We didn't forget or attempt to turn away from the

quest for individual rights that began with the Magna Carta. We built upon its keystone. Our founders were not bashful in acknowledging God's Grace in our history.

Contrast that with the French Revolution, where the king and religion were to a degree inseparable and rejected simultaneously. As a result, violent chaos and destruction ensued.

The American Revolution was also extraordinary in that it gave birth to the first real meritocracy. Barbara Tuchman writes of how novel it was that the American Revolution opened up progress to people from all walks of life, not just the nobility.

While it took awhile for the Republic to include everyone, the fact that it occurred and remains is, to my mind, nothing short of a miracle.

Some modern critics worry though that we do not separate religion from

government enough. They seek to not only divide faith from our government but also from the private sector businesses of our citizens. They argue that the Christian owners of Hobby Lobby should be forced by law to keep their faith out of their business.

But when the U.S. government decreed that Hobby Lobby would be forced to purchase insurance covering procedures its owners found morally objectionable, they responded, unbowed, in a way that speaks to the core of America's founding principles. Their lawyer wrote:

"Obamacare asks us to abandon our faith to remain in business or abandon our business to remain true to our faith."

In a free country, such a question should be unthinkable. Such a question is inconsistent with liberty. Indeed, such a question is antithetical to the

American tradition.

Modern day pundits act as if the separation of church and state means that our origins were based upon a purely secular state devoid of the influence of religion.

Nothing could be further from the truth. To a person, all of our presidents have acknowledged the guiding influence of their faith.

Today's critics sometimes imply that you can't have both faith and freedom. Some think you must choose between faith or freedom, or put a different way — liberty or virtue.

I disagree.

I believe that Liberty is absolutely essential to virtue, and vice versa. After all, it is the freedom to make individual choices that allows us to be virtuous.

Don Devine gets to the heart of the matter in his book, "America's Way Back." He writes: "Freedom needs tradition for law, order, inspiration. Tradition needs freedom to escape stagnation, coercion, and decline. The great achievement of the Constitution's framers was in providing a means for synthesizing freedom and tradition."

Government can't impose virtue, we must impose it on ourselves.

Government can't provide salvation, only the individual can choose to be saved.

Government can supply bread, but it can't mend a broken spirit.

To paraphrase Os Guinness, "Liberty requires restraint but the only restraint consistent with liberty is voluntary restraint."

This does not mean government cannot or should not reflect our values. In fact, it must. I believe that leaders guided by faith, leaders guided by virtue, are essential.

Most of our presidents recognized this principle, especially President Washington. He recognized that freedom requires an undergirding of faith. Washington believed that democracy depended upon a virtuous people. His prayers and writings, and those of the other great presidents in our history contained in the pages of "Our Presidents & Their Prayers: Proclamations of Faith by America's Leaders," reveal how integral our religious traditions were to our founding, and I believe, to our future as well.

Sen. Rand Paul, Kentucky Republican, is a first-term U.S. Senator and a candidate for president of the United States. He is the author of the book, "Our Presidents & Their Prayers: Proclamations of Faith by America's Leaders" (2015).



Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., speaks at the Faith and Freedom Coalition Road to Majority Conference luncheon in Washington. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

**"Do you believe America is a Christian nation?" Well, it is of course a historical fact that we were founded by a religious people, most of whom were Christians. But if one tries to expound on that point, even to acknowledge its historical significance, some immediately want to paint you as an intolerant believer in theocracy.**



# The freedom to bow our heads and pray in public



By James Lankford

Telling grieving families that our thoughts and prayers are with them in times of tragedy or hearing people say “God bless the United States of America” at the end of a speech are common. They are part of our American tradition.

Culturally, it is acceptable to talk about prayer, and even ask God for his blessings in public settings, but what if it goes a step further? What if we actually pray in public — closing our eyes and bowing our heads where others can see? Is that still free in America?

The recognition of faith has been integral in the formation of America. From

our nation's earliest documents like the Mayflower Compact and Declaration of Independence, to the first act of Congress in 1774, calling on a pastor to open its sessions with prayer, to annual observances like the National Day of Prayer, America prays.

In 2001, we saw Members of Congress gather on the steps of the Capitol following the horrific events of 9/11, singing “God Bless America.” Individuals from all across the country came together at prayer vigils following tragic shootings in Newtown, Connecticut and Charleston, South Carolina. The hashtag #PrayForParis has united people from around the world following this month's terrorist attacks in Paris, France.

As President Clinton said in his 1999 National Day of Prayer Proclamation, “Americans have united in prayer for those who died or were harmed, for the comfort and peace of their families, for the wisdom to heal our society, and for the strength to overcome such tragedies.”

Prayer in times of tragedy is not only accepted, it has become expected. If we can pray publicly in times of tragedy, can we also pray in good times as well?

When is it OK to show a public expression of faith?

Since 2008, a high school football coach in Bremerton, Washington, prayed on the field at the conclusion of the game, thanking God for his team and for keeping the players safe. Initially, the

coach walked to the middle of the field alone, but later, some students voluntarily joined him. For this public display of prayer, he was placed on administrative leave.

Without question, if a coach knelt on the sideline to pray for a hurt player, no one would criticize. But this coach chose to pray in good times and bad. Can a society pick and choose which times and places for public prayer is acceptable?

Why is praying in the midst of tragedy celebrated and encouraged, while praying in the midst of joy or thanksgiving condemned and threatened?

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This provision of the Constitution has been interpreted to mean there is a wall of separation between church and state. This is true, even as Jefferson acknowledged, that the church should be protected from undue government interference in the ability to carry out one's faith.

However, the “wall” was never intended to keep faith out of the public square. Yet, over 200 years after the founding of a nation built on religious freedom, America has become afraid of public expressions of faith, such as prayer. The separation of church and state doesn't mean the two entities should be separate at all cost — it means one entity cannot rule over the other.

This is what makes America great, but in respecting those choices, we should not err on the side of removing all public displays of faith simply because there are those in this country that choose not to practice a faith.

Freedom of worship is confined to a place and time, while freedom of religion — our actual right — allows us to practice a lifestyle of faith, including public prayer. The free exercise of faith is a fundamental human right, not something that can only be invoked in times of tragedy.

This year, in his National Day of Prayer proclamation, President Obama said, “In America, our Nation is stronger ... because we protect the fundamental right of all peoples to practice their faith how they choose, to change their faith, or to practice no faith at all, and to do so free from persecution and discrimination.”

To that, I say “Amen.” The question is ... does our nation's actions match these words?

Sen. James Lankford is the junior senator from Oklahoma. He serves on the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, chairing the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management. He also serves on the Select Committee on Intelligence, the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Indian Affairs.

## America has always turned to prayer



By David Barton

“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

Perhaps no nation is more familiar with or has been more reliant on

prayer than America. It has been inseparable from our national identity.

Although formal prayer events occurred in 1541 at Palo Duro Canyon in Texas, in 1564 at St. Augustine, Florida, in 1598 at El Paso, Texas, and in 1607 at Cape Henry, Virginia — it is from the pilgrims that two of America's most common prayer traditions stem.

After a brutal winter in which nearly half the pilgrims died, they experienced a prosperous fall and therefore declared a three-day feast in December 1621 to thank God and to celebrate with their Indian friends. Ninety Indians joined the 50 pilgrims for three days of feasting, athletic competitions and prayer — the origin of the federal Thanksgiving holiday Americans now celebrate each fall.

But in 1623 the pilgrims experienced

**And when Eisenhower was elected president of the United States, he acknowledged that “I was seeking a way to point out that we were getting too secular.” He therefore wrote his own prayer that he publicly prayed at his own inauguration.**

a severe spring drought which they knew could result in another winter of death and starvation. Gov. William Bradford called for a time of prayer and fasting. To the great amazement of the Indians who witnessed the scene, after nine straight hours of prayer,

clouds appeared in the empty sky and a gentle, steady rain began to fall, thus producing abundant spring crops and a bountiful, fall harvest.

The surrounding New England colonies gradually adopted these pilgrim practices and developed the tradition of calling for a day of prayer and fasting in the spring, and a day of prayer and thanksgiving in the fall.

Prayer continued to be central to the formation of the new nation. When the first Continental Congress gathered in Philadelphia in September 1774, luminaries such as George Washington, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry and the others began with an extended time of prayer which delegate Silas Deane described as “worth riding one hundred

» see **ALWAYS** | C38





By Randy Forbes

**O**n the first night of votes, during every week that Congress is in session, something special happens.

There is no media. There is no fanfare.

Yet Room 219, just a few steps from the House Floor, is crowded with members of Congress. They are quietly praying.

Ten years ago, when I first began praying in Room 219 before votes every week, I typically prayed alone, sometimes joined by a colleague or two. These days however, Room 219 is often standing room only, as members of Congress from different backgrounds and walks of life put aside political differences and unite in prayer for our nation, our leaders, our

president and each other.

All members of Congress are welcome to attend and pray. Many who do so are members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, a group I founded in 2005 to pray for our nation and to engage the legislative process to protect the free exercise of faith for Americans of every faith or no faith.

Today, along with my co-chair, Sen. James Lankford, this group of nearly 100 lawmakers is dedicated to the idea that the free exercise of religion is a fundamental human right that is essential to a free society. Every American should be free to live and work according to his or her beliefs without fear of punishment from the government. This foundational truth is enshrined in our Constitution and is part of the DNA of our nation.

Congressional Prayer Caucus Members focus on engaging the legislative process to protect the ability of every American — of all faiths or no faith — to exercise the First Amendment right to the free exercise of their religion. Why? Because essential to the human dignity of every individual is the ability to live by one's moral convictions, and not be coerced by the government to compromise those convictions.

For example, Prayer Caucus members

have actively worked to pass concrete protections for the free exercise of religion in the military. These protections are already having a direct and positive impact on service members of all faiths. The Air Force has updated their regulations to better empower commanders to make decisions regarding the protection of religious expression. In July, a congressionally-commissioned report from the Department of Defense inspector general's office recommended updating the process for handling accommodations requests — an area which has been a particular concern for Sikh and Jewish service members who desire to serve their country but who need an accommodation to serve with the outward signs of their faith.

Another area where Prayer Caucus Members have been active is in promoting and protecting First-Amendment rights on college campuses. Restrictive speech codes have been widely acknowledged as a systemic problem on college campuses around the country because they can stifle, rather than promote, opportunities for college students to learn to robustly debate and respectfully disagree in an open forum.

In 2014, after California State University revoked the recognized student

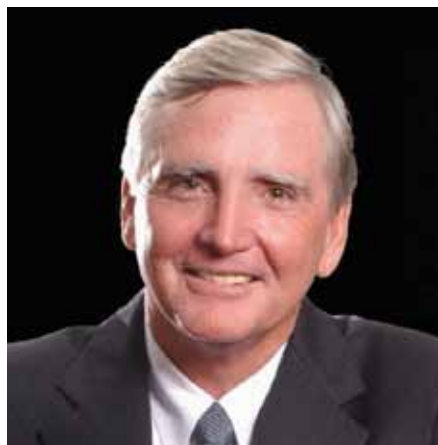
organization status of several student groups, including InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and CRU, Prayer Caucus Members urged University leadership to reverse their decision and protect student First Amendment rights of religion, speech, press and association.

