

At His Feet in the Prayer Closet

Lois Ewald



At His Feet
in the
Prayer Closet

by
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DEDICATION

How is it possible to dedicate a book to those who prayed that I would come to Him, and after that, for my life? That is my desire. I would not dare to make a list or name names because there have been those who have prayed for me that I know and those I don't really know, and I've been blessed with a long life. But I will mention the first person I am sure who ever prayed for me: my dear mother. I don't know the details of all her prayers, but I do know her prayers held me under the umbrella of God's grace and were a part of His work in coming after me like the "Hound of Heaven" until my heart broke over my sin, and I knelt by my bed to pray the first real prayer of my life.

Pray on, Mothers, God hears! Join them, Fathers!

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INTRODUCTION

There are already many wonderful books on the subject of prayer in our world. They've been written by men and women who have no rivals in their understanding and teaching on this subject. I owe them and would not for a moment think I could write something they have not already written. I could easily fill a page with names of such people who have been helpful to me. So, why this book?

It is in my heart to share what God has taught me about prayer as a simple learner, just to offer what can be put into words taught by our Father and borrowed from so many others. This would be in hopes that you might be encouraged to pray even when you may not feel like praying and never to think it is too late to learn. Teaching us to pray and how to pray is a God job. It is so important to Him that His Spirit of prayer does it. He is the One who teaches us. And His ways are personal and sometimes mind-boggling. His teaching is often what I would call "hands on" and not only intellectual knowledge. The intercessors whose books I've read all expressed continual

hungering to know Him better that they might further increase their prayer fellowship. It is as though we never know enough but can always know Him even better. I believe this is what makes learning to pray a need that God meets. Our prayer may be like that of His disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray."

I love the teaching of Jesus both by His Word and the example of His own prayer life. And I am also thankful for those He ordained to be my personal consecrated human teachers, scores of whom I shall meet in Heaven someday. May our Father bless your life as you pray in His prayer chamber, your prayer closet. Read, study, and learn all you can, but beyond this, pray.

REASONS TO PRAY

Separation from God always results in restlessness of mind and heart. Only in His presence will we be at home and feel that special belonging in the depths of our being. Until then, in agreement with Scripture, we are best described as sheep, wandering and wondering. The deep restlessness in our human spirit is unsettling and brings both fears and tears within. We will never find peace, contentment, and security in searching for these things themselves, but when God invites us to come to Him, and we listen and come, He Himself becomes our security and our hope. Contentment settles in our human spirit. To open those lines between Him and us, upon our request, He forgives our sins and, when invited, moves into our human spirit to take up residence. He intends this to be a forever relationship in which we enter into deep friendship with each other. Because He is God, personal and loving, we become His temple of worship and prayer, and He becomes our Home. As we walk with Him day by day, He invites us to "Come apart with Him." Prayer becomes the habit of our life. We are His, and He is ours. It is a steadily growing relationship, beginning with baby steps, and

some stumbling as we do in early childhood, but He brings us into His courts, and we begin maturing, learning, and growing in our prayer life. We will always be learners. As we watch and wait in our prayer closets, we come to know the ways of God, to see Him spiritually, and do His will. His presence is real! Who knows what God has in mind! All of this is because He embraces us with His grace. We bow before Him. We live at His feet in the Prayer Closet.

The Apostle Paul describes our identity in the Prayer Closet: "The God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23a).

There are many reasons to pray, much more than asking for things. Consider the following:

1. To come to know God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
2. To feel and acknowledge our child position
3. To sense our insecurity and need for Him
4. To ask and receive His counsel
5. To learn life from Him and grow up in our spiritual life
6. To run to Him with our struggles and problems
7. To learn to be thankful
8. To feel His love and forgiveness
9. To weep with the only One who really understands us

10. To receive His view of His world
11. To enter into His plan of redemption for His lost world
12. To engage in His personal plan for us with His blessing
13. To bring others before Him with their sorrows and needs
14. To learn true worship and adoration
15. To receive His spirit of quietness
16. To become messengers of His message
17. To know God ever greater
18. To receive His changes in us as persons
19. To be ready to meet Him face to face
20. To become intimate friends
21. To walk together here and for all time

The list is endless, even as God is endless.

AND PRAYER BEGAN

Prayers run throughout the Scriptures. I love that the beginning of prayer is recorded for us. It is interesting to me that the time when prayer began is somewhat like our prayers today. Sin had separated. God no longer came down into the Garden to walk and talk with people as He did with Adam and Eve. Out of confusion, feeling lost, complications in life, a sense of not knowing and not belonging, prayer began. But keep in mind that prayer began because of the grace of the Creator, who loved His creation and loves us still. He put prayer in the heart of humankind. He knew we would never survive without Him and has hovered over us to this day because we are confused, handling complicated issues in life without a sense of what to do. God moved those early human hearts to pray, and He moves ours to pray today. Prayer is the open door to God, the door that God Himself opened. He still calls us to pray and still opens the windows of Heaven to hear our cries. We will neglect it to our loss and sorrow.

It seemed to have taken a while before human beings realized that God existed and to acknowledge that they

did not know Him or feel need of Him. The enemy, the same one in the Garden, began early to usurp the place of worship designed by our Creator. Satan wanted this for his own place. He offers substitutes. The same is true today. Our present world excels in the same problems of discord and tensions as when early history tells us of a murder in the first family and of war after war. That history is like today. We talk about “fractured families” and use the oft-repeated phrase “dysfunctional family.” It seems that from the fall of humanity, “dysfunctional” describes families. All humans are dysfunctional and therefore families are, too.

And because our Creator made us the way He did, we will feel alone without a relationship with God the Father. It was God’s intention that humans know Him, as seen in His earthly walk with the couple He created and loved. We have a special space in our beings made just for this relationship with Him. The Scriptures say He was with us in our mother’s womb. He is not absent. We are born estranged from Him and yet in Romans 1, we read that He makes Himself known to every person. When He does this, we can acknowledge Him and respond to such seeking love as this, or we can make the conscious choice to ignore Him or even tell Him we want nothing to do with Him. We are born “each one to his own way” and until God Himself draws us into a relationship with Him and we yield, we will live life in a maze of restlessness, quiet or noisy, but always chaotic without our Creator. The Bible describes it in a visible way, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way” (Isaiah 53:6);

we turned from His plan to our own. It seems to have taken a while for people to feel this separation and “call upon their Creator.” But human beings did finally call, thanks to the grace of our Father, and this began the communication system with the Creator-Father-God that we have available to us today. The Bible calls it prayer.

And this communication was made easier for us in the years since the birth and life of Jesus, the sent-one, into our world to take away our sins that separate and bring us close to our Father. He draws us so close that Jesus Himself says to His followers, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). Some have doubted the simplicity and truth of this statement, but it is true. He longs for our presence with Him, and it is always His grace causing us to long for His presence. Because of sin, it is not in us to want this ourselves even though we need it. We are desperate for Him, but it is His grace that causes us to recognize this and know He is the One. And how could He possibly promise such a thing as giving us what we ask? Because in our abiding relationship with Him, He works to make us like His Son, the Lord Jesus, who sought only the will of His Father. In the abiding relationship the child of God will pray only for the will of God because this becomes the cry of our heart. This is the work of the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray. We learn and practice this for a lifetime, never an expert, never deserving, always a seeker and finder. It is all His grace!

Wonderful grace that opened our eyes, grace that drew us to Him, grace that reminds us of His personhood, grace that shows us the truth of being unable to live life apart from Him, grace that provided the Cross, grace that opens His arms as His heart is open. It is grace that stopped us in our life to make Him known and grace that bought us with the blood of Christ. It is grace that teaches us truth about life, about our needs, and grace that enables us to discover His desire to know and communicate with us. Grace hears our feeble cries, sees our tears, and shows us the prayer room of His Kingdom and how to enter. It is grace that teaches us to pray, and how to pray. All grace!

EARLY ACTION

The first book I ever read on the subject of prayer as a Christian was entitled *Prayer*, written by Ole Hallesby, a Lutheran theologian from Norway. It made such an impression on me that the author's name has never left my mind, and over these many years I connect with any written statements of his in other books and articles. The following is one of his statements:

The work of praying is prerequisite to all other work in the Kingdom of God. By prayer we couple the powers of heaven to our helplessness, the powers which can capture strongholds and make the impossible possible.

—O. Hallesby (1879-1961), *Prayer*

PRAYER BEGINS WITH AN OPEN HEART

The one who seeks
The one who finds
The One who speaks
The One who begins revealing Himself . . .

We come at last to our Creator/God/Father weeping in repentance, the only position in which we can begin fellowship with Him.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (II Corinthians 7:10)

God sets in motion the condition of the heart that causes us to seek God.

He keeps His promise that a seeker will find. He makes Himself real. It is our response to Him that qualifies us as seekers.

God speaks life into our dead spirits. He gives us knowledge of His voice so that we hear His voice and come to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

What is the result of responding to God? We receive spiritual healing and wholeness: from death to life, from blindness to sight, from darkness to light, from despair to joy, from hopelessness to hope, from fear to freedom, from confusion to peace, we are drawn into the communication called prayer. These are our new beginnings.

The book of Colossians is a great study. What changes take place as a result of His action and our obedience noted in the book of Colossians? Study Colossians with prayer in mind.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

Consider these important points about the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is God as Jesus is God: Our Triune Godhead.
2. The Triune God is at work in our redemption, and in salvaging us (our salvation).
3. We can never be “born again” without the Holy Spirit.
4. We can never know Christ nor walk with Him without the Holy Spirit.
5. None can be a disciple of Christ without the Holy Spirit.
6. None can be involved in the actual work of a disciple without the Holy Spirit.
7. None of us will ever have a true prayer life without the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Prayer.

The Holy Spirit awakens our desire to know God and communicate with Him, fits us for our place at His table and before His throne, teaches us to pray, teaches us how to pray, prays within us, enlarges our vision of our High Priest, Jesus, weans us from this world into heavenly places, shapes our assigned post of service while we are still in this world, and builds within us the mind of Christ. He does all of this to exalt Christ Jesus, and He reveals the awesome operating expanse of prayer as we walk with Him. Jesus is the sanctuary of God, and the Holy Spirit places and holds us in Him as we become more and more an intercessor. Wherever we see a kneeling Christian, we see the Holy Spirit at work.

This is why Jesus, when he was leaving Earth to return to His Father, told His disciples to wait: "Do not leave Jerusalem but wait . . ." (Acts 1:4). In the Book of Acts, we have the record of the actions of the Holy Spirit through the disciples Jesus authorized and equipped to build His Kingdom. Obediently doing as they were told, they were then equipped for the calling and the assignments Jesus had given to them. It was the installation of the Church in our world for His Kingdom to be built until He returns for us. We do not build alone because it is His Church, the Body of Christ, and He works in and through us. Caution is needed because we often try to work without Him.

In the words of Jesus Christ:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Because no man or woman can accomplish Kingdom work in human strength, Jesus told His disciples very important facts when He was with them. Study the Gospels and pay attention to the statements of Christ that He gave not only for His immediate disciples but for all who would ever come to believe in Him, those for whom He prayed in John 17. This is us!

And to His disciples, "But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you" (John 16:13-14).

Spoken to everyone present: "On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:37). "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not

been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:39).