Whether it is working to protect free speech, reinforce religious freedom for all faiths in the military, protecting public prayer, or supporting the autonomy of churches and faith-based organizations, the Congressional Prayer Caucus represents the commitment of nearly 100 members of Congress to ensuring that every American is free to live according to their faith.

This is an issue that should unite our nation. Protecting the free exercise of religion in this nation is something that all Americans should rally behind, regardless of religion or political persuasion, because it is a matter of ensuring and protecting basic human rights. Protecting one American's freedom is protecting every American's freedom — whether they are of any faith or no faith at all.

*Rep. Randy Forbes, Virginia Republican, is founder and co-chair of the Congressional Prayer Caucus.*

## The sound of a billion prayers



By Bob Williamson

Almighty God has provided ample communication opportunities with Himself to every person on earth. He talks to us through His Holy Word the Bible (and on rare occasion by direct revelation). He allows us the privilege to communicate directly with Him through prayer anytime 24/7 with no appointment necessary.

Best of all, He hears and answers our prayers.

There is no tsunami, earthquake, tornado, hurricane, atomic bomb or anything else in all of creation as powerful as prayer. The Bible assures us that nothing is impossible when prayer is taking place.

So with that in mind, I began praying that God would provide a way for our nation and indeed the world to find our way back to Him and that our land might be healed. Indeed, society had begun to come apart at the seams. The disintegration of morality was well underway and what was right was declared wrong and what was wrong was championed as being right in the eyes of an increasingly larger segment of our nation. We were moving away from God and what made our country great at an alarming rate.

I analyzed how in a short time such vast change had been accomplished, and I discovered that anti-God forces had become unified, organized and well-financed. This Godless conglomeration of people were smart and passionate and knew how to use technology, politicians and the media to their advantage. Most important, they had developed a plan that encompassed changing every aspect of our culture to include education, family, business, arts and entertainment, the media, government and even the church, and were systematically working toward their goals.

They collaborated using their

substantial combined resources to bombard the airwaves in order to marginalize Christians. This small but powerful group sent out over 1 billion targeted messages last year alone using social media, the press, movie and television scripts, blogs, music and every other conceivable media outlet with the goals of belittling the Bible and its teachings as being a myth, attacking religious liberty, glorifying immorality and condemning Christians by portraying them as bigots and haters.

All the while, Christians from some 43,000 denominations largely remained in their silos working independently of one another with no comprehensive strategy to counter these forces. Unification and collaboration seemed inconceivable that any project this massive and complex with varying liturgies, egos and logos could ever occur this side of heaven. However, I remembered the biblical promise that nothing is impossible when prayer is taking place.

So I invited prayer leaders from all over the world to come together and pray for wisdom and action. Nearly 100 of us assembled at my Florida resort and

prayed together for 2½ days, and The Jesus Alliance movement was launched. Today, believers from all over the world are uniting and organizing, and we are well on our way to sending a minimum of 1 billion pro-God messages.

The church has not been able to unite since the days of Christ; however, I had faith that fervent unabated prayer to our omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent Lord could tap into a power like none other in all of creation. It has been miraculous to see God's response.

Jesus prayed His own unification prayer in John 17:21: "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one — as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me." Yes, my dear friends, prayer is powerful, and it doesn't hurt to have God himself praying for the same thing.

*Bob Williamson is a successful entrepreneur, philanthropist and author who relinquished all of his business interests in order to lead the Jesus Alliance on a full-time basis. He resides with his wife in northern Florida.*



# If my people who are called by my name ...

## Without prayer we don't have a prayer



By Nancy Schulze

There is a beautiful painting of Jesus standing outside the door of a home, waiting for someone on the other side to open the door. The curious thing about the painting is that there is only one doorknob, and it is on the inside of the door.

Jesus stands as a gentleman, waiting as He does, to be invited into a human heart.

For 2,000 years, men and women have been opening that door, learning that when the Good Shepherd is invited in, they become acquainted with the most powerfully gentle, magnificently kind being they have ever known. He understands. He knows. He cares. He heals. He leads. He guides. He corrects. He protects.

For millennia, genuine but flawed believers have come to know that when limitations, weaknesses and wounds are placed in the hands of the Shepherd, trust activates His power. Transactions occur. Transformation happens.

As friendship with Jesus grows, gratitude takes hold of a life as it becomes more and more acquainted with the beauty of the One who laid down His life to set me free to be all that I was created to be. And no matter what comes my way, I know that the best friend I have ever had is with me in and through it all — every challenge, tragedy, triumph or joy.

As with anything of beauty, we humans instinctively want to share it with someone, especially those we love. But we fumble and stumble in our efforts to talk about Him and often fall short. How do you describe the indescribable? How do you talk about Him so that someone could grasp the magnitude of a being like Jesus? There is no one else like Him.

All you can do, really, is become as

much like Him as you can in thought, word and deed, and hope that others will be encouraged to open the door. It is a high bar. The highest. And we falter. But it is worth the effort because that door leads to fulfillment.

Our founders, almost to a one, were men who opened the door. Many attempts have been made to discredit and obscure the profound faith of our fathers. But we know what they believed. They were men of letters. George Washington wrote 10,000 letters and speeches. We know what he believed.

The founders were highly biblically literate. Over half of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were graduates of seminaries or Bible schools. The founding principles and constitutional roots of our country were borne out of what remains to this day the best-selling book of all time. It is a book about the lineage and history of Jesus. It is a history of the relationship between man and his Creator, including conversations between them throughout the ages. We call it prayer.

America is different. In a world where sovereigns and kings ruled over commoners and peasants, America was founded on the exceptional idea that all men are created equal in dignity and worth, and that our rights don't come from other men; they come from God. It caused quite a stir.

What emerged out of those ideas was the birth of the American spirit and an explosion of human potential that brought forth the most innovative, industrious, creative and productive people the world has ever known. With less than 6 percent of the world's population and less than 2 percent of the world's land mass, the United States of America produces one-quarter of all the goods and services in the world.

But this country is about way more than the material. We export more missionaries, volunteers, teachers and doctors than any other country on the planet. America has done more to raise the quality of life for more people in more places than any other country on earth — ever. There isn't a remotely close second to American generosity, financial and otherwise.

When America goes to war, it is not about hate. It is about love for the freedom and welfare of others as well as our own. When America prevails, she doesn't conquer and enslave; she helps rebuild and sets people free.

When America makes a mistake, she eventually faces it and fixes it. The

bloodiest war of all was the war we fought among ourselves. Not that long after our founding, 600,000 Americans died during the fight to make sure that all men were free in America.

Abraham Lincoln talked about the fact that both sides in that conflict were praying to the same God. As we look back, we can see that God honored the prayers of those who agreed with Him.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been poured into the effort to do away with any reference to God in this country. Secular forces behind the effort are organized, strategic, technologically advanced, well-financed and deadly serious — and they have been at it for



decades. Those who would resist the secularization of this country are outnumbered, outstrategized, outorganized and outfinanced.

But so were our founders.

In their own words, they prayed to "The Almighty" and to the "Lord Jesus Christ" for guidance, direction, protection, wisdom and aid in the time of their greatest challenge.

Our time is now. Will we turn to the One who answered their call? Will "we the people" get real and get serious with the God who guided the birth of the greatest nation ever known to man? Unless Americans connect or reconnect with the God of our forefathers, we will remain vulnerable and susceptible to the gods of others — be it secularism, materialism, socialism, atheism, communism, terrorism, pantheism or any other "ism" that would attempt to gain prominence over the glory, the power, the truth, the beauty and the lavish generosity of the God of the universe.

Prayer activates that God. Prayer also activates the one who prays. If George Washington had stayed on his knees, the United States of America wouldn't exist.

If we get on our knees, He will meet us there. And if we get up and act on His guidance, there is every reason to believe that we — with His aid — will reclaim, redeem and rebuild the real America.

There is a fierceness in the heart of a genuine believer who is awake to those things that attempt to stand between a man and his Creator. A fierce protectiveness against deception, division and destruction. A fierce love for that which is good. A fierce love for the truth that sets a man free.

While evil would have the world brand the Christian as a close-minded, judgmental, intolerant, bigoted weakling, the Christian is called to love his enemy and to pray for those who would persecute, divide, deceive and destroy.

Why would anyone fear or attempt to eliminate the influence of a weakling whose greatest weapon is prayer? Because at the other end of those prayers is a power greater than any other this world can comprehend. It is the power that created and owns every square inch of this place. A power that knows what is best for the people and the planet He created. A power that will let things go only so far before He acts.

Nancy Schulze is a co-founder, with Vonette Bright, of The American Prayer Initiative. She is the founder of the Congressional Wives Speakers and is married to Dick Schulze, who served 18 years in Congress. She is a fellow of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview.



# America: Still a nation of prayer



By Lea Carawan

**T**hroughout the nation's history, our leaders have offered prayers as petitions and thanksgiving, to embrace our grief and sorrow, for our troops in harm's way and first responders, in times of uncertainty and crisis, during war and in peace, for protection, provision, guidance and the acknowledgment that in and of ourselves, we are wholly insufficient.

This spirit is derived from deeply held Judeo-Christian values. We see these principles woven into the very fabric of our founding documents and through the legacy of the men and women who helped shape this country.

**Nevertheless, "we the people" must decide whether we are going to stand up against undue censorship, the dismantling of our heritage and efforts that give the state the ability to force us to leave our God-given liberties at the door of the public square — our places of business and our barracks, schools and government entities.**

They give substance to the freedoms we all cherish and echo in the words and prayers of Patriots who rose up together with one voice.

Perhaps one of the most illuminating examples comes from Abraham Lincoln, who, in a moment of national crisis during the Civil War, said, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."

However, for decades, there has

been a steady undercurrent of targeted efforts to remove God from every vestige of American life and culture. These battles confirm a tangible reality that the things we hold sacred are slowly eroding all around us. Thankfully, a new generation of leaders is emerging to fill the gap.

The Congressional Prayer Caucus — an official caucus of the Congress — was created in 2005 for this purpose. Nearly 100 members, co-chaired by Rep. J. Randy Forbes, Virginia Republican, and Sen. James Lankford, Oklahoma Republican, have united to protect our religious freedoms and help restore Judeo-Christian values to their rightful place in the marketplace of ideas. Many of them gather to pray for one another and for our nation before each legislative session in Room 219.

In 2005, the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation — a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization — was created to work alongside the Congressional Prayer Caucus to build and support a nationwide network of lawmakers and citizens who are committed to prayer and action.

The American Prayer Caucus Network, with more than 500 members of like-minded national, state and local government leaders, represents the front-line defenders of faith and those who promote prayer and seek to protect our Judeo-Christian heritage, the rights of conscience and religious liberty through legislative prayer caucuses at the state level. America can still be a city on a hill and a light to the world, but it is imperative that we pray for our national and state leaders and for our country. Their fervent leadership is needed more than ever.

Protecting religious liberty does not infringe on anyone's rights. No one should be forced to choose between strongly held religious beliefs and his or her livelihood, especially not in a nation with such a rich spiritual heritage. We have the right to exercise our deeply held beliefs without undue government interference, legislative maneuvering and media-fueled public derision.

Nevertheless, "we the people" must decide whether we are going to stand up against undue censorship, the dismantling of our heritage and efforts that give the state the ability to force us to leave our God-given liberties at the door of the public square — our places of business and our barracks, schools and government entities. It is our choice, and it is time to make a bold declaration to the halls of power and to do so with unity and resolve.

Elected representatives are again

calling on God's people to unify with one heart and one voice to pray for the country and those who lead her through the extraordinary PrayUSA Initiative. This unprecedented call for a nationwide prayer initiative was launched this year on March 7 by government leaders at the first-of-its-kind LIFFT America Religious Liberty Summit (the acronym is: Leaders Inspiring Faith and Freedom To America) in Charlotte, North Carolina.

happening.

This initiative is exploding across the nation. To date, nearly 900 government leaders, 50 leading organizations and 140,000 citizens have said "yes" to this historic movement. An inspiring three-minute video and downloadable kits are available at [www.PrayUSA.com](http://www.PrayUSA.com) to help churches schedule a PrayUSA Sunday.

In an era not that long ago, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor, theolo-



The summit was convened by the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation along with Mr. Forbes and Mr. Lankford. Sixteen members of Congress and 36 legislators representing 25 states gathered to effectively challenge the growing anti-faith movement. In a solemn and historic ceremony, all who were present signed a Call to Prayer for America Proclamation (opposite page), declaring that people of faith can no longer be silent as our nation's Judeo-Christian heritage and religious liberties are increasingly compromised.

Today, local congregations across the United States are scheduling PrayUSA Sunday Spotlights or special services with church and government leaders standing side by side in a show of unity and humble petition before God. Enthusiasm, inspiration, excitement, motivation: These are powerful and stirring words, but they do not fully capture everything that is

giant and anti-Nazi dissident, offered these sobering words during World War II: "Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. Silence in the face of evil is evil itself."

America, it is time to speak, it is time to act and it is time to pray. Together, we can demonstrate a renewed hope, a strengthened resolve, a sharpened focus, a bold declaration and an energized movement.

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*Lea Carawan is president and executive director of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established to unite and mobilize government leaders nationwide who are committed to protecting religious freedom, preserving America's Judeo-Christian heritage and promoting prayer. For more information, visit [www.cpc-foundation.com](http://www.cpc-foundation.com) or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CPCFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/CPCFoundation).*



# HUNDREDS OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS CALLING THE NATION TO PRAYER

National, state and local leaders  
who are leading the Call to Prayer  
for America:

U.S. Congressman Rick Allen (GA)  
U.S. Congressman Mike Conaway (TX)  
U.S. Senator Steve Daines (MT)  
U.S. Congressman John Fleming (LA)  
U.S. Congressman J. Randy Forbes (VA)  
U.S. Congressman Jeff Fortenberry (NE)  
U.S. Congresswoman Virginia Foxx (NC)  
U.S. Congressman Scott Garrett (NJ)  
U.S. Congressman Richard Hudson (NC)  
U.S. Congressman Randy Hultgren (IL)  
U.S. Congressman Doug Lamborn (CO)  
U.S. Senator James Lankford (OK)  
U.S. Congressman Randy Neugebauer (TX)  
U.S. Congressman Steve Pearce (NM)  
U.S. Congressman Robert Pittenger (NC)  
U.S. Congressman Scott Rigell (VA)  
U.S. Congressman Tim Walberg (MI)  
U.S. Congressman Joe Wilson (SC)  
U.S. Congressman Rob Wittman (VA)  
Senator Steve E. Abrams (KS)  
Representative Stephen Alford (KS)  
Senator Mark Allen (OK)  
Representative Ron Amstutz (OH)  
Senator Joel Anderson (CA)  
Representative Steven Anthimides (KS)  
Representative Don Arnes (OK)  
Representative Tracy Arnold (MS)  
Representative Dean Arp (NC)  
Representative Marilyn Avila (NC)  
Representative Bernard Ayotte (ME)  
Representative Kurt Bahr (MO)  
Representative Bob Ballinger (AR)  
Representative Gary Banz (OK)  
Representative John Barker (KS)  
Representative Timothy Barr (GA)  
Representative Tom Barrett (MI)  
Representative Tony Barton (KS)  
Representative Paul Battles (GA)  
Senator Molly Baumgardner (KS)  
Representative Jim Beckett (MS)  
Representative John Bennett (OK)  
Representative Richard Bennett (MS)  
Representative Richard Billinger (KS)  
Representative Lisa Billy (OK)  
Senator Brian Bingman (OK)  
Senator Tim Bivins (IL)  
Representative John Bizon (MI)  
Senator Larry Boggs (OK)  
Representative Sue Boldra (KS)  
Representative C. Scott Bounds (MS)  
Senator Elaine Bowers (KS)  
Representative Randy Boyd (MS)  
Representative John Bradford (KS)  
Senator Josh Brecheen (OK)  
Senator Rick Brinkley (OK)  
Senator Bill Brown (OK)

Representative Chris Brown (MS)  
Senator Dan Brown (MO)  
Representative J. Paul Brown (CO)  
Representative Mike Brown (OK)  
Governor Sam Brownback (KS)  
Senator Nickey Browning (MS)  
Representative David Brumbaugh (OK)  
Representative Steve Brunk (KS)  
Representative Jim Buchy (OH)  
Representative Perry Buck (CO)  
Representative Tony Burkley (OH)  
Senator Dave C. Burns (ME)  
Senator Terry C. Burton (MS)  
Representative Charles Busby (MS)  
Senator Albert Butler (MS)  
Representative Larry Byrd (MS)  
Representative Wes Cantrell (GA)  
Senator Videt Carmichael (MS)  
Representative Black Carpenter (KS)  
Representative Will Carpenter (KS)  
Representative Dennis Casey (OK)  
Senator Tom Casperson (MI)  
Representative Joyce Chandler (GA)  
Representative Bubba Carpenter (MS)  
Senator Marie Chappelle-Nadal (MO)  
Senator Lydia Chassaniol (MS)  
Representative Lee Chatfield (MI)  
Representative Gary Chism (MS)  
Representative Mike Christian (OK)  
Representative David Clark (GA)  
Representative Heath Clark (GA)  
Representative Tyler Clark (ME)  
Representative Josh Cockcroft (OK)  
Senator Patrick Colbeck (MI)  
Representative Tristan Cole (MI)  
Senator Nancy Adams Collins (MS)  
Representative Jeff Collins (NC)  
Senator Ronald Collins (ME)  
Senator Michael Connelly (IL)  
Representative Donnie Condit (OK)  
Representative Margaret Condit (OH)  
Representative Kathleen Conti (CO)  
Representative Ann Coody (OK)  
Representative Kevin Cooke (GA)  
Representative Amarian Cooksey (OK)  
Representative Travis Couture-Lovelady (KS)  
Majority Leader Kirk Cox (VA)  
Representative Dale Crafts (ME)  
Representative Dean Cray (ME)  
Representative Jarrod Crockett (ME)  
Senator Mike Cunningham (MO)  
Representative Becky Currie (MS)  
Senator Andre Cushing (ME)  
Senator David Curtis (NC)  
Representative Philip Curtis (ME)  
Senator Nathan Dahm (OK)

Senator Warren Daniel (NC)  
Representative David Dank (OK)  
Senator Jim Davis (NC)  
Senator Kim David (OK)  
Representative Dennis DeBar (MS)  
Representative Pete DeGraaf (KS)  
Representative Scott DeLano (MS)  
Senator Tom Dempsey (MO)  
Representative Lee Denney (OK)  
Representative Bill Denny (MS)  
Representative David Derby (OK)  
Representative Tim Derickson (OH)  
Representative Dale DeWitt (OK)  
Representative Jonathan Dever (OH)  
Senator Bob Dixon (MO)  
Representative Timothy Dore (CO)  
Representative Joe Dorman (OK)  
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Representative Willie Dove (KS)  
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Representative Bo Eaton (MS)  
Representative Jon Echols (OK)  
Senator Ed Emery (MO)  
Senator Judy Emmons (MI)  
Representative Terry England (GA)  
Representative John Enns (OK)  
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Representative Eleanor Espling (ME)  
Representative Casey Eure (MS)  
Representative Justin Everett (CO)  
Representative John Ewy (KS)  
Mayor Julie Ferguson (OK)  
Senator Eddie Fields (OK)  
Representative Dan Fisher (OK)  
Senator Joey Fillingane (MS)  
Representative Blaine Finch (KS)  
Senator John Ford (OK)  
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Senator Jack Fry (OK)  
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Senator Stewart Greenleaf (PA)  
Senator A.J. Griffin (OK)  
Senator Larry Grooms (SC)  
Representative Cheryl Grossman (OH)  
Representative Stacey Guerin (ME)  
Representative Philip Gunn (MS)  
Representative Christina Hagan (OH)  
Senator William Haine (IL)  
Senator Steve Hale (MS)  
Representative David Hall (OH)  
See more at [PrayUSA.com](http://PrayUSA.com)

Sign the Proclamation at:  
**[www.PrayUSA.com](http://www.PrayUSA.com)**





# Mobilizing heavenly forces

## America is a nation that called for fasting and prayer at pivotal times of great peril



By William J. Federer

**D**uring threats of war, Benjamin Franklin organized Pennsylvania's first "volunteer" militia and proposed a "general fast," which was approved by Pennsylvania's president and council and published in the Pennsylvania Gazette, Dec. 12, 1747:

"The calamities of a bloody war ... seem every year more nearly to approach us ... and there is just reason to fear that unless we humble ourselves before the Lord and amend our ways, we may be chastised with yet heavier judgments. We have ... thought fit ... to appoint ... a Day of Fasting & Prayer, exhorting all, both Ministers & People ... to join with one accord in the most humble & fervent supplications that Almighty God would mercifully interpose and still the rage of war among the nations & put a stop to the effusion of Christian blood."

**George Washington wrote in his diary on June 1, 1774: "Went to church, fasted all day."**

When the British announced that they would blockade Boston Harbor on June 1, 1774, Thomas Jefferson drafted a "Day of Fasting," which was introduced into the Virginia House of Burgesses by Robert Carter Nicholas with the support of Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee and George Mason, and passed unanimously:

"This House, being deeply impressed with apprehension of the great dangers, to be derived to British America, from the hostile invasion of the City of Boston, in our sister Colony of Massachusetts ... deem it highly necessary

that the said first day of June be set apart, by the members of this House as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, devoutly to implore the Divine interposition, for averting the heavy calamity which threatens destruction to our civil rights ... Ordered, therefore that the Members of this House do attend ... with the Speaker, and the mace, to the Church in this City, for the purposes aforesaid; and that the Reverend Mr. Price be appointed to read prayers, and the Reverend Mr. Gwatkin, to preach a sermon."