The Holy Spirit is our teacher. He will teach us how to pray in our Father's world and will also be the One to move us to pray in timing and circumstance because, with prayer, we ourselves grow and develop, we learn and bear fruit for His glory as well as participate in God's redemptive purposes for the world in which we live. To carry out our human ideas and plans, as spiritual and worthwhile as they may seem, apart from the direction of the Holy Spirit and the work that only the Father can do is wasteful activity. We have no power against the enemy, no ability to break down walls; we are unable to "roll the stone away," coming against the enemy in hindrances, removing obstacles of his as well as human activity, apart from Christ. He is the Victor. When we begin to really believe that Jesus meant what He said, "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5b), this powerful understanding will revolutionize our prayer life as He calls us to prayer ministry. And this in turn will revolutionize our world.

UNION BETWEEN BRANCH AND VINE

John 15:7

The union between the Vine and the branch is indeed a prayer union. The highest conformity to Christ—the most blessed participation in the glory of His heavenly life—is that we take part in His work of intercession. He and we live forever to pray. In union with Him, praying without ceasing becomes a possibility—a reality, the holiest and most blessed part of our holy and blessed fellowship with God.

—Andrew Murray (1828-1917), *With Christ In The School of Prayer*

PRAYER BY F.B. MEYER

The study of prayers offered by others often teaches us how to pray. This prayer by F.B. Meyer has been such for me as it explores the depths of my own longings to know our Father and walk with our Lord Jesus.

Mould us, great God, into forms of beauty and usefulness by the school of Providence and by the touch of Thy hand. Fulfill Thine ideal, and conform us to the image of Thy Son. In Thy great house may we stand as vessels meet for Thy use. We are little better than common earthenware, but may we be cleansed, and purified, and filled with Thy heavenly treasure. Dip us deep into the River of Life, and give refreshment by us to many parched and weary hearts.

Information for our walk in prayer:

At that time, people began to call on the name of the LORD. (Genesis 4:26b)

Let's look "at that time":

1. Sin had entered the world.
2. The sin of disobedience had entered the hearts of God's created beings, and the whole world fell into the lap of the evil one.
3. Adam and Eve exchanged their fellowship with God the Father for the dominion of His enemy and theirs. They began to see/know the difference between good and evil and entered the struggle with daily burdens:

- fear, sickness, pain and death
- struggle for survival
- aloneness, disappointment
- dysfunctional family issues which led to the first murder (sibling killing sibling)
- separation from their Creator's personal presence.
- nature totally out of control, while they themselves were moved out of their garden home

All of these are the same burdens in our hearts and minds. Babies were born, and the world developed at the same time as the "worldly sorrow that brings death" (II Corinthians 7:10). These are our beginnings. These are our roots.

It was the love of God, His grace, that caused humans to see their plight and is true even today. It was then that people began to call upon the name of the Lord. It was His grace, both then and now, when we see ourselves and our God, and we begin to call upon the name of the Lord.

FAITH

The word "faith" prompts different thoughts. It's an everyday word used in reference to having faith in people, such as a professional person whose abilities are needed, or to situations like boarding an airplane or stepping into an elevator. It is akin to the word "trust."

Some people equate spiritual faith to a strong imagination, making something believable in order to arrive at belief or a certain feeling. When asked, "What is faith?" a little boy once responded, "It is believing something that really isn't true until you think it is." We can laugh at his answer, but there are those who would agree with him and express the same viewpoint in adult words.

It is important to know the essence of faith since a biblical faith is required for pleasing God, for having prayer answered, and for being able to obey the commands of God. As we consider biblical records of people in both Old and New Testaments, what stands out in their behavior is faith. And in the book of Hebrews, Chapter 11,

there is no doubt that faith is the key word because it is the key to the spiritual exploits of God's people. This is an excellent chapter for the study of faith.

But how are we to "live by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7)? How are we able to have the kind of faith the Bible says is necessary for the Christian life? You might want to explore the Scriptures in the concordance of your Bible listed under the word faith. It is a great personal study, and in this list you will find Romans 10:17: "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." The Father causes us to hear His voice. The Bible indicates that faith is a gift, found in the same place as hope and love, in Christ. These three—faith, hope and love—are found in Christ as we come to Him and connect and learn to abide. When we lack faith, we waste time trying to "grasp it," trying to conjure up a feeling. What we will discover is that the more intimate our walk with Christ, the greater our faith. It is always Christ who brings with Him all that we need for our spiritual life.

Faith is accepting in full belief the words of Christ as reality, as truth, and persuasion to trust Him, and through the Holy Spirit at work in us, He causes all He has said to become the daily experience of our personal life.

Faith is followed by "fight" and not by "flight." It will be tested by our own inner voice and manner of thinking

because we will be tempted to return to our “old way” of thinking. This will be a perpetual battle.

Faith will be tested by the enemy of our soul who will say to us as he said to Eve, “Did God really say?” (Genesis 3:1).

Faith will be tested by others around us whom the enemy incites to offer kindness and friendly persuasion so we will follow our own designs rather than God’s guidance. The enemy delights in our unfaithfulness to God who is faithful to us. Obedience to this temptation will always hinder our own spiritual growth as well as the exploits God wants us to have in such a world as this for His glory and purpose.

Faith will be tested by God Himself: “to test you in order to know what was in your heart...” (Deuteronomy 8:2b). He tried them to see if they trusted Him. “When He has tested me, I will come forth as gold” (Job 23:10b).

Accommodation to the spirit of this age does not promote a life of faith or inspire a walk with God but rather injects a careless looseness of all He has placed in our hearts. It tears away at the strength of spiritual stability, and we move into the group of “double-minded men” talked about in James 1:8.

Because God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, He can make promises and commitments He is able to keep. The question is not if He is able to do what He says He can/will do but, rather, do we believe Him? The

answer to this question for us determines our life, our daily walk and most assuredly our victories in the prayer closets of our lives. Faith does not cause us to do foolish or presumptuous things. In the heart of our life it is a resource built of quiet strength in God.

If we are faithless, he remains faithful. (II Timothy 2:13a)

The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you. (Deuteronomy 33:27a)

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. (Isaiah 40:29)

Yield each new day to the One who gave you life before the world crowds in to govern and influence. You belong to Him. Speak to Him before speaking to any human being. He will strengthen us in the inner being for each new day.

It is in obedience to His Word that we experience the new birth, our walk with our Father in close fellowship with Him, the life of growth and experience of faith and trust in Him. The abiding life begins, and everything about our life is made over by our Lord Jesus. Our prayer closets become places of daily operation for the will of God in us but also in our personal circles and the world in general.

We join Him who owns it all and is powerful to redeem,
and we become part of preparing everything for the
coming of the King.

PRAYER AND SANCTUARY LIFE

Don't you love the word "sanctuary"? Friends of mine in Massachusetts had a lovely home right across the road from a bird sanctuary. These delightful places have been established across the country as protected areas for birds (there are also sanctuaries for wildlife) to be cared for and preserved in their natural habitat. Humans who enter must adhere strictly to regulations made for the animals' benefit. Trails are cut through the trees, shrubs and flowers so people may walk around and enjoy the sights and sounds of such a wonderful place. In years past, I walked those trails more than a few times, drawn by the beauty and joyful sounds in the quietness. The protection provided for winged creatures, freely flying about, prompted songs in their hearts that filled the air. In that sanctuary they found provision and protection. And what joyful inspiration I felt from their song and all the other blessings of this sanctuary experience.

Sometimes I have similar emotions in a woods or in a forest glen or under the stars of night when looking up to the sky appearing as a giant cathedral. I wonder if

Abraham had this in mind considering God had already sent him out one night to count the stars. Perhaps he created a sanctuary in his personal world as he built an altar for sacrifice to worship God. We are told that Abraham built many altars and that he was a friend of God.

The dictionary says a sanctuary is a "consecrated place, a place of refuge," special words of deep meaning. A beautiful Bible verse from Exodus 25:8 (KJV) simply reads: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

How can we find sanctuary in the 21st Century? Jesus Christ invites us into new life in Him and will work with us in every way to show us what this means. He plants desires for it in our hearts. Living in Him, which He calls abiding life, is His desire for each of us, and carries promise. He says that abiding in Him is the only way to obtain the blessings for which we pray. In John 15:5a Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit." Life in the sanctuary may be ours because Jesus Christ is our sanctuary. What happens there? Why do we need to understand this, and how can it be? It opens to us as we read and study His Word, letting it shape us as we obey Him. We must allow the Holy Spirit to set up the worship center of our hearts, making Christ our Lord, giving prayer its proper place. Prayer is more than asking for things. It is getting to know God, sharing with Him and hearing from Him. There are seasons and reasons that we find

ourselves alone with God. But this is His design to nurture the sanctuary life.

Many experiences take place in people's lives during and after they are born again. This is not just starting over (turning over a new leaf) but rather a new life. Sins are forgiven, hearts are cleansed from the stain of sins, and minds are changed as they are converted from a self-centered monopoly to a Christ-centered program. These are all workings of God's Spirit, and something tremendously important and wonderful happens as the heart is made over and His kingdom reign begins. He owns us now because He purchased us when He gave His life on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins. The Bible says the old passes away, and all things become new. Not only is our personal life newly created and we are changed inwardly, but God does something with us. He places us in Christ. This is mystical and supernatural. No human being can do this, but God can and does.

And when He takes up residence, He never goes away. Jesus never leaves. He has come to abide, and as He works from His throne in our heart, His objective is to bring us into the reality of knowing and walking with Him in His will to personally experience the abiding life. The abiding life is sanctuary life. That sanctuary is Christ Himself.

In sanctuary life God reveals Himself continually, and in Psalm 63:1-3, we read: "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole body longs for you, in a

dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you." Who awakens this thirst? It is always God as He draws us, the Bible says, with cords of love.

We can forget the past life with all its failures and sins, dark memories and heavy sorrows. And as we learn to walk guided by the Holy Spirit, listening to the voice of God, we move away from the sin of unbelief. This all takes place in the sanctuary where we learn to rely completely upon His mercy and grace. Christ becomes everything as the Spirit works in us. It is Jesus who said that when the Spirit came into the world, He would take the things concerning Him (Jesus) and make them known to us.

As we begin to see the world around us from God's perspective, we see our Father, ourselves, our families and friends and cry out to God with the Psalmist: "But as for me, it is good to be near to God" (Psalm 73:28a, KJV).

What moves us to God? Personal need that we recognize and acknowledge for His comfort, security, protection, and purpose in life and for One more powerful than we are to handle issues of life. When we consider our world, we feel frustration and stress when bad things happen and evil abounds. We wonder where God is and why He isn't doing something about the injustice and wickedness and power of evil. We trouble ourselves with questions but come to realize that the only One with right answers is the

Lord. In reading Psalm 73:17, we conclude that there are issues with no human solutions: "till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood..." It is in the sanctuary that God speaks, shows us His plan for those who are His and gives us a balanced perspective of His eternal plan.

Where is our greatest place of safety and peace?