George Washington wrote in his diary on June 1, 1774: "Went to church, fasted all day."

On April 15, 1775, four days before the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, led by John Hancock, proclaimed:

"In circumstances dark as these, it becomes us, as men and Christians, to reflect that, whilst every prudent measure should be taken to ward off the impending judgments ... the 11th of May next be set apart as a Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer ... to confess their sins ... to implore the Forgiveness of all our Transgression."

After the Continental Congress passing a Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, on July 12, 1775:

"We have appointed a Continental fast. Millions will be upon their knees at once before their great Creator, imploring His forgiveness and blessing; His smiles on American Council and arms."

Col. Knox's cannons from Fort Ticonderoga were placed on Dorchester Heights overlooking the docked British ships. Gen. Washington then ordered, on March 6, 1776:

"Thursday, the 7th ... being set apart by this Province as a Day of Fasting, Prayer and Humiliation, 'to implore the Lord and Giver of all victory to pardon our manifold sins and wickedness, and that it would please Him to bless the Continental army with His divine favor and protection,' all officers and soldiers are strictly enjoined to pay all due reverence and attention on that day to the sacred duties due to the Lord of hosts for His mercies already received, and for those blessings which our holiness and uprightness of life can alone encourage us to hope through His mercy to obtain."

The next day, a storm forced British Gen. Howe to abandon his plans of attacking the cannons on Dorchester Heights, and he soon evacuated Boston.

Facing 10,000 British troops aboard

400 British ships in the New York harbor, Gen. Washington ordered, on May 15, 1776:

"The Continental Congress having ordered Friday the 17th instant to be observed as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, humbly to supplicate the mercy of Almighty God, that it would please Him to pardon all our manifold sins and transgressions, and to prosper the arms of the United Colonies, and finally establish the peace and freedom of America upon a solid and lasting foundation; The General commands all officers and soldiers to pay strict obedience to the orders of the Continental Congress; that, by their unfeigned and pious observance of their religious duties, they may incline the Lord and Giver of victory to

and peace."

Benedict Arnold plotted to betray West Point. After his plans were thwarted, the Continental Congress issued a Day of Thanksgiving on Oct. 18, 1780:

"In the late remarkable interposition of His watchful providence, in the rescuing the person of our Commander-in-Chief and the army from imminent dangers, at the moment when treason was ripened for execution ... it is therefore recommended ... a Day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer ... to confess our unworthiness ... and to offer fervent supplications to the God of all grace ... to cause the knowledge of Christianity to spread over all the earth."

British Lord Cornwallis' surrender at



prosper our arms."

The British attacked Washington's position, August 27, 1776, in the Battle of Brooklyn Heights. Despite the British advantage of a surprise attack from behind, Washington's troops were able to be evacuated under cover of a providential fog.

After the surrender of 6,000 British troops at the Battle of Saratoga, the Continental Congress proclaimed the first National Day of Thanksgiving, Nov. 1, 1777:

"That with one heart and one voice the good people may express the grateful feeling of their hearts ... join the penitent confession of their manifold sins ... that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance ... and ... under the providence of Almighty God ... secure for these United States the greatest of all human blessings, independence

Yorktown on Oct. 19, 1781, and the Treaty of Paris in 1783 officially ended the Revolution.

Ronald Reagan stated Jan. 27, 1983, "In 1775, the Continental Congress proclaimed the first National Day of Prayer. ... In 1783, the Treaty of Paris officially ended the long, weary Revolutionary War during which a National Day of Prayer had been proclaimed every spring for eight years."

William J. Federer is an American writer of over 20 books. "America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations" has sold more than a half-million copies. He hosts two daily syndicated radio programs: "Faith in History" and "The American Minute," which summarizes what happened on a certain day in history.



# Learn to 'pray with our legs'



By Penny Nance

"I prayed for 20 years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs," said slave turned abolitionist statesman Frederick Douglass.

His words give a sweet reminder of the dangers of believing in the spirituality of prayer without the tangibility of action. At Concerned Women for America, the nation's largest women's public policy organization, we believe both prayer and action are indispensable and inseparable parts of fruitful cultural engagement.

Scripture tells us "faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26) and encourages us to "always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). Thus God endowed His creatures with not only the ability to pray and act, but the obligation to do so.

By emphasizing prayer or action disproportionately, we miss the deeply

beautiful union of both. Prayer leads us in how to act. Prayer itself is a type of action. Actions can be empty without prayer. Action, as it did for Douglass, can become a prayer when offered for the sake of God's Kingdom. The two are truly inseparable, yet we often detach them.

If we emphasize only prayer, we risk becoming lazy or complacent, believing our trust in God can somehow make up for our disobedient inaction. In Exodus 14:13, Moses tells the Israelites, "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." This verse is often misleadingly cut off there, when in the very next verse Moses was corrected by God: "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff ... to divide the water." God told Moses that it wasn't right to just pray; real action was required.

Action is also de-emphasized when we begin to slip into a way of thinking that says God can be found only in a church through our prayers, that He belongs in a sacred zone cut off from the rest of our life. By contrast, Paul urges us in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 to "pray without ceasing," which is possible only when prayers accompany us as we act throughout all of daily life: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God" (Colossians 3:17).

On the other extreme, if we emphasize only action at the expense of prayer, we easily burn out. We seek the goal without the means, the roof without the foundation, the words without the

breath, the bread without the wheat. To quote the title of Fil Anderson's book, we run the danger of Running on Empty. The book's description captures the struggle of those drawn to act and tempted to forgo prayer: "Learn to live with God instead of for God."

There is great irony in acting without prayer, because prayer is such a powerful tool for making things happen. "Prayer causes things to happen that would not happen if you did not pray," pastor John Piper teaches. "If you do not avail yourself of the privilege of bringing to pass events in the universe that would not take place if you didn't pray, you are acting like a colossal fool."

The proper union of prayer and action is found in Acts 13, when prayer empowered the selection of active leaders: "In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers ... while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and ... proclaimed the word of God ... John was with them as their helper."

This is a beautiful illustration that each person in this story — the fasters, the missionaries, and John — and their own roles in prayer and action. There are times when God asks us to sit back and let Him act — our action then being to blindly move forward, putting all our

trust in God's hand. Not everyone is called to pray and act in the same way, but all are called to both act and pray in some capacity. And that is what we empower women to do.

Concerned Women for America, along with the American Prayer Initiative that I was so honored to help found, are vehicles to help enable rhythms of prayer and action to become part of our everyday practices of cultural engagement.

This isn't just a nice idea; it is a lived reality. It's a reality when we do a devotional and prayer time before each staff meeting and a busy day of action. It's a reality when we are praying for the victims of Islamic terrorism and speaking out to release captive Americans held by an Islamic regime. It's a reality when my email inbox is full of prayer requests from our active state leaders. And it's a tangible practice when, at the end of each article, we encourage our women with clear prayer intentions and action steps.

May we "pray with our legs," letting prayer propel us into stepping forward with confidence in our God and with strength for the prayerful, active path He will lead us on. We do not believe our efforts will be successful otherwise.

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Penny Young Nance is CEO and president of Concerned Women for America, with a membership of a half-million in 450 chapters, and is a recognized authority on cultural, children's and women's issues.

## Does prayer still work in America?



By Paul Blair

It had already been a difficult year, that first year the Pilgrims landed in Cape Cod, but now a drought was jeopardizing their corn crop which in turn could jeopardize their very existence. What would they do? The answer was

simple. The people were called to a day of prayer and fasting. The Wampanoag Indians had already been firsthand witnesses of the genuine Christian faith of these Pilgrim families, but this day would amaze them even more. Before the day ended, a gentle rain began to fall.

One of the Indians who worked most closely with the Pilgrims was Hobbamock. His testimony was recorded in Cotton Mather's book, The Great Works of Christ in America, "Now I see that the Englishman's God is a good God; for he hath heard you, and sent you rain, and that without such tempest and thunder as we used to have with our rain; which after our Powawing for it, breaks down the corn; whereas your corn stands whole and good still; surely, your God is a good God."

Hobbamock became a Christian and built an Indian village adjacent

to Plymouth Plantation, living out his days with them as neighbors and friends.

**"Turn from your wicked ways" – Repentance does not simply mean that you are sorry that you did something. Repentance means a change of direction. Talk is cheap. As Christians, our walk of faith should match our talk of faith.**

From the beginning, prayer has been an integral part of America's history.

In September 1774, representatives of 12 of the 13 colonies met at

Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia. This was the very first Continental Congress. They were convening to discuss their response to the "Intolerable Acts of Tyranny" being poured out on the colonies by the English crown. Recognizing the crisis they faced, a motion was made that they should pray before they began their work in order to seek God's guidance and blessing. A local parson from Christ's Church came on the morning of Sept. 7, 1774, and history records that the very first act of Congress was to hold an extended Bible devotional and prayer meeting.

Over 300 times, either the Continental Congress or individual state governments called for days of prayer and fasting during our War for Independence to humble themselves before God and seek his divine presence.



# Adopt a precinct

What if someone covered your home, family and you in specific prayer?



By Shelly Huey

It was typical Saturday morning, sunny Southern California kinda day. Everyone seemed to be going somewhere. With urgency. With no time to wait. I stood silently anxious at the intersection of busy, residential streets. This was familiar territory. I loved this neighborhood. Lots of great memories were made here. I drove those streets daily in my car.

Only this day was different. What a unique perspective this would be.

I would be walking up to each door at each house. I couldn't wait to talk to the people about voting. And to engage them in conversation about voting their values, and defending liberty and freedom.

My husband, Craig, was running in a special election in California for the U.S. Congress. So naturally, I enlisted to walk neighborhood precincts. Every address in this nation, and the registered voters

that live there are assigned to a specific precinct. All of this information is placed on a voter-list database.

Any campaign for an elected office has access to these voter lists. Campaigns divide the voter lists into neighborhood precincts. Volunteers place the precincts with the voter lists into packets. Anyone who works for a campaign and wants to help get the vote out will be given a precinct packet. I was armed with a clipboard, pen and precinct packets, and I resolved strategically to cover the area. Pretty simple list. What a powerful resource.

Prayer. It's also pretty simple. It's the powerful resource for strategically covering an area. It was a no-brainer to make prayer an integral part of our campaign. It started with early-morning prayer meetings, which grew into neighborhood prayer walks and eventually districtwide prayer drives.

But there had to be more than this. We needed to utilize the tools that we already had, to target specific areas. We began by putting up the congressional district map in our campaign office, outlining on it where the precincts are. Daily, we updated the map and specifically marked the precincts that were walked and covered by volunteers. Then it dawned on me.

Why not have a prayer warrior who lives in that neighborhood — within that precinct — “adopt” the precinct? And in that adoption, they will be able to target specific streets, homes and names in prayer!

So, we launched Adopt A Precinct during our campaign. A series of videos

explaining Adopt A Precinct were sent out to our database, and interested people quickly signed up. They received the precinct of their choice via email. In their hands, they now had exact names, streets and neighborhoods to pray for. They began to rally the troops. Some precincts enlisted their small groups. Others invited individuals. All precincts were activated for transformational

**Maybe you stand silently anxious at the intersection of prayer and action. Because it's unfamiliar territory. Maybe your life is anxious and busy, and certainly doesn't feel residential. Maybe you resolve to make a difference. In your home. Your street. Your neighborhood. Your city. Your state. Your country.**

prayer throughout the district.

Hundreds of precincts were adopted. Hundreds of prayer warriors were mobilized.

Thousands of households were specifically prayed for. Hundreds of thousands of individual names were covered in prayer. The effect on that election cycle was beyond special.

You are beyond special. Pretty unique. Loved. Your home and those

who live with you are special. Are pretty unique. Are loved.

Your street. Your block. Your neighborhood. Is special. Is pretty unique. Is loved. What if someone seriously prayed for you. By name. For your home. Your street. Your block. Your neighborhood.

Maybe you stand silently anxious at the intersection of prayer and action. Because it's unfamiliar territory. Maybe your life is anxious and busy, and certainly doesn't feel residential. Maybe you resolve to make a difference. In your home. Your street. Your neighborhood. Your city. Your state. Your country.

But you don't know where to enlist.

Imagine every campaign in this nation utilizing this targeted strategy, because every campaign seems to be going somewhere. Imagine every campaign mobilizing an army of saints to specifically pray. With urgency. Imagine every campaign activating the one and only true hope into each neighborhood. On every street. We have no time to wait.

Wherever you live, a campaign is happening, from local elections to presidential.

You get to be the voice to tell them about Adopt A Precinct, you get to drive them to victoryupdates.com so they can see the videos and learn, and you get to email me: shellynotw@gmail.com if you have questions.

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*Ms. Shelly Huey is the author of Victory Update, a training program that promotes “adopting a precinct” in prayer to identify, connect, inform and activate Christian believers for civic engagement.*

## AMERICA

From page C35

At one time, Americans believed in God and humbly sought His blessings and protection. After 239 years, God has not changed. Unfortunately, the American people have. The air hangs heavy with hypocrisy when we see everyone from members of the media to members of our government asking prayer for the victim's families after some great tragedy strikes, while at the same time, ignoring the firing of a high-school football coach who allows students to voluntarily pray with him after a ball game.

God is still in the prayer-answering business, but prayer is on His terms. The simple power of prayer is revealed in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

“If my people who are called by my name” — Prayer is a family privilege. God is omniscient, but He only obligates Himself to answer the prayers of His children. How do you become a child of God? By faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16, John 14:6).

“Shall humble themselves and pray” — This literally means to bend your knees before the Creator recognizing that He is God and we aren't. Then, lay your petitions and praises at His feet.

“Seek my face” — A Jewish term meaning to seek God's direction. Prayer is not continuing to behave badly and expecting God to rescue us from the consequences of our bad behavior. Living by faith means to walk in His known will as obedient children. We have His Word, the Holy Bible.

“Turn from your wicked ways” — Repentance does not simply mean that

you are sorry that you did something. Repentance means a change of direction. Talk is cheap. As Christians, our walk of faith should match our talk of faith.

“Then”, God says, “I will forgive your sin and heal your land.” God is not obligated to do His part, until we do ours. Remember, God is not Santa Clause, just there to give us our every wish. It's His desire for our will to become more like His. Remember, the Disciples' Prayer says, “Thy will be done” not “my will be done.”

As the former agnostic who became a great Christian philosopher, C.S. Lewis, once said: “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” The problem with America is that we have too many who treat Christ as

being only moderately important.

Christianity is not something we join or something we do every Sunday morning. Christianity is who we become by faith in the Biblical and historical truth that Christ, being fully God and fully man, died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

It is great to have friends in high places, and there is none greater than having access to the Heavenly Father through faith in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

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*Mr. Paul Blair is a retired NFL football player who now serves as the Senior Pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Edmond, Oklahoma, and president of Reclaiming America for Christ.*



# Praying the Gettysburg Address



By Rebecca Hagelin

**O**ften times, our most effective prayers are those we pray spontaneously alone based on the current cry of our heart. Other times, it is more fitting to join in a common group prayer, or with one person praying on behalf of all those assembled.

Whenever and however you choose to pray for our nation matters not. What is critical is that we actually do so.

One of America's definitive documents is essentially a prayer straight from the heart of a man who saw the full potential of our great nation. The Gettysburg Address beautifully distills the meaning of America, its history and purpose, in a manner that lends itself to easily become a prayerful cry of our hearts, whether whispered on our knees by our bedsides, or boldly from a microphone in a public gathering.

I'm struck by the similarities between how Jesus Christ brought clarity and fulfillment to the Mosaic Law, and how President Abraham Lincoln brought clarity and fulfillment to our nation's founding documents.

The Mosaic Law of the Old Testament was beautiful and guiding, but it had one major imperfection; No man was able to fully follow it. Only Jesus Christ, both man and God, could fulfill the law. Because he knew and followed the law of God perfectly, he was able to distill it into two short and simple maxims for our understanding, edification, and salvation: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31) Christ fulfilled every single element of the law. And by doing so, he brought freedom to all who were enslaved to the power of sin. He transformed an unattainable set of rules into a series of signs, revealing to us both God's holiness and our own need

for salvation.

The Declaration of Independence and our Constitution laid the most beautiful foundation for a country in the history of the world. Still, the Constitution was imperfect, and needed to be amended many times. Particularly glaring was the evil of slavery that legally thrived under both documents in our nation's early years.

Then came President Lincoln, the "prairie lawyer." He knew American law well enough to distill its meaning down to a simple phrase, "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." No one had ever before so concisely explained the history of America, or our great experiment in democracy, as Abraham Lincoln did in his Gettysburg Address. He succinctly stated the purpose of the "American law," just as Christ had done so long before regarding God's law.

Under Lincoln's leadership, America

**Praying to God portions of the Gettysburg Address is a very effective way to pray for America and our freedom. Just as we use the Lord's prayer as a template to teach us how to pray to God about our relationship with him, so may we use the Gettysburg Address as a template to pray to God about our nation.**

was finally able to "fulfill" the promise to those who were still enslaved, guaranteeing Thomas Jefferson's words written in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." Lincoln's leadership did to America's founding documents what Jesus' life and sacrifice did to Mosaic Law: Removed the deadly flaw without destroying the righteous foundation.

Praying to God portions of the Gettysburg Address is a very effective way to pray for America and our freedom. Just as we use the Lord's prayer as a template to teach us how to pray to God about our relationship with him, so may we use the Gettysburg Address as a template to pray to God about our nation.

In our time of broken families, pre-born babies who are treated as nothing more than property to be discarded at will, a divisive citizenry, and government encroachment into every aspect of our lives, I invite you to join me in allowing the Gettysburg Address to become the cry of our hearts.

Pray it with me to pay homage to those who gave their lives to secure freedom within America for every human being. Pray it so that America may, once again, become "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Take time to search through the rich historic treasury of America's great leaders; and simultaneously, search through the pages of the Bible. In both



Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us

places, you will find inspiring accounts of men and women, powerful and ordinary, who, when finding themselves in difficult times turned to God in prayer and saw Him answer in miraculous ways. For suggested prayers based on these people, events and truths, visit the website of the American Prayer Initiative ([www.americanprayerinitiative.org](http://www.americanprayerinitiative.org)), a project founded to help restore America's biblical roots and founding principles.

*Rebecca Hagelin has been promoting faith, freedom and family for 30 years. She is a columnist and author of the parenting book, "30 Ways in 30 Days to Protect Your Family", scheduled for rerelease in May.*



# On our knees



By Janet Parshall

**A**merica is in trouble. Polling data from Rasmussen Reports shows that only one in four Americans thinks we are heading in the right direction. Sixty-nine percent of voters believe the nation is headed down the wrong track. Something is wrong, but few can identify how to get America back on the right path.

Perhaps we are looking for solutions in the wrong places. In tough times, we tend to look outward, "It's their fault." Or we turn inward, "That problem is not my problem." What we need to do, is look upward. We've been in rough places before as a nation, and, if we allow history to be our teacher, those who went before us knew where to turn in times of trouble.

We won our independence from a suffocating monarchy, but we had to learn how to govern ourselves. We drafted our Declaration, acknowledging our inalienable rights from our Creator followed by the initial Articles of Confederation, which proved too frail, so a Constitution was drafted in

1787 and ratified by the states the following year.

In 1789, Congress convened and approved the amendments to the Constitution, including the First Amendment which guaranteed religious liberty. One of the first orders of business was to pass a measure providing a salary for the chaplain of the Congress, who would conduct opening prayers.

When George Washington resigned his commission as commander in chief of the Revolutionary Army, he circulated his farewell address to the governors of the 13 states. He ended it with his "earnest prayer" that they remember: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

In another farewell address, Washington, the president, returned to

**We face foreign enemies today no less formidable than those engaged by our forefathers. But they knew what many of us have forgotten. God has the power to grant us not only victory against our foes, but also bring peace to the turmoil in our own hearts.**

the same theme by proclaiming that there was no chance of any successful national morality and no hope for any real civic virtue apart from a worshipful attitude toward God. He established the first federal day of prayer, noting: "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty

God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

John Adams followed Washington as America's next president. On March 23, 1798, Adams issued a proclamation for a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. It read, in part:

"That the citizens of these states, abstaining on that day from their customary worldly occupations, offer their devout addresses to the Father of Mercies, agreeably to those forms or methods which they have severally adopted as the most suitable and becoming: That all religious congregations do, with the deepest humility, acknowledge before GOD (emphasis mine) the manifold sins and transgressions with which we are justly chargeable as individuals and as a nation; beseeching Him, at the same time, of His infinite Grace, through the Redeemer of the world, freely to remit all our offenses, and to incline us, by His holy spirit, to that sincere repentance and reformation which may afford us reason to hope for His inestimable favor and heavenly benediction."

In addition to Washington and Adams, almost every president has issued proclamations calling upon citizens to set aside a day of prayer and thanksgiving to God for the blessings of freedom. Yet, there is an undeniable hostility against the role and acknowledgment of faith from some of our national institutions. In the past 50 years, the U.S. Supreme Court has:

- Outlawed prayer in public schools.
- Outlawed Bible reading in public schools.
- Banned the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools.
- Banned a silent moment of prayer in public schools.

- Banned the use of religious clergy to teach even optional religious instruction in public schools.
- Banned a Christmas nativity scene in a public building.
- Banned school-sponsored prayer at graduation ceremonies.

While American independence was born on July 4, 1776, that tree of liberty was birthed because of the seeds planted by men like Patrick Henry. What Mr. Henry said in Richmond in 1775 speaks to the soul of America now:

"They tell us sir that we are weak — unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs? ... We fight not our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations."