And He shall be for a sanctuary. (Isaiah 8:14a, KJV)

Are fear and worry your travel companions? Do you take them to bed when you lie down at night? Do they rise with you in the morning? When you watch the evening news on television, read the newspaper, overhear or hold conversations with people around you, are sparks of fear ignited into the fiery heat of crippling concern? This is changed only in the consecrated sanctuary where refuge is ours because we are owned by the powerful Lord and King of this place. He shows Himself to us. The better we know Him, the more we trust Him. The greater we trust Him, the better we know this One who welcomed us:

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

If I had only enjoyed coffee and fellowship at the lovely home in Massachusetts mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, would I have known the joys of the sanctuary experience? No, I had to leave them behind, cross the road, enter the gate, and experience the opportunity.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. (James 4:8a, ESV)

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. (2) I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust." (3) Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. (4) He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. (9) If you say, "The LORD is my refuge, and you make Him your dwelling, no disaster will come near your tent. (11) For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;(14) "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. (15) He will call on me, and I will answer him (prayer life in the sanctuary); I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him." (gleanings from Psalm 91)

We move with the traffic of this world as we go to work each day, shop at supermarkets, do our banking, leave off dry cleaning, eat in restaurants, ride trains and subways and buses (if we are city dwellers), or drive cars to many destinations. We pay our rent and other bills and have idle chatter with those we meet in our paths. But there ought to be a clear difference in our days as God's children who experience the abiding life.

All the provisions made for the birds, plus many more, are made for you and me. It is in the very personal sanctuary inhabited by God and us that we find what our hearts long for, what our needs demand. There is human effort extended to care for the birds in their earthly sanctuary. Certain things are planted that provide food and covering, and there are hiding places included for their protection when a destroyer may invade the garden. And inside each of these birds there is that which we call instinct given by their Creator so they will know what to do. Their Creator preserves and protects and provides.

Our Creator and our God does more than that for us. When Adam was created, God breathed His own life into him. Adam and Eve were different than the birds and the animals and nature because they were made in the image of God. And God placed in them an instinctive desire to live forever, to know and fellowship with their Father. We know the story of the destruction brought into this picture

when God's first woman and man moved outside the garden sanctuary God had for them.

Fortunately for us, our Creator/God is all-powerful, and He made His move. And He has moved throughout history, so our relationship with Him could be restored. His plan was the Cross and the Christ. The Cross is our point of entry. It is only by way of the Cross we come to Christ, and we will discover that the abiding life in Christ has everything to do with taking up the Cross, following Him, thereby experiencing the resurrection power working in us by His Holy Spirit. This is to be our life. God will show us and lead us as we move toward life in Him.

Sanctuary life in the midst of a powerful and fallen world is His gift to us. His invitation to this is from His heart to our heart. And while we are learners, God is the greatest teacher and enables us to experience an inner life that changes everything in the outer life. Sanctuary life is the factor that makes the difference in Christian living, a difference that we can sense. Not entering into this explains why some Christians constantly struggle against God's will, why some move in and out of a walk by faith, and why there is constant worry and fretfulness and distrust, for it is in the sanctuary life that we see God, and He opens Himself to us. He gives us His mind and His strength and calls us to join with Him in offering our poor world the comfort and peace and hope that it needs but can only find in God's solution.

And in this sanctuary, God restores. He provides all that gives this life contentment and purpose, everything necessary for our deepest needs for forgiveness and peace and contentment: His protection, provision, and preservation that eventually, in His time, move His children from a place on this planet, to home with Him.

Meanwhile we live in this world, in it but not of it. Do those walking along with us hear the songs and see the sights from our sanctuary life? Does my life invite those around me to taste and see that the Lord is good? Does my spirit provide a resting place, my heart a loving home as I carry the sanctuary life with me? Those around us are searching for what we experience and find themselves strangely drawn to the God of our sanctuary if our lives manifest our Father.

Keep in mind that our Father delights to have His children enter and abide in this created space, this sanctuary. It is the presence of Jesus Christ. Our prayers bring us there. Our intercessions are made out of our walk with Him as His Spirit continually teaches us individually how to pray.

AS WE PRAY, GOD MAY CALL US TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. Experience a personal prayer time like we have never had in our lives. He will get the prayer requests to us in an organized manner. Prayer matters should be established in writing so they are retained.
2. Become involved in prayers outside your personal world by obtaining a list of your church leaders, missionaries and their places of service. You may ask them to include you in their monthly prayer letters or reports. Pray over people and items in their letters.
3. Make a list of national and international spiritual leaders. Include those in your church but beyond that as well in other local, national and international organizations.
4. Connect with a world-prayer organization so you are interceding around the world. Included in

these are concerns for refugees, the persecuted Church, international governments and world leaders. One of the ways to start is to keep pen and pad with you when you watch world news. Make a record of name, country, problem, etc.

5. Keep a current prayer list open so you can pray for those who share their problems and sorrows with you, the person you meet whose soul becomes your burden, fellow church people with major health issues, surgeries scheduled (all confidential), etc.
6. Pray for people in the military. Do you know that the current major cause of death in the U.S. military is suicide?
7. Invite others to your home on a monthly basis to pray for the above. Share only ice water or something hot in winter with no other refreshments, otherwise the time dedicated to prayer can be reduced, and food can become the focus.
8. Begin a prayer group for women in the church.
9. Begin a prayer group for children in the church.
10. Begin a prayer group for men in the church.

11. If you live in a neighborhood with other Christians, meet together to pray for the neighborhood and its people, families, etc.
12. If you are already walking with friends, turn the walk into a prayer walk. Pray for homes and businesses, schools and churches, etc.
13. Of course, pray for your family members. It's especially important to pray for your grandchildren, great-grandchildren, children, and adult children.
14. Pray for people where you do your personal business, for their spiritual needs, for their families and their service to people.
15. List the schools of your city and pray for their boards and committees, for their principals, teachers, and workers. Pray for Christian organizations working in those schools and especially for children who have never heard the Gospel.
16. List nursing homes and pray for their services to those in their care.
17. List churches and pray for their spiritual life, for pastors and people.
18. List those businesses that are harmful to people and pray for God's handling for the sake of those affected.

19. Pray for government leaders worldwide as well as your own in authority over you.
20. Ask our Father to make your life a life of intercessions, standing with Him and His people for God's will on Earth as it is in Heaven.

SERIOUS PRAYER AND GOD'S RESPONSE

The beginning of a new spiritual life, after being born again of God's Spirit, in many ways is like babyhood in the physical sense. While we were not born physically through an act of our own, so we are born spiritually through the will and act of God. Jesus tells us that we did not choose Him, but He chose us.

The physically born baby needs help from within and without. God is the principle of life itself, and from without, babies need the help and care of others to survive. In the plan of our Creator, babies are born hungry, and some must be taught how to eat. And as the baby eats, it grows and develops into the human being God creates.

When we are born spiritually, the principle of life is within us. This is the Holy Spirit, God Himself, and from His position of propriety and power, He is able to make us into the people He wants us to be. His Helper is at work within and, without, the Body of Christ becomes our nursemaid and caregiver. We are fed with good things and nurtured

mentally, physically and spiritually for the growth of our lives and the good of our souls. Good human parents have good plans, and our Father also has good plans for His children.

A baby is born with the ability to communicate, and even without words he knows how to ask for his needs and wants in ways understandable to his parents. His reasons for communication are always self-centered. He considers his needs alone. He believes he is the center of his world and wants everyone around him to know this and act accordingly. But as a baby grows with good parents, he is taught to share and include others and help to carry the heavy loads of those around him.

It seems the spiritual life is much the same and reveals its state in our prayer life. Our early prayer life is mostly dedicated to ourselves. It is completely centered in us, but God is unwilling to leave that alone because He desires that we "grow up" and learn to partner with Him in a world of intense pain and need.

Our prayer life is of utmost importance and value because it is our connecting power line with our Father/God. And as we mature in our spiritual lives, so also will our prayer lives mature, and we eventually are shown and enlarged to see things with the eyes of our Parent, to think as He thinks.

In fact, the Bible says we “have the mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2:16), and in this position our life is lived in the thrust of His principles and power. If we do not follow Him in this, we will be in constant disarray in our thoughts and intents. God is creating in us not only a clean heart and a renewed spirit, but He also wants us to live in the same dependence and drive that Jesus experienced which He describes by saying to us, “As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you” (John 20:21b, KJV). It is important we know what this means because our prayer life will issue from it. Jesus came with a passion for the will of God, a sole desire to please Him. He sends us out with the same mind, and the Holy Spirit instructs us personally in what this means. It has everything to do with our prayer life.

God says: “They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them” (Isaiah 58:2b). He opens His comments to us with this question in Isaiah 58:5b-14:

Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is this the kind of fasting I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry

and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I! 'If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings (results of revival). If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.' The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

God's work in personal revival always produces the following evidences. From Psalm 103:3-5:

...who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The rest of this wonderful Psalm describes the activity of God in revival.

When we bow before God to pray for revival, what is the aroma of our life reaching Him? Does He see us about our Father's business as one who is sent? Does God listen to us as sent ones, like our Leader, embracing our world for His sake? Is our love like His love for lost people in our world? Do we pour our life out for them as Jesus did for us? Why do we want revival? What does that really mean, and why are we asking for this in our life and the lives of others? His promises to us as in II Chronicles 7:14 contain an "if" and a "then." Unless I prescribe to the "if," there will be no "then"!

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. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. (II Chronicles 7:14-16)

HELPERS IN OUR PRAYER LIFE

It seems clear that while “help” comes from our Father, He has ordained that we are also helped through other people. This has been absolutely true for my prayer life. I can recall several times in conversations with others that there was no question God was speaking to me through them. For me, reading has been a great source of inspiration and knowledge. There are scores of these helpers, but I will share only a few.

E.M. Bounds (1835-1913), *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds*

The prayer closet is the battlefield of the Church, the base of supplies for the Christian and the Church. Cut off from it there is nothing left but retreat and disaster.

When God’s house on Earth is a house of prayer, then God’s house in Heaven is busy and all potent in its plans and movements, then it is that earthly armies are clothed with

the triumphs and spoils of victory and His enemies defeated on every hand.

God shapes the world by prayers. Prayers are deathless. The lips that uttered them may be closed in death, the heart that felt them may have ceased to beat, but the prayers live before God, and God's heart is set on them. Prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them; outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world.

Andrew Murray (1828-1917), *The Prayer Life*

The Lord Jesus is our example in living the prayer life. He glorified the Father on Earth. In all His living and in all His praying this was His aim, hence the power of His life. As we live and pray purely that God may be glorified, we shall prevail.

In the conflict between the powers of darkness, the inner chamber is the only place where the decisive victor is obtained.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), *The Power of Prayer in a Believer's Life*

Prayers are the believer's weapons of war. When the battle is too hard for us, we call in our great ally, who, as it were, lies in ambush until faith gives the signal by crying out,

'Arise, O Lord.' Although our cause be all but lost, it shall soon be won again if the Almighty doth but bestir Himself. He will not suffer man to prevail over God, but with swift judgment will confound their gloryings. In the very sight of God, the wicked will be punished, and He who is now all tenderness will have no bowels of compassion for them, since they had no tears of repentance when the day of grace endured.

Susanna Wesley, John Wesley's Mother (Letter from June 8, 1725)

Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures you sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.

John Wesley (1703-1791)

Whatever cools my affection toward Christ is the world.

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917), *My Utmost For His Highest*

When once we get intimate with Jesus, we are never lonely, we never need sympathy, we can pour out all the time without being

pathetic. The saint who is intimate with Jesus will never leave impressions of himself, but only the impression that Jesus is having unhindered way, because the last abyss of his nature has been satisfied by Jesus. The only impression left by such a life is that of the strong, calm sanity that our Lord gives to those who are intimate with Him.

G. W. Whitfield (1714-1770), *Christian Quotes of Whitfield*

Believers keep up and maintain their walk by secret prayer. The spirit of grace is always accompanied with the spirit of supplication. It is the very breath of the new creature, the fan of the divine life, whereby the spark of holy fire, kindled in the soul by God, is not only kept in, but raised into a flame.