We face foreign enemies today no less formidable than those engaged by our forefathers. But they knew what many of us have forgotten. God has the power to grant us not only victory against our foes, but also bring peace to the turmoil in our own hearts. The question before us now is whether or not we will call on His name and seek His guidance, petitioning for His wisdom in the days ahead. How we answer that question will determine whether we become a nation of hope or a people of hopelessness.

Billy Graham was right when he said, "To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees."

*Janet Parshall is the executive producer and host of "In The Market with Janet Parshall," nationally syndicated on over 700 stations across the country. Ms. Parshall is the author of several books, including her latest, "Buyer Beware."*

## ALWAYS

From page C29

miles to hear," with John Adams reporting, "It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here."

America continued its reliance on prayer throughout the Revolution, with the Continental Congress calling the nation to 15 separate days of prayer. The resulting frequent occasions of Divine intervention were so obvious that George Washington told General Thomas Nelson:

"The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this that He must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked, that has not gratitude

enough to acknowledge his obligations."

According to Washington, the hand of God was so apparent that anyone who did not feel an obligation to thank God for what He had done for America was simply wicked.

Between 1620 and 1815, colonial, state and federal governments issued more than 1,400 official calls to prayer. (Scores of those original prayer proclamations can be seen on WallBuilders.com.) Thousands more official calls to prayer have been issued since 1815, often by our national leaders.

For example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt led the entire nation in a six-and-a-half minute prayer as Allied troops stormed the beaches on D-Day. Gens. Dwight D. Eisenhower and George S. Patton also offered their own prayers. In

fact, during the Battle of the Bulge, Patton declared that "We've got to get not only the chaplains but every man in the Third Army to pray," and to that end, he and his chaplain issued a prayer card to every one of the 250,000 soldiers under his command. History records that the battle then changed from an apparent German victory to a resounding German defeat.

And when Eisenhower was elected president of the United States, he acknowledged that "I was seeking a way to point out that we were getting too secular." He therefore wrote his own prayer that he publicly prayed at his own inauguration.

There are hundreds more examples, and as President Reagan affirmed:

"Prayer has sustained our people in

crisis, strengthened us in times of challenge, and guided us through our daily lives since the first settlers came to this continent ... The most sublime picture in American history is of George Washington on his knees in the snow at Valley Forge. That image personifies a people who know that it's not enough to depend on our own courage and goodness; we must also seek help from God, our Father and Preserver."

*Mr. David Barton — Founder of WallBuilders.com, preserving "America's forgotten history and heroes, with an emphasis on moral, religious and constitutional heritage," is an authority on the role of faith in American history. He is co-author of the book "U-Turn" with George Barna.*



# Praying 'War Room' into being

## Producers of the hit movie recall it as a series of answered prayers

By Stephen and Alex Kendrick

**O**n Aug. 28, 2015, we had the privilege of releasing a feature film entitled "War Room" into U.S. theaters and over a dozen international markets. The movie introduces viewers to the concept that prayer can be a powerful weapon that will positively impact every area of our lives. In "War Room," an elderly widow named Miss Clara shows a young woman her "wall of remembrance" in the foyer of her house. It's a collage of pictures that serve as mementos of specifically answered prayers in her life.

This concept was more than a plot point and artistic license for us. Answered prayer was featured in living color in our home and church growing up. Our mom still tells the story of when she was six years old and huddled under their kitchen table watching our grandmother cry out to God for protection as a tornado hit their property. Afterward, they walked out to damaged buildings, fallen power lines, and uprooted oak trees around them, but their house was left untouched.

During the 1990s, we watched our father, who didn't have the money, books, or classrooms launch an independent, private Christian school through prayer. They just celebrated their 25th anniversary. Once, when he needed funds to rent a modular classroom, Dad prayed for the \$7,000 needed to set it up. A few days later, a married couple, unaware of the need, dropped by his office said, "We believe God is leading us to give this to you." The man placed a check written out for \$7,000 on dad's desk. Not a penny more or less than what dad had requested. Not a year too early or a month too late. We were in awe.

In 2002, following in our father's footsteps, we were privileged to launch a faith-based movie ministry through our church with no money, no professional experience, and no film school training. But we had learned that God could provide at every level, and so we laid every need before Him at each phase of the production.

Now, after 13 years, five films, and international distribution in 76 countries, we continue to be in awe of God's precise provision in response to specific prayer. Each film has been the result, not of our adequacy, but of a string of one answered prayer after another. Now, in

our office at Kendrick Brothers Productions, hangs our own wall of remembrance. Eighteen photos that remind us of some of our favorite stories of answered prayer.

Incredible provision. Unbelievable direction. Impossible odds. We laugh and have yet to see God fail us.

This concept is not new. The greatest men and women in the Bible were always people of prayer. Abraham lived by faith, but was guided by prayer, and the nations of the world, even today, are still affected by those decisions. It was Isaac's prayerful intercession that resulted in the birth of Jacob — who became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 25:21). Moses spoke with God "as a man speaks to his friend" and received God's revelation for his leadership decisions (Ex. 33:11). The world still has the Torah and the timeless guidance of the Ten Commandments as fruit of it.

Nehemiah's prayers resulted in Israel miraculously rebuilding the city walls of Jerusalem in record time. You can visit Jerusalem, as we have, and see a portion of Nehemiah's wall still standing today.

From Joseph to Jeremiah, Hannah to Hosea, the Scriptures are replete with

people who discovered that God really does listen and respond to those who approach Him in faith.

Yet, we believe Jesus Christ remains the ultimate model and master of prayer. He would rise early or stay up late to pray. As His popularity was exploding, He would "often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (Luke 5:15-16).

His first fully recorded sermon in the scriptures explains the fundamentals of how to pray (Matt. 5-7). He gifted the world with the greatest model prayer known to mankind (Matt. 6:9-13) and later prayed the most powerful, priestly prayer of all time (John 17). As He threw the crooked moneychangers out of the temple, He shouted, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matt. 21:12-13). Before laying down His life and even while suffering on a Roman cross, Jesus continued to make prayer His priority.

We believe that answered prayers are not extreme coincidences. They are fingerprints of a living, loving God who is inviting anyone willing to trust Him by faith to draw close and enter into a relationship with the One who made us and "is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our

being" (Acts 17:27-28).

Prayer is not merely a ritual or a religious experience. It is about a relationship with a person — God Himself. When it is merely a selfish means to access the provision or protection of God rather than about knowing and pleasing the Person of God, then we are missing the point. But when the priority becomes to connect in a loving relationship with Him — one on One — we have seen that God will cause prayer to also help us experience the powerful provision of everything we need in such a way that ultimately brings us great joy and gives Him great glory.

*Alex Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick are writers and producers of the film company Kendrick Brothers Productions. Their most recent film "War Room" (2015) was No. 1 at the box office in the second week of its Labor Day release. They recently released "The Battle Plan for Prayer" that teaches people how to pray more effectively. Both are active as lay ministers at Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia.*



**Now, after 13 years, five films, and international distribution in 76 countries, we continue to be in awe of God's precise provision in response to specific prayer. Each film has been the result, not of our adequacy, but of a string of one answered prayer after another.**



# Desperation drove us to our knees

## Miracles behind the making of the hit film, 'Woodlawn'



By Jon Erwin

I remember vividly being on my knees in prayer. It was one week before filming my brother's and my third feature film, an inspiring, true sports story called "Woodlawn." The tale was truly incredible; in the torn city of Birmingham (our hometown) one high-school football team's commitment to love and unity saved their school from collapse and brought their community back together. The film centers around one spontaneous moment of prayer, with what ended up being a powerful scene in the movie, where the entire team commits

themselves to Christ and to each other. So, it was fitting that I should be on my knees to begin the project, even if that wasn't my decision.

Desperate times call for desperate prayer, and the situation we had gotten ourselves into warranted it. The actor we had cast to play Tony Nathan, the lead in the film, was having problems with his work visa and was stuck in London. Our film had no star. Even worse, a large portion of our production budget had fallen out at the last minute, and we no longer had enough money to finish the movie. So, there I was, praying my heart out wondering if Andy's and my dream of telling this incredible story that our own father had told us as children, would end in disappointment and disaster. The feeling that hung in my gut: desperation.

It seems like desperation is always a catalyst to prayer, and maybe that isn't a bad thing. Maybe we need more of it. I remember talking to Gov. Mike Huckabee about the time our story was set in: a turbulent season for America in the early seventies which gave birth to something called "The Jesus Movement." It was also the moment that changed his life and that of many other Christian leaders today. He told me desperation was the fuel of it. It was necessary. It's

what served as the catalyst to the greatest spiritual awakening in a hundred years. It began a movement of prayer among young people. It began a season of renewal.

Desperation, it seems, has its purpose and its place.

The trouble is we so often avoid it. We outrun it and rationalize it. We build the walls of a false sense of security, so we don't have to feel this terrifying thing. We see it as a "bad" and "weak" emotion. But what if we are running from the cure? What if embracing our own desperation is the key to change and growth? What if desperate prayer actually works?

It certainly did for me. God simply showed up. There is no other way to describe it. Within the week we discovered an incredible young actor, Caleb Castille, who was just amazing and even better for the role of the film. His personal life's story was so inspiring; he had traveled for months while we were promoting the film, inspiring high school kids everywhere to follow their dreams. We never ran out of money. In fact some of the final remaining needs were met within 12 hours of us needing them. God provided, and we got to see Him do it. There is just no other way to explain the existence of

the film, Woodlawn.

People all over the nation have now experienced the film, and this story of love conquering hatred couldn't come at a better time. It will be, by far, our highest box-office success to date. The film has been extremely well received by critics and audiences alike. Hundreds of stories similar to the film, of young people making the same decisions for love and unity, are truly humbling and make the job worth it.

So, I challenge you to have the courage to be desperate. And in your desperation reach beyond your own ability or competency. Reach beyond the stars to the one who created them. It may just change your life. It may be that your biggest battles are meant to be won on your knees.

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Jon Erwin and his brother, Andrew, began their careers as teenagers, working as camera operators for ESPN. In 2005, the brothers ventured into directing commercials and music videos for platinum artists including Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith and Skillet. They have directed the movies "October Baby" (2011), "Mom's Night Out" (2014) and "Woodlawn" (2015), in theaters now.

## God is the issue

### Your view of God predicts how you will vote



By Brad Bright

God is the issue. If I know how you see God, I can predict how you feel about same-sex marriage, abortion, justice and even many economic issues. I can also predict how you will vote.

Baylor University professor Christopher Bader summed up a landmark

2006 study conducted by the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion this way: "You learn more about people's moral and political behavior if you know their image of God than by almost any other measure." The study revealed a clear correlation between how Americans view God and how they view economics, morality, justice and politics. Americans who see God as personal generally have higher moral standards and are less reliant on government.