Samuel Prime (1812-1885), *The Power Of Prayer*

Your prayers, dear child of God, shall be answered; some of them perhaps during your lifetime on earth, and all of them, certainly during your lifetime in Heaven.

Another significant helper in my prayer life has been George Müller (1805-1898). He founded the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad, sent out over 160 missionaries from Britain, distributed 111 million gospel tracts, supported 2,000 orphans in five orphanages, and trained 120,000 students. How was this

possible? Even now the Scripture's comment about Abel describes George Müller: "And by faith [he] still speaks, even though he is dead" (Hebrews 11:4b). His life speaks to me and to scores of others.

After his 90th birthday, at a gathering of pastors, he said the following:

I was converted in November, 1825, but I only came into the full surrender of the heart four years later, in July, 1829. The love of money was gone, the love of place was gone, the love of position was gone, the love of worldly pleasures and engagements was gone. God, God alone became my portion. I found my all in all in Him; I wanted nothing but Him. And by the grace of God this has remained and has made me a happy man, and led me to care only about the things of God.

–The Autobiography of George Müller

George Müller believed that God would supply his needs through prayer alone. He shared his personal and ministry needs only in prayer, and miracle upon miracle describes his life.

This was his stated practice:

I kneel before my Father.

I make my need known.
I set aside all my own thoughts and reasoning.
I affirm my trust in Him.
I wait expectantly.

He stated in one of the writings about his prayer life: "God has not always responded immediately to my calls." At one point George Müller said he had been waiting for 29 years for God to respond to a request and then added that it did not matter how long he waited; he had full confidence that in God's own time and way, He would answer his prayer. The prayer example of George Müller taught me to believe and trust.

God loves city people, and prayer is absolute. We had the great privilege of directing a Christian ministry in the heart of New York City for 40 years. During that time I found meaningful Scriptures concerning the city that deeply affected our prayers, and I also learned to pray and watch as God worked through other leaders as they headed up prayer movements especially for cities and city people.

LORD, confuse the wicked, confound their words, for I see violence and strife in the city. Day and night they prowl about on its walls; malice and abuse are within it. Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets. (Psalm 55:9-11)

The groans of the dying rise from the city,
and the souls of the wounded cry out for
help. (Job 24:12a)

Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city
to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to
the LORD for it. (Jeremiah 29:7a)

God often spoke to my heart about the cities of Scripture
and His concern for them, leading to His mercy and grace
upon those who lived there.

Jesus: As he approached Jerusalem and saw the
city, he wept over it. (Luke 19:4)

Paul: He was greatly distressed to see that the city
was full of idols. (Acts 17:16)

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, a city that had the truth but
did not want it. Paul was stirred over Athens, a city that
wanted the truth but did not have it.

Many years ago, Sam Hadley (1842-1906), leader of Water
Street Mission, was seen leaning heavily against a
lamppost, as though ill. A friend hurried to him and
overheard him sobbing, "O God, the sin of this city is
breaking my heart." That same man was used directly and
indirectly to save thousands in the city of New York.

Early on and often, the Holy Spirit asked me if I was stirred over New York City and if I wept over it. Many prayers were prayed over many years for that city and still are today. God's mercy and grace rest over the cities of our world. His call is for intercessors.

The authors I have quoted happen to be favorites of mine whom I have read year after year. Many of their books have been reprinted and are available today. If you feel at a loss when it comes to prayer and that you are missing this in your spiritual life, I would encourage you to visit a bookstore or go online and purchase some of these for your spiritual growth.

MELODIES OF PRAYER

Many melodies have taught me prayer from the hearts of composers.

In the early 2000s, I taught some courses for groups of people on the biblical foundations of certain hymns sung by the Church. I learned something I had never realized before. Most hymns that have lasted over the years and are favorites of many people are actually prayers. I feel sure the Holy Spirit has a hand in this to exalt and worship God and to lift up the cries of human hearts to the Father. Most answers to the prayers that are sung are found in the person of Jesus Christ. Below are some of these wonderful songs:

Open My Eyes, That I May See
composed by Clara Scott in 1895

Open my eyes, that I may see, Glimpses of
truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key, That
shall unclasp and set me free.

Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God,
Thy will to see;
Open my eyes, illumine me. Spirit Divine!

Open my ears, that I may hear, Voices of
truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave-notes fall on my ear,
Everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God,
Thy will to see;
Open my ears, illumine me. Spirit Divine!

Open my mouth, and let it bear, Gladly the
warm truth everywhere;
Open my heart, and let me prepare, Love
with Thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God,
Thy will to see.
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit Divine!

Read or sing this next hymn as a deep prayer of your own.

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Text: Edwin Hatch, 1835-1889

Music: Robert Jackson, 1842-1914

Breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life
anew, that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart
is pure, until with thee I will one will, to do
and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God, till I am wholly
thine, till all this earthly part of me, glows with
thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God, so shall I
never die, but live with thee, the perfect life
of thine eternity.

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart
composed by George Croly in 1854

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses
move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay.
No angel visitant, no opening skies;
But take the dimness of my soul away.

Hast Thou not bid me love Thee, God and
King?

All, all Thine own, soul, heart and strength
and mind.

I see Thy Cross, there teach my heart to cling;
O let me seek Thee, and O let me find!

Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
Teach me the patience of unanswered
prayer.

Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The kindling of the heaven descended Dove.
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.

Let it be so: my heart an altar and thy love the flame. May we be always watching and listening for that holy intrusion of our Father who passionately wants us to learn to pray, by praying. He comes after us for this purpose, using people, places, and things so we will learn and mature in our prayer life.

MINISTRY AND PRAYER

Ministry (serving) is the call of God on our lives when we enter His Kingdom by new birth, becoming a child of God and indispensable for His purposes. I love the following verse:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to His service. (I Timothy 1:12)

I give thanks to Him who has granted me the needed strength and made me able for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He has judged and counted me faithful and trustworthy, appointing me to this stewardship of the ministry. (I Timothy 1:12, AMPCE)

This verse states it clearly. We are called, equipped, and appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ. This is critical teaching. "Given me strength" and "made me able" are

two phrases that describe the result of the filling of the Holy Spirit if there is to be fruit, more fruit, abundant fruit.

I want to share with you how I learned this, having believed it from Scripture and the example of lives that bear out this teaching. The filling of the Spirit is necessary for ministry. When we come to Christ and are born again, the Holy Spirit enters our human spirit. His residence is necessary as He becomes our teacher and guide, taking the things of Jesus and making them known to us; in fact, Scripture says that "If anyone does not have the Spirit, they do not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9). He is the seal of our new life in Christ and over time, takes the control seat of our life. But the Holy Spirit is also the equipper.

Within a year after coming to Christ, I was asked to teach an adult Sunday school class. Because I was thoroughly absorbed with Scripture and knew that my heart was right with God, I took the assignment (which no one else would take), thinking that I would be able to put lessons together and simply share and teach. A short time after starting this, every Sunday I became aware of many things: that I could not clearly explain the truths I understood and that I felt acute fear standing before these people. I felt like a child in the first grade trying to teach and knew that either change had to happen, or I needed to step aside. One Sunday morning after the class ended and I had come down into the sanctuary for the Easter service about to begin, there were only seats left in the very first row of the sanctuary. I sat down right there, feeling distress over the

presentation that I had just completed, and in my heart I cried to God. Without words, I gave God my despair and frustration and discouragement. He heard my heart. In return, God spoke a Scripture to me: John 7:37. I didn't recall seeing it before, but I turned to it immediately and read:

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this, he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:37-39)

The Holy Spirit conveyed to me that what I needed was His work alone and that if I "believed" Him, I could ask, and from that day "teaching" would be in the "rivers of living water flowing from within." Those rivers are Him, and I knew that in my heart, made that request, and teaching from that day to this has had His anointing and His power because I have had His filling. Undeserved but true! It is not only in teaching that we need to see this truth but in all ministry. There is a tragic difference between human and Spirit-filled activity. We will either know defeat or Christ in victory, as God is glorified, in the Spirit.

Remember that Jesus did no healing, no miracles, etc., until He was baptized in the river and the Holy Spirit came upon Him. He was always God, very God, but the Holy Spirit equipped him for the earthly ministry that our Father had assigned Him. If He needed that equipping, how much more do we! The disciples had desires and motives to please Christ, and they tried their best but were themselves disappointed at times with their behavior and results. They were not at all like Christ nor able to do the things Christ could do until after the ten-day prayer meeting in Jerusalem where they had been told to wait for the power to enable them to fulfill the ministry that would establish thousands in the Body of Christ and have His power in preaching and teaching. The Book of Acts describes their experience before and after the Holy Spirit filled them and began His powerful work, like a stream of living water flowing from inside them. Remember that Jesus said the Holy Spirit would not speak of Himself but would take the things of Christ and make them known to them. God does His work. We are simply His servants sent to be the channels of blessing.

This filling of the Holy Spirit is not to satisfy any desire for power to do miraculous things, to be involved in the supernatural so we or others can prove our spirituality or to show people how powerful we are as God's servants. I later discovered that this power of the Holy Spirit is "resurrection power": the power of the resurrected life of Christ, known only in connection with death to self. For me this is spelled out in one of my favorite Scriptures:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5, KJV)

In the NIV we read:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

When the Apostle Paul said to the people, “So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you” (II Corinthians 4:12), he was addressing this principle of the Holy Spirit who breathes life and who makes the exchange of death in us for the resurrected power of life in another, like Christ does for us.

May God grant us understanding of these Scriptures and give what is needed for fruitful ministry.

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. (1 John 4:17)

Many want to be like Him in His power and might, but it is in our attitude and daily walk in this world that we are to be like Him, in visible character with love, tenderness, mercy, and His grace flowing on a broken world that needs Christ. To be like Christ can only take place through the deep and lasting work of the Holy Spirit. And this can never happen apart from our prayer life because it is the work of God alone. Make no mistake here. A fruitful and abundant life is impossible apart from a prayer life. We wait before Him, and He does the work.

PRAYER WHEN LIFE SEEMS TO FALL APART

When it seems “life falls apart” for the child of God, it is God who picks up the pieces. Some of these He tosses away. They never should have been there, and they have no value or use in His plan for our lives. But any others, even the tiny pieces, He holds in His hands and re-designs them into the very pattern He had in mind when He allowed “life to fall apart” for us.

While we weep sometimes in pain because of loss,
God holds us tenderly. He knows this cross
Is meant to further all that He has planned,
And works His mighty work with His strong hand.
The labor pain we feel will bring forth fruit,
More and abundantly producing is that fruit,
While in our inner man death takes its place.
His best is ours, we live within His realm of Grace.

–Lois Ewald

A PLACE FOR TEARS

Old Testament

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. (Nehemiah 1:4)

What had Nehemiah heard?

They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." (Nehemiah 1:3)

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. (Psalm 126:5-6)

New Testament

For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as

enemies of the cross of Christ. (Philippians 3:18)

For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you. (II Corinthians 2:4)

I served the Lord with great humility and with tears. (Acts 20:19a)

So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. (Acts 20:31)

For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water,' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.' (Revelation 7:17)

ALTARS AND TEARS

Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, "Spare your people, LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:17)

Weeping between the temple porch and the altar: where is this place? It is the dwelling place of people who have yet to acknowledge God, to hear and see and understand the personal call of God and the place of submission to His invitation to come to Him. They move about in the outer courts, but there can be no change unless they come to the altar. The altar is the place of mercy and reconciliation between God and lost humankind. It was established for us when Jesus hung upon the Cross.

This weeping is in the hearts of those who are burdened with the lost of our world who need to bow at the altar to

know their Creator/Father. There is no greater loss than that of our souls.

But hearts also weep over the waywardness of God's people, His own who live afar off from Him and walk in the ways of the world instead of the way of righteousness, those exposed to the dangers of the world in its separation from the Father, and those described by Jesus in His words about sheep, sheep that are wandering away from His fold.

THE ALTAR IS NECESSARY FOR BOTH: the altar of forgiveness and blessing, of mercy and grace, of peace and rest. Altars are places for tears.

The Bible has much to say about tears. There are self-centered tears, selfish tears with us in the center. There are tears over experiences in life that are painful, over losses in life that give us grief and sadness. There are tears when bad news comes to us about people we love. These tears are God's arrangement for handling the emotional stresses we experience. But there are other tears.

Jesus shed tears over those who turned away from Him, over Jerusalem. He shed tears over unbelief and lack of insight into Him and His power and resurrection, as in the death of Lazarus and lack of understanding. These were His public tears, and who can know His other tears with His Father?

Those who follow Christ and become His disciples must know that this choice will always bring tears. They will be the same tears of our Lord. There is no better place to bring our tears than His prayer room. It is our suffering with Christ.

PRAYER AS WORSHIP

What is worship?

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. (Psalm 95:1-7a)

At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place. Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice, to the rumbling that comes from his mouth. He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth.

After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back. God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding. He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.' So that everyone he has made may know his work, he stops all people from their labor. The animals take cover; they remain in their dens. The tempest comes out from its chamber, the cold from the driving winds. The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them. At his direction they swirl around over the face of the whole earth to do whatever he commands them. He brings the clouds to punish people, or to water his earth and show his love. "Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders." (Job 37:1-14)

The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress. (Job 37:23)

It is not possible to worship God without loving Him. This love is not known by "feeling" but by obedience to Him.

We humans love all kinds of things from doughnuts, hot dogs, and certain activities to lemon pie. It is how we use the word in today's world. However, the true love of God rules and rests in our hearts after we obey Him and what we then feel is His pleasure.

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." (John 14:23)

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Romans 10:8-10)

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! (Romans 10:15b)

What does Jesus say?

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. (John 6:44)

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of all the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind so that you may prove for yourselves what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God for you, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect in His sight for you. (Romans 12:1-2, AMPCE)

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of

the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through Him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. (Colossians 1:9-23)

This is our God, before whom we bow in worship and to whom we offer our thanksgiving and our intercessions. What a mighty God is He!

THE PRAYER OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The human heart is a battlefield itself, and it is only when Jesus Christ becomes Lord that victory and the peace of victory come into the center of our being. But it is also at that time that the enemy of God and his myriad of demonic hosts notice and observe us.

That enemy is the enemy of God identified for us in Genesis, and all that God owns, is, and does, he battles. When a person is converted (saved), the Lord brings about awesome change in the heart He now possesses; however, this person still lives in the midst of a fallen world. Our new birth into the Kingdom of God, our connection with Jesus Christ, causes God's enemy to become our enemy also. While God is and will always be Sovereign Ruler over all, it was Jesus who said "the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me" (John 14:30b). Because Satan had no claim on Jesus, we are able to read, "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out" (John 12:31). The purposeful reasons for the coming of Christ into this world

came into focus and climax. Gethsemane and Calvary were the battlegrounds: Jesus won!

But we say, Satan is very much alive and active in this world, which is true, ever since Adam and Eve sinned. However, he has been driven out of his place of power on planet Earth. The battle at Calvary, won completely by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, opened the door to followers of Christ being able to take their place of personal victory over sin and Satan. That battle brought down the captivity Satan held and his self-proclaimed honor and worship of himself; it defeated his power and dominion on planet Earth. The ultimate day is coming when he shall be bound and cast out of this world, and it will be forever free from any involvement on his part.

But, for the present time, though Satan is not in charge and does not hold the keys to anything, he and his myriads of demonic spirits can conduct what we call spiritual warfare. He cannot take us down nor defeat any plan of Christ, but he can disrupt, dismay, discourage, bring about disunity, cause disorder and confusion, create fear and darkness, work steadily at the obedience factor in our walk, cast doubts, fill us with darkness, and plant dismay and disloyalty. He is powerful and intends to destroy. He is a liar and very capable of twisting truth. The closer he comes to defeat, the greater he applies his battle strategy.

While the battle is "spiritual," so is the victory. Here are some facts to consider:

1. Jesus Christ alone can defeat Satan, and the most powerful place of his defeat is in our prayer life.
2. All personal disobedience to the written Word, the spiritual principles God gives, places us in a weakened and vulnerable condition when the enemy attacks.
3. We need to know and understand the difference between "walking in the Spirit" and "walking in the flesh" because this is of utmost importance.
4. The walk in the flesh is an open invitation for our enemy who is on the watch for this opportunity to enter our complete domain of life. His attack at that time will cover a multitude of bases. He is clever and bold.
5. The walk in the Spirit means simply that God's Holy Spirit is in control of our lives, our thoughts, our hearts, our souls, and Christ is on the throne. This is the only and absolute place of personal victory over Satan.

He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (I Corinthians 1:8-9)

It was after Dr. Hal Guffey, former Chairman of the Hephzibah House Board of Trustees, was taken home to Heaven that his wonderful study on spiritual warfare came to me. When I wrote to his wife, Betsy, that I felt Hal had intended adding to this study, Betsy herself finished it for him and sent it on. I am forwarding this to you as part of this writing on spiritual warfare.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

by Hal W. Guffey

Becoming a true Christian means that we have denied ourselves, taken up the Cross and followed Jesus into the war of all wars, the spiritual warfare between God and Satan. It is nevertheless a war that has to be fought to its foreordained conclusion. There are no shortcuts. It cannot be bypassed.

In this warfare all are participants, some knowingly and some unknowingly, some wisely and some foolishly.

There are no neutrals.

There is no nuclear freeze.

There are no conscientious objectors.

There are no physical rejects.

There is no diplomatic immunity.

There are no safe houses.

There are no disarmament treaties.

We have been freed from captivity, but we are still behind enemy lines. We are living in the world-system that is Satan's domain. We are living with a traitor, our old nature, the flesh, trying to trip us up. Our objective is to free other prisoners from every prison cell (People Group) in the world and together fight our way through enemy lines (this world system).

All the way along we must ward off direct attacks from Satan and his angels, while keeping the traitor, the flesh, immobilized. The only way to accomplish this is by strict adherence to the battle plan given to us by our Commander, Jesus Christ, in the Bible. We must maintain communication with Him through prayer, unquestioning obedience and enthusiastic cooperation with all units under His command.

Available to us is the greatest array of tremendously powerful weapons. No earthly fighting force has even an inkling of the power of implementation given to the Christian Vanguard here on earth. There is a set of personal and group armor that will protect us and get us through the enemy lines if we will equip ourselves with them. The equipment enables us to pray our way through to victory.

Subject: Ephesians 6
by Betsy Guffey

How do we fight this battle?

Ephesians 6:12; Isaiah 59:19; I John 4:4; Zechariah 4:6; II Corinthians 10:4; Romans 8:31; Psalm. 55:9; 60:11,12; 146:9; and Isaiah 54:17.

Prayer for all the saints: Ephesians 6:18 (Petitions from Ephesians)

- 1:17 For a spirit of wisdom and discernment;
- 2:14 Break down any wall of hostility in the family of Christ;
- 3:17-9 Keep them rooted and grounded in love and filled with the Spirit;
- 4:1 Lead lives worthy of their calling and maintain unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;
- 4:18 Deliver them from any hardness of heart;
- 4:29 Make them dispensers of God's grace;
- 4:32 Make them quick to forgive;
- 5:10 Teach them what is pleasing to the Lord;
- 5:15-6 Help them to use time wisely;

5:20 Keep them living with an attitude of gratitude;

6:11 May they remember daily to put on the whole armor of God and keep standing.

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, . . . tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

A CALL TO PRAYER FOR HIS WORLD

Be Still My Soul

composed by Katherine von Schlegel (1697-1768)

Be still, my soul, the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still my soul; thy best, thy heavenly friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul; thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright, at last.
Be still my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul; the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone.
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.

Be still my soul; when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

What I want to share with you may have a political sound, but that is not intended. I hope you will read this with your heart. What I am sharing is a clear and broad call to prayer to the followers of Christ Jesus, who created the world, loves the human race, and who desires to enlist us in His plan of inviting everyone everywhere to come to Him, our Creator God.

After receiving a factual email message yesterday that stirred my heart and troubled my mind, the Lord reminded me of other factual information that calmed my heart and focused my mind. His Word reminds me of this truth.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners
and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's
people. (Ephesians 2:19a)

In Revelation 21 and 22 we have thrilling descriptions of the new Heaven and the new Earth being prepared for the Body of Christ. We are given citizenship to this place while still living on Earth but born again into His Kingdom. It is ruled by the King of Kings, our Lord Jesus Christ. Once we have this citizenship, Scripture calls us strangers and pilgrims for the remainder of the journey here.

The implication of this truth is that our identity is changed, our "belonging place" is new, and we are new creatures

whose interests and concerns become like those of our Shepherd/King Jesus Christ. We are given His worldview and enterprise. We live in His economy under His banner: the will of God. And immediately we stand under that banner and are to take up our cross. While the fellow citizens of our new world may love us, the citizens of our former world often move into disdain and hate, despising us and our King, the Lord Jesus. They often work in attempting to bring us back where we once lived as they live. Sometimes and in some places the work is done by the force of persecution.

Major changes take place as we, by His grace, become His own dear children. While we love family and friends, country of birth or choice and the beauty of many former things, our citizenship is recorded in Heaven, and our loyalty and labor changes as we work in the building of His Kingdom, filled with love for Him beyond all else. Change becomes complete!

There are happenings along the way that serve to remind us whose we are. One such thing for me was an email. Reading it first struck alarm, then sadness, then a consideration of the future and greater sadness. We are called to serve Christ without fear, but prayer for our broken world can only be made real and vital by Jesus Christ. People who walk closely with God are of one mind that the issues facing us are not political and will not be resolved politically. The world is waiting and being set for that one ruler God's Word describes as the antichrist who

will bring about the peace the world wants but only temporarily. God help those of us who know Christ intimately and personally to pray, pray, pray. He has told us to work for the night is coming when no one can work, and He tells us to look up because our redemption is drawing close. He also tells us He will come again in the same way He departed. We are to watch, pray, and take up the Cross while we wait for Him.

Our President said the other day that we are not at war with the other religious faiths. There is some truth in that since America as a nation permits religious freedom, however, all men everywhere are lost with sinful hearts. No matter what we choose to believe, we are lost without the One God sent to redeem us, including our own people. He loves all people everywhere, and He seeks after them, and as His followers, we do not war with people of any religious persuasion. However, we are in spiritual warfare with the dogmas of any religion that lift any god above God and His Christ. In Him alone are people loved and changed into new creatures with a new heart and renewed mind, moving from hate to love, from the devaluation of human life to the preservation of His created human life, from selfish to selfless, from the turn to "our own ways" to God's way of sacrifice and service and love for others. It is to His followers that God gives a call to prayer for nations and peoples, for leaders and governments, for world organizations, for families and marriages and children and parents, for educational purposes and schools, for fellow Christians, and especially

the persecuted Church. A call to prayer is made for all countries because they are filled with human beings who have the same needs: heartache, fear, painful loss, betrayed trust. All people have been created by a loving Creator who still loves them, His people of the earth.