If that is true, then culture transformation must start at the most fundamental level — our view God. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, alluded to this connection. She wrote, "Birth control appeals to the advanced radical because it is calculated to undermine the authority of the Christian churches." This, of course, is also the primary reason that groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union have obsessed over

stripping God from public education and the public square. They recognize that in order to reshape culture you must fundamentally alter the way people see God.

In 1776, when the United States of America was founded, the average American in the course of a lifetime heard more than 3,000 sermons — addressing their accountability to God and their resultant responsibility for their fellow man. The core belief driving this perspective was that God is the sovereign king of creation and therefore the chief purpose of mankind is to glorify God. Almost all sects of Christianity and Judaism espoused this in one form or another.

Because of this view of God, the free market worked well for America. When my neighbor's barn burned down, I pitched in to help rebuild his barn. When my neighbor fell ill during the harvest, I was obligated before God

to help him bring in the harvest. My accountability to God for my neighbor dictated my civic duty to help make sure no one was left behind. This is the same dynamic that animated the abolitionist movement — the core belief that I am to glorify God with my life by serving my neighbor, especially those at the bottom.

Today, this view has been savaged by the theology of tolerance. The reigning belief now permeating most branches of Christianity and Judaism in America is, "God wants me to be happy."

Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith labels this moralistic therapeutic deism. His insightful book "Soul Searching" explores how younger Americans see God's primary purpose for existing as ensuring their happiness. They see God as a benevolent



# God in the wind and the silence of nature



By Rob Keck

**A**s I knelt on the rocky ledge, wrapping my shivering hands around the huge full curl of horns of a Makenzie Mountain wild ram, I cried uncontrollably as the snow and rain pelted my shivering body.

It had taken almost two hours to reach this Dall sheep from where I had made the shot at 300 yards, much higher up the mountain. The sheer drop-offs and narrow ledges of this jagged mountain made it very difficult and dangerous to traverse and reach my prize. Seven days of a 10-day extreme backpack hunt in the Northwest Territories of Canada had passed, and emotions were running wild as the success of this moment washed over me.

As my guide Kevin and good friend Don knelt beside me, I offered up a prayer, as I always do after taking a game animal. This was a prayer of thanksgiving.

**The great outdoors is a place where we can restore our lives, where we can grow and enjoy even more fully our relationship with him. God reveals himself here in numerous ways, whether in tragedy or triumph.**

ing to God for the good fortune of being alive, having just fought off hypothermia two hours earlier, for guiding my footsteps safely through these deadly boulder-strewn peaks, for the ram and for so much more. I knew that this prayer would be one of not only thanks, but also of a request — a request for his continued safe guidance since it would take three more days through rugged terrain and swift waters, carrying heavy packs, to reach a gravel bar along the Arctic Red

River. It was here that a single-engine Super Cub could land and then take us back to base camp.

The measure of success of this hunt was far more than taking a very mature 41-inch ram. It was more than high-protein red meat to share or a spectacular mount for America's Wildlife Museum and Aquarium, which I chair. It was mind over matter, conquering rugged, dangerous, bolder-strewn peaks with heavy packs that I'd trained for months in advance. It was an adventure that most retirement-age folks would never even consider. It was a place where God's hand made this all possible.

It was here that one rides an emotional roller-coaster challenged by the physical and emotional stress of the hunt. Here one feels the anxiety of a storm front approaching, the concern that the elusive game could disappear suddenly or the sheer terror of crossing a major rock slide, not knowing if the next rock will give way to tragedy.

As a hunter, it is in these times that I cling to God, feeling him closer than ever. I am touched by the spiritual movement of the mountains, the sunrise and sunset, the northern lights, the wind and, maybe most of all, the silence of this extremely remote place on earth.

The great outdoors is a place where we can restore our lives, where we can grow and enjoy even more fully our relationship with him. God reveals himself here in numerous ways, whether in tragedy or triumph.

It is here in the outdoors that I feel an even greater sense of commitment to partner and follow God's word as a responsible steward of his creation. In Genesis 1:28 God admonishes us to "have dominion or rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on earth." As a hunter-conservationist I am following his command, which is fulfilling to me.

Hunting so often simplifies life. It allows me to see more clearly the things that count most in my life and leads me into another dimension of my relationship with our creator.

I see it mirrored in the mountains and the desert. I see it shine and glow in the stars, the moon and the changing of seasons. I feel the Lord's hand as I wade an Arctic river, as I endure blowing snow or as I face the scorching wind of the Sonoran Desert.

I hear it in the gobble of the wild turkey, the bugle of an elk or the eight notes of a barred owl. I smell it in the freshly fallen leaves in the October hardwoods or in the sweetly fragrant April honeysuckle. I see God in all this and more, and he speaks to me in the wilderness, the outdoors.



Deuteronomy 8:2 says: "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands."

In that verse God had an incredible plan in store for his chosen people, one including a magnificent outcome. Yet God first wanted to make sure they were up for the task and worthy of the reward. Spending 40 years in the wilderness can build a lot of character. Similarly, spending 10 days on an extreme backpack hunt in the Mackenzie Mountains builds a lot of character as well.

The benefits of going to remote places is nothing short of amazing. Being able to get away to a spot surrounded by God's handiwork, free from distraction, puts us in a place where one can truly focus on God and hear what he is saying.

Senses become more fully alive and focused, and suddenly it makes sense. You are never closer to God himself than when you are in the very midst of that which his very hand created. Those remote places are truly remarkable, and for me, it's there that I have the greatest ability to tune in to what God is saying.

God never promised us that our journey would be easy, only that with him, it would be worth it in the end.

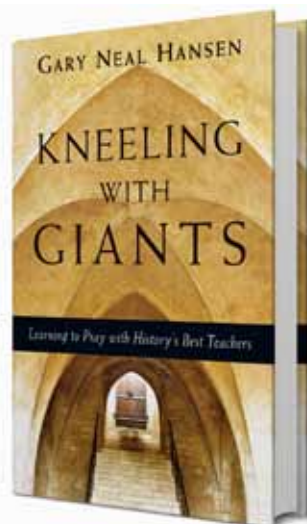
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*Rob Keck has been a driving force in conservation for more than three decades. He is the director of conservation for Bass Pro Shops and serves as chairman of the board for America's Wildlife and Museum and Aquarium. He served 27 years as the CEO of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Petersen's Hunting magazine named him one of hunting's 25 most influential personalities of the 20th century.*



# Recommended reading for your spirit

By Byron and Beth Borger

These and other books can be ordered from Byron & Beth Borger's Hearts & Minds Bookstore: [HeartsandMindsBooks.com/order/](http://HeartsandMindsBooks.com/order/) (20 percent discount if you mention The Washington Times).



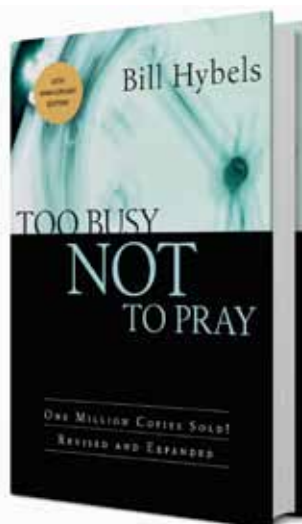
**"Kneeling with the Giants: Learning to Pray with History's Best Teachers," Gary Neal Hansen (InterVarsity Press), \$16** — Few who develop a meaningful and mature life of prayer do so without learning from others. Who better to learn from than the giants of the Christian tradition, those who have come before and have written the most enduring, classic works about their spiritual practices?

In this remarkable book Mr. Hansen offers a key insight about a particular way to pray, drawn from spiritual giants of the past. As a good guide he reminds us that the point is not just to learn about these famous ascetics and their books but to actually pray and experience God as they did. Mr. Hansen, a Presbyterian seminary professor, helps us by explaining, for instance, St. Benedict's insight on using the Divine Office, Luther's teachings on the Lord's Prayer, Calvin's studious meditations on the Psalms, St. Teresa of Avila's experiences of recollecting the presence of God or even learning how and why the Puritans wrote out their prayers.

From the ancient "Jesus Prayer" to evaluations of Agnes Sanford's "The Healing Light," this covers a very wide array of material. There is an appendix on using the book in small groups or church classes as well as a final reminder called "Putting Prayer into Practice," which is very thoughtful and highly recommended for those serious about deepening their journey into prayer.

**"The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves," Curt Thompson (InterVarsity Press) \$22** — This is not a book on prayer, but

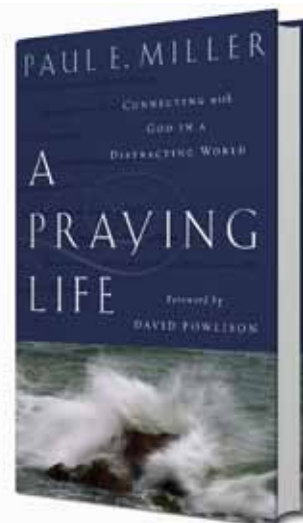
it does explore the psychiatric benefits of a coherent understanding of the biblical teaching about shame, about how modern science and neurobiology explains what happens (in the body itself) when people are stuck by toxic emotion. With verve and plenty of real stories, Mr. Thompson explains the ways in which spiritual experience can help bring restoration and healing as people learn to "dare greatly," taking risks of relational vulnerability. Mr. Thompson is a psychiatrist with interest in brain studies who integrates faith and scholarship in insightful ways. His earlier book explored these themes: See the very readable "Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections Between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships."



**"Too Busy Not to Pray: Slowing Down to Be with God," Bill Hybels (InterVarsity Press), \$16** — This very approachable, nicely written and quite helpful primer has sold over 1 million copies. This book is ideal for those who feel too stressed to pray regularly, or for those who need guidance in the basics. It is simple, a joy to read and compelling in practical ways.

Mr. Hybels is the pastor of the large Willow Creek Church near Chicago, known for its upbeat services designed with sensitivity for the unchurched, so he knows how to write for an audience that may not be familiar with theology or religious terminology.

**"Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?" Philip Yancey (Zondervan) \$16.99** — Mr. Yancey is respected as one of the finest evangelical writers working today, a good journalist and author of many fine books exploring how people find meaningful faith, searching for God in a complicated world. Here he asks a perennial question: Does prayer really matter? He then reports on his findings and invites us all to more fruitful prayer, knowing there is great mystery.



**"A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World," Paul E. Miller (NavPress), \$14.99** — In our ecumenical bookstore we have sold hundreds of different books on prayer over the years. This may be the most talked-about book on the topic in years, in part because of its profound sense of the goodness of God's great mercy shown in Christ, but also because the author is himself a learner, sharing stories from his own struggle to deepen his relationship with God.

In this engaging work Mr. Miller offers down-to-earth advice, telling humorous anecdotes about his own daily life. Endorsements come from respected evangelical leaders such as J.I. Packer and Philip Ryken, president of Wheaton College.