He also says "In the beginning, O Lord, You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain, they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed but You remain the same, and Your years will never end." (Hebrews 1:10-12)

While Christians may pray for the country in which they live and for those who have authority over them, there is need to remember that we have become citizens of another country. We serve under the authority of a sovereign God, even while the pain and struggle of the planet is everywhere. We need to be world Christians, not burdened singly for our country of birth or choice, sometimes hating other countries. His is an embrace of grace, and may He make our hearts like His. This is our Father's world. "May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we hope in you" (Psalm 33:22).

I cannot feel
That all is well, when darkening clouds conceal
The shining sun;

But then, I know
He lives and loves; and say, since this is so,
Thy will be done.”

–S. G. Browning

The Bible teaches that the King is coming! Our King, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming in sovereign power to rule and reign and is now establishing for His children the new Heavens and the new Earth where we will live with Him forever. Meanwhile, may this call to prayer reach our hearts and keep us on our knees for His world of people. Amen.

A PERSONAL STORY OF PRAYER

This is a personal story from my life I would like to share with you. It's a true story about prayer, written with thanksgiving to God and to encourage those who feel their case is hopeless, especially with family and children's issues. It's a simple record of a powerful, personal Father who hears our cries.

A little girl lost her mother when she was in the third grade, most likely due to cancer. They were a poor family and lived in the country. Because the father needed to work and there were eight children, four younger than this little girl and needing care, school was off and on for the older children, and by the fifth grade, she stopped attending to care for her younger siblings until she was 16 years old. By then, her father had married again, but his many children seemed overwhelming to the new wife, and she responded with hurtful behavior.

This girl, now 16, left home and moved to a large city where she found a job in a restaurant and a room in a boarding house. She lived a somewhat lonely life with fear

and anxiety in a big city having moved from the country with a big family, and she felt very alone. But she was determined and knew she had to try to do something on her own.

One day, three grown brothers came to eat lunch in the restaurant where she waited on tables. Accidentally, she spilled soup on one of them, which certainly got his attention, but in an unusual way. After things were cleaned up, including his clothes, he indicated to her that he would like to know her better. He was kind to her and stayed in town some extra days so they could know each other. After he left for his home in Illinois, he wrote letters and pursued her. To make the story short, he came to get her, and they were married after a very short time, neither of them really knowing the other.

When he took her home, she discovered that it was an alcoholic household and that her new husband, his father and all his brothers drank excessively. There were five brothers and four sisters still living at home when he brought her there temporarily. Because she was only 16, her husband's mother treated her like one of the children, and since she was another mouth to feed in an already-crowded house, she was not really well-liked by her new mother-in-law. They lived there for a short while until the husband could find work that would pay bills, including rent, and then moved. But all the men, including him, drank as drunkards. Alcohol controlled everything.

Eight years later, I was their first child. Alcohol ruled our home. My father had a job in a brewery driving a beer truck for delivery to public places, and every Friday night he stopped at home to deliver the cases of beer for his week's use. This meant, of course, that there was never enough money for our family's necessities. We lived in the back part of a house that had a very little kitchen, a sitting/bedroom and another bedroom. There were arguments and tensions, of course. How could it have been otherwise?

A neighbor lady across the street felt sympathy for my mother with little ones and a new one on the way and invited her to church more than once. Mother finally went with her, and there came a day when she responded to the love of God and gave her heart to Christ, beginning her new life walking with God. This did not decrease problems in the house, as you might suspect. I remember one night during a church service my father came in through the door of the church. He was greatly intoxicated and created a loud and never-to-be-forgotten scene. I was just a child, but I was embarrassed, and so was Mother, who feared it would happen again.

After my sister's birth, a very young cousin came to live with us temporarily. Sometime after that, when it was time for my brother to be born, my father could not be found to take my mother to the hospital. Everyone who knew him looked for him in his old haunts but could not find him. Someone else took my mother to the hospital. My brother

was born, and later that day my father returned home. He expressed regret and was sorry about his absence because he had been on one of his drunken binges. Early that evening, he asked me if I would like to go to the hospital with him to see my mother and new baby brother. I was happy about that.

It was evening and growing dark in mid-October. The streetlights were on. As we walked to the hospital, we were about to cross a street when my father stopped, turned me to face him, put his hands on my shoulders and said words to this effect, "I promise you I will never touch another drop as long as I live. I am promising you." I do not remember responding. I was a little girl of six. I remember feeling something inside me saying that this was an important moment.

My father kept his promise. He never touched another drop for the rest of his life. This was a miracle.

My father was a proud man and actually an honest man. I am sure the keeping of this promise, in his mind, was one of his own strength. But what he did not know then was that my mother had her church praying for his deliverance from this family curse of alcohol. God had heard the prayers of her weeping heart, and He began His work of miraculous rescue for a family.

Life went on. My father would have nothing to do with church; in fact, he was very resentful of my mother's

spiritual life and made it known. I saw him rip a Bible to shreds one day in anger and also order her pastor out of the house with loud threats. However, as he grew older, he softened somewhat, perhaps due to my youngest sister who was born when my parents were older and who loved him in her sweet ways. I believe it was a God thing, part of His plan to reach into my father's heart. It softened this man who seemed depressed most of his life and who had sorrows and wounds in his own spirit that he carried in heaviness.

All those years my mother walked with God. She was a simple person and obeyed God to the best of her understanding and ability. She faithfully served people, and every morning we children remember her early rising and time with her Father. Her prayer life grew larger the longer she walked with Him. It included family, neighbors, kids in the block, but especially did she pray that God would break the alcohol bondage of my father's family. God heard those prayers, and as years went by, He began to work in hearts and lives. My father's widowed mother, the one who never liked Mother, came to live in our home about a year before my high school graduation. She was not a believer in God, and my mother lovingly served her year after year (she lived to within two weeks of her 100th birthday); one night Mother turned out the lights and was checking on things before her own bedtime. As she walked past my grandmother's room, she heard my grandmother praying aloud the sinner's prayer, the confession of sin and the seeking of forgiveness. Wasn't it

dear of our Father to let her hear this?! Grandma was the first of her family and at this point she was likely well into her 90s. Over time, the power of alcohol in many lives ceased to control, and some of the women began to consider spiritual matters and reach out for God. In years ahead He also began to convert some of the boys in the next generation!

All of the sons of my grandfather and some of their sons were alcoholics. They began consumption of alcohol when they were very young, drinking and drinking and drinking. My brother was in this group, and the power of alcohol gripped him. He once said that he drank every day of his life from his boyhood having been given alcohol by a neighborhood family. Of course, my parents never knew this was happening. He joined the Navy the day after graduation and said there was not a day he did not drink.

As the four of us children grew into adulthood, only one was faithful to her childhood God, the youngest of us all. My other sister and my brother and I, all from various levels of our childhood, moved away from anything we heard in Sunday school or church and lived disobediently to God and those in authority over us. While we three knew our mother's heart was breaking, we still went our own way. I remember once when she told me she was praying for me that I told her quite rudely she could stop anytime, that I would never be a little mouse like her and

that I wanted more out of life than she was happy with and intended to get it. I lived this out.

I will not take time nor space for my years of tangled and sad stories except to say that our mother never stopped praying, without any doubt. She prayed daily and with many tears. My brother once said that he walked past her bedroom door early one morning and it was opened a little crack, and he heard her crying for him, weeping before the Lord for her children. He never forgot it.

Well, I am writing this many years later just to say that God heard the prayers of this mother. My sister, suffering over choices she had made, the first of us in pain and sorrow, came to Christ with whom she began walking closely. She became one who shared Christ with everyone who knew her. At 35, she was diagnosed with cancer and lived only months afterwards, leaving two young boys. I was with her often in the hospital where she shared Christ with nurses, friends, maintenance men, housekeepers and doctors. She asked her former husband who had left her for another woman to come see her. He did, and she told him she wanted him to know that she forgave him, that even though he had not sought forgiveness, someday he would want it. She told him that he would also need forgiveness from God. There was no malice in her heart.

Just yesterday, someone said that my sister had written her a letter from her deathbed that had changed her life. God heard the prayers of our mother and rescued my

sister. He not only saved her but also gave her an anointing for ministry to many others.

When my sister died at 35, she left behind the two boys not yet grown. When their earthly father abandoned the family, he didn't just leave my sister but also his sons, and he made no attempt to share their lives until many years later. So, they lived with my mother and father. There is no doubt that these two boys, along with other grandchildren being born, were prayed for daily by their praying grandmother. Her prayers are still being answered.

And for my younger sister who stayed faithful to Him, God kept hold of her heart through some very hard things, some heartbreaking losses. He gave her a heart also filled with love for people and gave her an anointing that led to teaching and also to chaplaincy in a hospital, serving the suffering and the dying and their families. He enables her to weep with those who weep, gives her favor with people and calls her to train others for ministry leadership, preparing them to serve our Lord. She, too, was prayed for by our mother and served her in Mother's later years with love and tenderness. God heard the prayers of one who trusted Him.

When my mother went to Heaven, a young woman came to her memorial service. None of us knew her, but she introduced herself as a little neighborhood girl who came to know Mother and was led to Christ by her. She

indicated that often they met together to pray for her difficult life and that, as an adult, she was walking with God.

In his 70s, my father was diagnosed with lung disease after smoking most of his life. He began to lose strength, became bedridden knowing he was dying, and Mother, true to her calling, loved and served him for months. As she bathed and nursed him, she sang the old hymns of the church. He was in and out of consciousness, but she was praying and trusting her Lord. There was a morning when he became conscious. He told her that he had made things right with God and died only a few days later. We knew that God alone could do this in answer to her faithful prayers over many, many difficult and testing years of her faith in His promises.

My younger and only brother died last week, and his story is wonderful, full of grace. After years under the control of alcohol, drunkenness and arrests, serving jail sentences, he came to Christ. With his whole heart he grew in understanding and obedience, loving the Word of God. The long years afterwards were spent serving Him, loving people and doing kindnesses for them in ministry at nursing homes, jails, in the lives of men cursed with alcohol, and in men's ministries. God so filled him with love that he and his wife provided a home for our mother during the last years of her life. His love for Jesus and for people is the mark of his life. God heard the prayers of

our mother and rescued him. He not only saved him but gave him an anointing for ministry to many others.

I saved my own story until last. I was the firstborn, one who became angry and hateful and rebellious. I kept my word and pursued what I wanted, deeper and deeper in the pit of sin, but my mother never stopped praying. I was 28, deeply depressed one day at home in my bedroom, when God spoke to me, and in my desperation I came to Him, weeping and broken. I fell at His feet, unable even to speak. My heart was full of regret and repentance. God said to me, "I can help you if you'll let me." Many times I am reminded of the mercies and grace of God. In place of darkness and bondage, He fills my joyful heart continually.

He treats me with mercy and grace. He not only rescued me but anointed me for ministry to others, and this is my near 60th year of serving Him in all the ways He teaches me, all because Mother prayed.

That is the point of this true story. Mother prayed. My mother's prayers have not ended because she has gone to Heaven. I am sure they cover the children and the grandchildren and those yet to be born. They covered her neighbors, the lost children in her world and among other lists she had a prayer list of prisoners, inmates she never met or knew but prayed for over many years. At my brother's memorial service a few days ago I met an older man who was a childhood friend of my brother. He lived a few houses down from us, and he was on her list. In his

40s, he bowed his knee to the Savior. With tears, he expressed his love for the Lord Jesus and shared with me that he knew it was because Mother prayed. These are the lists I know about. Our Father knows the rest.

And the point of this story is to encourage wives and mothers everywhere who sorrow, and of course not them alone, but husbands and fathers and all God's people. This is a world of sorrow and brokenness because of sin. In today's world I often hear the term "dysfunctional family." I have concluded that every family is dysfunctional because each human being is such, and this inability to function properly is in all of us. It is not only alcohol and drugs but also abuse of all kinds and selfishness in every issue of life. In lesser but still painful degrees, families live with ugly words and unkindness, with jealousy and rival competition. We humans are defective and dysfunctional. It is only when our Creator/Father is given a welcome into our hearts that change can take place. But He hears the prayers of fathers and mothers and siblings and friends. Our God is One who is loving enough to care, powerful enough to change hearts, and He makes people over, new and clean.

Enter the closet. He waits there. He hears our hearts and dries our tears. And He sets in motion all it takes to answer our prayers. Praying does not always bring instant answers. Sometimes prayers are prayed year after year, with intercessors wondering if God listens while His Word guarantees He does. Our Heavenly Father waits for our

intercessions. He works year after year to bring home the wandering sheep, and one day there will be great rejoicing in Heaven as well as in homes on the Earth.

TREASURED SCRIPTURES AND THOUGHTS

Beginning steps:

As a new follower of Christ, I was introduced to the subject of prayer in books. I was invited by a friend one day to make a trip to a Christian bookstore (a first for me) in Toledo, Ohio. She looked around and took a stack to the cash register for payment. I knew nothing and no Christian writers, so I stood with her as she paid. Near the register was a stack of books for 39 cents. One was entitled *Absolute Surrender* by Andrew Murray. Knowing my own new struggles of surrender to what I then understood, I bought this one book.

That night I read it cover to cover with clear understanding that God was teaching me something new and real. I asked my friend, and the next day we returned to the bookstore and purchased everything they carried by Andrew Murray. I discovered he was a writer of the past, and when I read books after that, my heart and mind began to find a deep satisfaction in the old writers. He was one and became my teacher. Someday in Heaven I

hope to share this with him. Much of what he wrote had to do with prayer. This was good for me because until then my praying was just like me, self-centered and selfish. I prayed for me, my, and mine—mostly me.

In subsequent visits to the bookstore, I discovered many other awesome writers, including a man by the name of F. B. Meyer. His thoughts and teachings were deep:

God's promises are given not to restrain, but to incite to prayer. They show the direction in which we may ask, and the extent to which we may expect an answer. They are the signed check, made payable to order, which we must endorse and present for payment. Though the Bible be crowded with golden promises from board to board, yet will they be inoperative until we turn them into prayer. It is not our province to argue the reasonableness of this; it is enough to accentuate and enforce it.

—F. B. Meyer (1847-1929), *Daily Meditations for Prayer*

Does this prayer move your heart? It moves mine even to this day. Although at that early time I did not fully understand it, God heard my heart and responded with His own personal work in me. I never knew what He had in mind for my life, and I never knew then what the word

grace really meant, but now I know it is always His love and His grace opening hearts to call on Him as He draws us to Himself. He still says, "Follow me" and has much to teach us. We follow on in His embrace of grace.

When I share some of my thoughts with you as a person who reads and studies, I wonder who could possibly remember all the books and people used by God to convert our minds and hearts. I would like to share some thoughts of others that have been indelibly printed on my heart by the Holy Spirit as my personal guide. Scripture becomes intensely personal as He takes the Word of God and gives understanding and teaching. He is the trainer of every child of God who surrenders to Him. He does what Jesus said He would—take the things concerning Jesus and make them known to us (John 16:12-14).

If I were to write everything about prayer that God has shown me, I would never finish. From my first weeping prayer of repentance to understanding that I was truly His child and He loved me, then in coming to terms with His will and plan for my life, I learned that everything between God and His people involves prayer, prayer and more prayer. He taught me very early in my walk with Him that prayer was the most important activity of my life and that the statement Jesus made, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5b) was a fact that needed to underlie every waking thought. Because of His work in me, I sought teaching and preaching and the prayer experience of God's children in Scripture and past history. I still don't

want to miss anything God has for me to learn and experience. I learned that Scriptural praying covers every personal need and needs in ministry with Him. I also learned there is no fruitful ministry apart from Christ. He has shown me that the prayers of God's people can change the world, form and transform governments, and break down evil strongholds.

You are coming to a King,
Large petitions you may bring,
For His grace and power are such
You can never ask too much.

And:

When our God beholds us there,
Pleading in the place of prayer.
Then the flag of truth prevails; foes
Slink back, Satan quails.
Bring us, Lord, yes, bring us there,
Where we learn prevailing prayer.

—John Newton (1725-1807)

What I learned as truth:

1. The soul is to be pitied who does not experience the prayer arena of the Father, the place where we bow to seek His mind and will. Upon entry we lay down our personal fallen self, with all our cherished plans, so nothing clouds His face or blocks His voice. It is just the two of us.

Then in our minds and hearts, renewed by His Holy Spirit, God works out life's plans, great and small, this One who loves and cares, guides and directs with His own sovereign power. Contentment reigns in our hearts, and peace reigns in our minds because we are in His company, in His prayer arena. All is well with our soul.

2. When we pray, faith is not antagonistic to knowledge but actually rests on knowledge. It stands securely on what we know, on a Person:

God's character

God's record of work

God's faithfulness in the record

God's revelations to humanity

God's written Word of prophecy, promise, and
practice

3. Our Father works arduously to give us trusting hearts. We trust other things and people, but trusting our Father is difficult for us, so there are substitutions we make that seem much more possible and likely, from our human perspective, to "work."

We can actually trust technology more than the work of His Holy Spirit. We find ourselves much more concerned with running equipment and human contributions in our programs than in hearing from God.

Trust can be in our self-confidence and the convincing lift of the world's acclaim if we choose to believe all the good things spoken about us. We enjoy hearing how good we are at certain things and begin to trust our own abilities, calling them gifts, but ignoring the Giver.

Trust can be in our techniques and in successes we keep in our memories. These can be in past experiences and our own idea of success. Trust can be in our educational degrees, high skills, or diplomas hanging on the walls of our office or on the walls of our mind.

Trust can be in our own personality and power of persuasion. We actually glorify it for self as a sign of good leadership.

Our trust must be in God alone. This is His objective for our good. This is a very critical matter and involves both personal and ministry intercessions that acknowledge our prideful hearts. Our trust must be in our Father who works according to His plan and timing. I have discovered He is a great networker, and when He answers prayer, He has much more in mind than the present plan as I see it. His work is larger than my circles, and the results are always eternal when He accomplishes His will. My best action is to present the case (which He thoroughly sees and understands), leave it at His altar of mercy and grace, act only if He so directs and confirms by actions of His own, and then watch Him!

I don't know who wrote this, but a friend recently sent it to me:

If we have multitudes of people, but have not prayer, we have nothing but an unarmed, non-threatening army. And if we have a wide offering of programs, tailored to every age and interest, but have not prayer, we accomplish nothing that will endure. If people tithe and give all that they have, and spend countless hours in service, but have not prayer, it profits us nothing.

Another thought:

Why should I charge my soul with care?
The wealth in every mine
belongs to Christ, God's Son and heir and
He's a friend of mine.

—John Sammis (1846-1919)

Our enemy works diligently for our destruction. One of his ways is to overpower the human cry to know the Creator. That cry is in the heart of every human being, even in a child. By adult years an enormous stack of life's debris has piled high in his attempt to stifle that longing, but when the voice of God speaks in power and authority, that cry can be aroused again to surface with the question: "Who is God and who am I?" When unanswered, people die

with this eternal longing and fear. It will be answered at the Judgment, when everyone will know who God is and who we are. This is how we were made by our Creator, and for many, this question begins our search. I have taught these Scriptures many times over the years; they are a blessing for our souls: Acts 17 and Romans 1.

It is a privilege to stand with Jesus Christ in our Father's Kingdom with His heart and mind, bringing matters to Him that only He can handle in His prayer chamber. These would include human hearts with fear and anguish, human selfishness of all kinds, and human behavior that only God can deal with. May He move us to enlarge our concerns presented in His high and heavenly places. As we wait and watch for our Lord's return, may He enable us to let go of those things that weigh us down and inspire us in His calling and obedience. Jesus is Lord! May we offer Him our praise as His people. One day we shall stand before Him, wondering how we could have regarded Him with such insolence. Perhaps that is when God will wipe away all tears as we are promised.

Prayerlessness always leads to lack of power, lack of fruit, and an increase in worldliness, which brings us into darkness and death while we yet live on Earth. It can be in this darkness that we live our days and nights. Only Christ Jesus is the light of the world, and when He enters our being, He lights up our life. We become His reflectors. Abiding in Christ dispels darkness not only for myself but also in my circle of life. This is a result of prayer. The

following quote comes from the first book on prayer I read as a new Christian:

The shower of answers to your prayers will continue to your dying hour. Nor will it cease then. When you pass out from beneath the shower, your dear ones will step into it. Every prayer and every sigh that you have uttered for them and their future welfare will, in God's time, descend upon them as a gentle rain of answers to prayer.

—O. Hallesby (1879-1061), *Prayer*

Trust is an empty word if not accompanied by obedience. The word trust is only pretense if I don't follow Him as Savior and Guide. How can He save me in the midst of chaos and confusion, error and attack if I am not obedient to Him? This has great connection to my prayer life.

Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. (1 Chronicles 29:14b-16)

Obedience to God, His Father, was a road of suffering for Jesus. When we join Him and walk with Him, obedience often brings suffering to our lives. Suffering brings us to our Savior, and we learn to pray as never before. However, the experience of His presence far exceeds suffering as His joy becomes our own.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. (Isaiah 53:11a, KJV)

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. (Philippians 3:10a)

I once received a Christmas card with these insightful observations from an unknown author:

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

This is the Savior who hears our prayers. All our lives the enemy of our souls would have us search for the above

substitutes, which many do but are never satisfied in their hearts.

Life is like the trackless sea. Without working instruments, a ship and all aboard will be lost. In life, the Word of God and prayer are necessary instruments, and the lack of these is revealed clearly in the awesome lost condition of our human race both in the past and in the present. Prayer: Lord, keep us on course in connection to You and Your Word.

It is possible to know about God and not know God.

Now this is eternal life: that they know you.
(John 17:3a)

You will seek me and find me when you seek
me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

Notice, God wants us to know more than about Him. He wants us to know Him. This is impossible without a prayer life.

I have never met anyone who voices dislike of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Children love the picture of Him with a lamb across His shoulders or in His arms. As adults, we are nurtured by the picture of Him leading His flock of sheep with staff in hand. We love the words from Psalm 23 describing our Shepherd. In the New Testament, who can help but respond to Jesus in the Gospel of John, Chapter

10, as He declares Himself to be the door, the gate, the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd? He also says, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (John 10:14-15a). "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). The intimacy of this relationship is found in the prayer life.