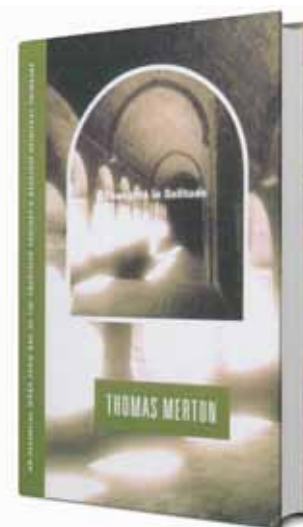
**"Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home," Richard Foster (HarperOne), \$24.99** — Few authors have shaped the late-20th century Protestant world's understanding of spirituality more than Richard Foster, a lively Quaker who, in his legendary "Celebration of Discipline," reminded us that one of the great dangers of contemporary life is superficiality. "We need deep people," Mr. Foster implored, as he guided readers unfamiliar with medieval mystics, Roman Catholic monastics and

contemporary contemplatives into deeper spiritual waters, igniting an ever-growing trend of fresh interest in classic spiritual disciplines.

Many think this second of his many books is his best, offering 21 different ways to pray, from the most quiet and meditative to the robust and lively, to ways of encountering God in the ordinariness of the mundane. One of the more important books on prayer written in the last 50 years.

**"Living Prayer," Robert Benson (Tarcher), \$14.95** — Mr. Benson has a remarkable way with words, a writing style that offers simple storytelling and a rare economy of language; he is a master of clear and moving prose.

In this tenderly told faith journey, he writes of leaving his fundamentalist background, learning to experience God through more ecumenical, liturgical practices, attending his first silent retreat and entering the world of creative laypeople exploring contemplative spirituality. For his experiment in taking up the practice of "fixed hour" prayer, see his lovely "In Constant Prayer," part of the "Ancient Practices" series edited by the late Phyllis Tickle.



**"Thoughts in Solitude," Thomas Merton (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), \$14** — Mr. Merton was one of the most well-known of 20th century Roman Catholic spiritual writers. His memoir of leaving a promising literary career to become a Trappist monk ("Seven Story Mountain") was famously on The New York Times bestseller list in the 1950s.

His dense "New Seeds of Contemplation" is considered a classic, but this little volume is one of his most beloved and accessible works, a great introduction to the prodigious writer. It reminds us of the need for stillness and what happens to a society when a frenzied pace makes such solitude rare.



# Heaven's geeks

Christians from Google, Microsoft and other firms digitize prayer to bring people closer to God.



By Neil Ahlsten

**P**rayer can lead to life-changing outcomes. In our studies at Abide, prayer has given people peace, guidance and freedom from things like worry and addiction. But it turns out that four out of five church-going adults aren't happy with their prayer lives. They wonder, "What do I say to God? How can I hear God? How can I feel close to God?" About 100 million Americans want to grow in the life-changing power of prayer but don't know how.

I used to work at Google and spent years tackling big, audacious problems. Google's basic formula is simple and effective. Find really important problems. Prototype smart solutions. Test until you find something that real users find far better than their current options. Always let data prove what works. I saw this formula succeed for search, maps, Android and more.

Then a group of us from Google, Tesla and other tech companies started wondering, "Could this approach work for spiritual problems? Did people have big spiritual challenges? Could digital products help to solve them? We started researching and running surveys to uncover practical, spiritual solutions to problems." Prayer was a big one. We found many powerful stories of deep, personal change through prayer. But for many others, prayer was hard. Even frustrating. They wanted help praying. It turns out that even Jesus' disciples ran into this issue two thousand years ago, saying, "Lord, Teach us to pray."

But, can digital products engage us with an invisible God? After all, isn't prayer a sacred exercise? Can data-driven learning help solve sacred problems? Some people find this idea ridiculous. One Googler laughed in disbelief. "You want to digitize prayer?" My response: Let the data prove it out.

We started with a simple set of assumptions. The Bible is the most widely published, read and prayed book in history. We assumed that the Bible described effective ways to pray, and we started testing them. We took traditions that have helped people find peace, purpose and strength for thousands of years and tried adapting them to modern life.

The concept of applying scripture to life questions has deep, personal roots for me. When I was 20 and studying economics at the University of California at Berkeley, I encountered a Bible passage in Luke where Jesus told 70 of his followers to take no money or stuff

and to share the good news of God's plan with others. Jesus tells his followers to find a person of peace who will welcome them, giving them food and a place to sleep. Feeling inspired through prayer, I tried it. I hitchhiked into San Francisco with no food or money.

Within a day, a gifted writer and musician offered to let me stay in his home. He bought me food. He gave me a spot to sleep. Surprisingly, he was someone who felt persecuted by Christians. He was gay, and ethnically Jewish. Twenty years later, we are still good friends. The passage held true for me, but in ways some people might not expect.

If you believe an idea is valuable, you try it.

So, what works for prayer? We tested liturgical prayers, free-form prayers, Psalms and reflective questions. We created text, video, audio and multimedia experiences and put them in front of sample users. One test gave extraordinary results. It looked like digital could help us encounter the divine.

In one test, we recorded topical audio prayers using scripture and sent them through email to people who needed prayer on that topic. Ten minutes later, I got a reply from a vice president at Dell. "Neil, this is the best piece of digital content I've ever received. You made my week!" Just minutes later, another from a startup founder and ex-Googler: "This tingles of product-market fit." We ran blind tests on hundreds of American Christians. Then thousands. Now over a million people have prayed through audio prayers on Abide. And the life-changing power of encountering God holds true

for a strong percentage of our users. A third of the people who listened to a two-minute audio prayer from Abide said they received divine guidance.

There are two opposing ways to interpret this kind of result: either these participants are misguided, or God gave them guidance.

There have been amazing, spiritual elements to our journey. A man known for prophetic gifts — someone who knew nothing about our project — prayed over me in 2013. He specifically said that God wanted to use our team to create a prayer platform that would help people experience God's promises. "I just keep hearing the word platform, platform, platform," he said. "I don't know what this means." Every day, by faith, our team is still learning what that means.

One finding is consistent. The single, biggest driver of satisfaction in prayer is simple. It's speaking with God. People who talk and listen to God during their prayers on Abide are five times more likely to be satisfied than people who did not. Our data suggests that if you want a satisfying prayer life, start by having real conversations.

Try a prayer yourself. You might find it life-changing.

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*Neil Ahlsten is co-founder and CEO of Carpenters Code, which has built Abide, a smartphone app for guided prayer. Before Google, Mr. Ahlsten worked for the U.S. Department of State in Darfur and served in hot spots across Africa for Food for the Hungry and the World Bank.*

## BRIGHT

From page C40

Santa Claus in the sky. They have demoted the Creator from king to cheerleader.

This dynamic propelled a tectonic shift away from embracing "our God-given rights" and "our God-given freedoms" to demanding "my rights" and "my freedoms." God became irrelevant to the conversation, just as He is in public education today. Narcissism is now not only accepted, but also embraced as a good. Tolerance has

supplanted love as the cultural standard for moral outrage. "Don't judge me" has replaced "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

This phenomenon has hijacked many Christian pulpits as well. When pastors expound, "It makes God happy when you are happy," we know the cancer has fully metastasized. When Christian organizations embrace self-indulgent behavior to achieve "unity," we know man has deposed God as the ultimate arbiter of the good. Moralistic therapeutic deism twists the starting point 180 degrees from God to Me. It therefore follows that anything that makes me happy must be good.

This also reveals our true problem as a nation. The ACLU and Mikey Weinstein are not the problem. Planned Parenthood is not the problem. The church is the problem. We have forgotten who God is — and it shows.

Jesus said we should love God and love our neighbor, but He never tolerated self-indulgent behavior. He recognized for what it was. Then He forgave it and empowered the person in front of him to change. As He said, "Your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more."

Reshaping culture requires transforming the way the individuals within

society see God — and this process must begin in the church. Anything less means continuing to play whack-a-mole with the cultural symptoms. Failing to address the core issue ultimately means conceding all other societal ills as well. God really is the issue.

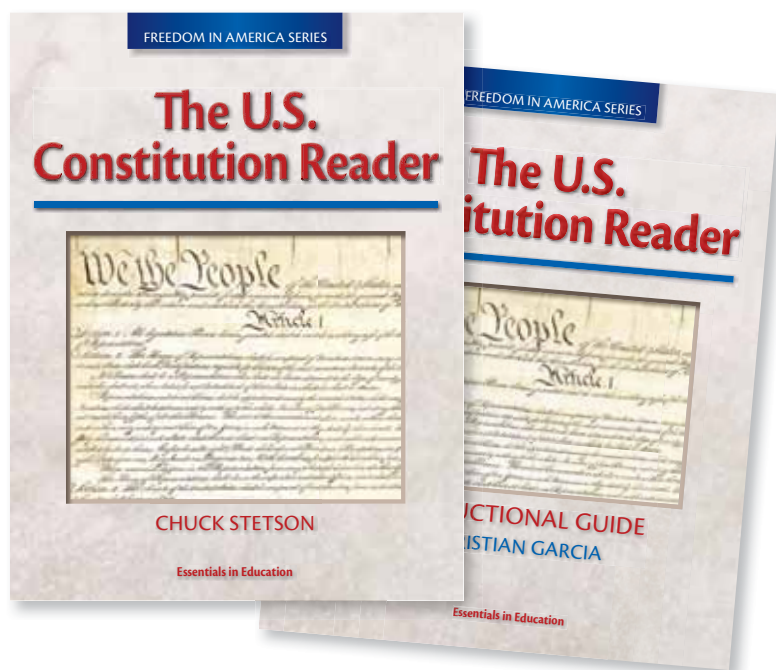
The only question that remains is whether or not we will make God the issue.

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*Brad Bright is the youngest son of Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. He is the author of "God is the Issue," a book to help Christians move from defense to offense, co-opting any cultural symptom.*



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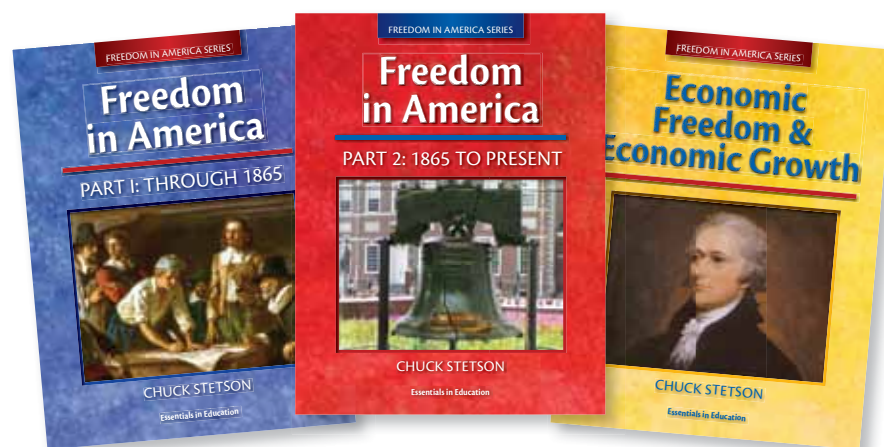
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