The Easter question: Who will roll away the stone? The stone of hardness of heart, the stone of obstacles, the stone of impossibility, the stone of a confused mind, the stone of self will? Our Father is the One who rolls away the stone, opens the highway of communication, and sets us to praying. God is the stone remover, and prayer is His method.

Mary's prayer: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38a, KJV). When we become people who pray, God will work to place this same yielded spirit in our hearts.

In Acts 12 we find a hostile world attacking the Church, a desperate Church praying without ceasing and a prayer-answering God who rules and overrules. The record says that many were added to the Church daily. Revival and awakening took place! Clearly the weapon of prayer brought victory because God listens to the desperate prayers of His children. Our best position is knowing that we are helpless without Him.

When the windows of our prayer life are open to our Father, the doors of our lives become open to those around us in this world that they might come inside and meet Him for the first time, get to know Him better, or find consolation in Him during a time of trouble. When we pray, we become shelters from the storms of life for others because Christ is residing in our human spirit. He longs to have people know Him. When there is no prayer life for the believer, nothing can be done eternally for others. We have only what can be found in human goodness to offer, which are temporary deeds. When God wants to reveal Himself through us, He draws us into a prayer relationship out of which He draws others through us to Him. This is eternal work. We become those who “stand in the gap” to His delight. The picture of Christ knocking at the door is a favorite of many because we recognize in the words of God that the door is the heart of our life. His promise is that if we open the door and invite Him in, He will fellowship with us. Without prayer the door remains closed, and we are without His presence and fellowship. This is an awesome loss—there is none greater.

From the moment I bowed before the Father, I had within me a deep desire to read the Bible. I began this with hope and prayer that God would give me understanding day by day and in all kinds of circumstances. When I continued to pray, He opened Scripture to me that addressed my needs. Over the years certain Scriptures were planted firmly in my heart and mind, and the Holy Spirit now often brings them to the surface when I need to know He is

present and He is speaking to me. Probably some of these same Scriptures He uses in your lives and are your favorites also.

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. (Daniel 9:18b)

The only right plea for answered prayer? His mercy endures forever!

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God; for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. (Psalm 5:2-3, KJV)

The right beginning for every morning of life! The entire human being, called self, is entire also in its fall into the bondage of sin; no part of it escapes. Because of this, the self-life is not only displeasing to God; it is His enemy. It usurps His place. When self reigns, I am at war with God, my Creator. The beginning of a transformed life takes place when self is hung on the Cross of Christ. It is in this way He authorizes that I am becoming a fully new creature in Christ Jesus, one who is free. There is no room for this self-life in our prayer lives, and God will never respond favorably to it.

Faith, love, and hope are heart results of obedience. So also are spiritual power and fruit. This is the life that pleases God and can be found only in the abiding life in Christ Jesus. Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4).

The whole world lieth in wickedness. (I John 5:19, KJV)

To be removed from the lap of the evil one and placed in a new pathway to walk with Christ is a new beginning in life. Our Father can do this as we pray.

Darkness is the time to pray:

- Darkness of sin and unbelief
- Darkness of being lost
- Darkness of confusion and uncertainty
- Darkness of sorrow and despair
- Darkness of circumstances
- Darkness of disappointment
- Darkness of loneliness and isolation

Become quiet, motionless, alert, and listen. He is light, and in Him is no darkness.

Home is God Himself. The Bible says it is in Him we live and move and have our being. We are always lonely and empty until we move Home and find our life in God. Jesus spoke of it as "the abiding life." This deeper life is staying firm and fixed, at home with God. It is not possible apart from a prayer life.

Someone once said that Easter each year is like the call of the trumpet announcing the news of an awesome victory, the solution of a major perplexity, and the assurance of a great triumph.

True worship cannot begin until Jesus Christ takes His throne in the worship center of my life's sanctuary. It is impossible without prayer.

Guilt and sorrow travel together, and even forgiven sins at times come to mind, producing the guilt of having committed loathsome and terrible sins against One so loving and kind who has forgiven and restored. Repentance and sorrow are experienced together in our initial encounter with Christ and our new birth as well as during the walk with Savior and Shepherd, our best Friend. We must learn to overcome the accusation of our enemy. Prayer is indispensable.

It was David who cried out at the Father's throne in Psalm 51, and we understand his tears, sorrow upon sorrow, when we have known His mercy. And was it not David who prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth" in Psalm 25? Like David, we also know the guilt of sin and sorrow. This is not the sorrow of morbidity nor depression but the sorrow of a repentant heart. There is sorrow in memory of those things we left undone that should have been done or in doing things that should not have been done. It is a healthy sorrow because it is a humbling factor in our journey with Him. When we come to Christ to know God,

it is always grace. Sometimes after that we are tempted to believe that in ourselves we can become powerful victors and safe. But all our walk with Him is grace, grace that is greater than all our sins, grace that keeps. In our sorrows we cry to our Maker and dearest Friend, so sorrow is part of His grace in that we see ourselves as we are and God as He is. Our God Himself initiates sorrow for His children along with gladness in His forgiveness, mercy, and love for a lifetime. This entire process has everything to do with communion with God, our prayers.

We are to walk through life with empty hands: in my hands no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling. I can bring nothing for acceptance except empty hands and a hungry heart. He is the Giver and His giving is all grace. We learn this well in our prayer closets.

With empty hands I am able to clasp His hand
as my Shepherd.

With empty hands I can receive from Him
what is to be given others in need.

He says: Open your hands and I will fill them.

With empty hands I can lift another
and bring him to the One whose hands
are nail scarred from the Cross.

Like Mary of old, with empty hands I can bow
to wash His feet with my tears of
adoration and worship. This is the
adoration of a kneeling Christian.

Genuine faith produces genuine character, and our life becomes increasingly like the One in whom our faith is planted. Roots of His person produce His fruit (character) in and through us. Because He is truth, all falsity is gone with all pretense, and we bow humbly before Him.

The greatest thing taking place in the world today is not the fight for democracy and freedom throughout the world, not the upgrading of education, not the development of new and better medicines and health care management, not the further advance of technology, not treaties or negotiations to make a better or safer world. Though all these have their place as concerned people try to make life on this planet better, the greatest thing is the ongoing establishment of the Kingdom of God. While only the King can usher it in and reign as King, He works through us, His followers. He completes His suffering through us as His ambassadors and disciples, according to Colossians 1:24. It involves an unfinished task. His work involves several things:

1. He makes us like Him.
2. He sends us on His errands of mercy and truth.
3. He takes captive the enemy's strongholds.
4. He reminds us of His calling and suffering for His sake.
5. He draws us close in prayer so we will see His power.

And there will come a day when He will say again, "It is finished," and He will come this time as King! Perhaps we will be in our prayer closets when He comes!

Give me a listening heart, O God, that I would not miss even a whisper from Your heart to mine. Amen.

God holds the nations in His heart and mind for good purposes, for they hold the world of people who belong to Him by right of creation.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us—so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him. (Psalm 67)

I appreciate the Scripture-based choruses and worship songs being introduced to the singing Church when sung from our hearts in worship to Him, but I dearly prize the old hymns that invoke deep thoughts of Him whom I love. One of these goes like this:

There is a place of quiet rest...near to the
heart of God,
A place where sin cannot molest, near to the
heart of God.
Oh, Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the
Throne above,
Hold us, who wait before You, near to the
heart of God.

–Cleland B. McAfee (1866-1944)

The Bible has much to say about quietness and stillness as our Father says to us, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10a). “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still” (Psalm 4:4, KJV).

One morning I researched the words “still” and “quiet.” God knows that in our noisy world we hear many voices and loud, never-ending sounds. There are biblical examples of God speaking loudly, but few. He seems to speak in a still, small voice, which I can hear only in my stillness.

The Bible says that when we walk with the Shepherd, He leads us beside the “still waters.” It says that “in quietness and confidence is our strength.” He speaks peace when billows roll. There were times when Jesus “did not answer a word” (Matthew 15:23), and there are times in the Gospels when Jesus “grew quiet,” times He quieted even

the wind. I have come to feel in my own life there is need for "the holy hush of heaven."

There is a power in quietness and stillness. There is the stillness of a bridled tongue, a conquered spirit. There is the rest of calm in a quiet heart and the possibility of hearing the song of Heaven's hosts and the still, small voice of our Lord Jesus. O, Lord Jesus, give me a quiet heart and spirit. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness" (Jeremiah 31:3b).

We are drawn and come to Him not by our intelligence, not by our human reasoning, not by our appreciation of the beauty of nature, not by recognition of His power, not by receipt of blessings, not even by seeing truth. So why do we come? We are drawn by the One who loves us for no reason, except He is love. He is like a magnetic pull to us. The pull cannot be ignored, and we know He is God. Sometimes that drawing comes in the midst of illness or fear, a crisis of some kind, or something so powerful or beautiful, our mind thinks of Him, and He draws in this awakening moment. When we feel cold hearts or disinterest in His Word, when we are in the throes of temptation, our prayer must be: "Draw me, we will run after thee" (Song of Solomon 1:4, KJV).

It is an early April morning, and my visual world is completely engulfed in fog—thick, dense fog—and I can only identify objects within a few yards. But the fog takes

on a strange glow with color. I can see that behind it, the sun is present and in a matter of time, it will burn off the fog that leaves a rather eerie and gray feeling. In the thoughts of my heart, I realize that life is often like this. We are unable to see things clearly, feel concern about which way to go and experience feelings of fear and insecurity. But through this morning's fog God shows me a wonderful truth. There comes a glow of light. It is the presence of our Father who will burn through this circumstance of time and shine His love powerfully and thoroughly. Sight will become the knowledge once again of His care and mercy and love for me. The fog has moved away. He is here! What grace as He meets with us.

It is easier to sing than to sacrifice. It is easier to say words than to deny myself, take up the Cross and follow Christ. It is easier to raise hands and speak loudly of worship than to surrender daily in death to self. May God move in me.

We can take on the culture of Christ and the atmosphere of Christianity without taking in Christ Himself, the person of Christ. Nothing is known of an intimacy with Christ Himself apart from prayer.

The Holy War began in Heaven when Lucifer warred against his Creator. It continues on Earth where Lucifer still wars against His Creator. We are often only spectators. But there are times we are called to engagement in the battle. The wonderful truth about this

spiritual warfare is that the Creator always wins, and we are on the winner's side! It is found in our prayer closets.

Suffering was in the pathway of salvation for Jesus. His suffering first opened the door, and He tells us there will be suffering ahead for us, not His which was unique as the Lamb of God, but with Him for the sake of the Gospel in a violent world that will hate us because it hated Him. We are targeted by Satan. His goal is to make us unfaithful to Jesus. If we stand up for Jesus, someone will despise, ridicule, and persecute; sometimes the persecution is from those who are close to us.

Suffering in self-denial discovers that self dies slowly and painfully. When we love as Jesus loved, there is always pain connected with it. He gives us His power to do this when we pray.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are not offended in Me" (Matthew 11:6). The characteristics of being offended in Christ are complaints and feelings of injustice, jealousy, and dislike of others around me who seem to be blessed. The only way to walk with Christ without offense is learning to watch and pray.

Affliction does not cause us to glorify God. Our circumstances are not the cause of spiritual growth and progress. Nothing or no one can cause us to be fruitful other than God Himself. God uses afflictions and circumstances to humble us and to enable us to see and

acknowledge our need of Him, our true state of weakness and dependence, and as we submit to Him, He creates fruit and progress. This is what Scripture calls fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. "From me is thy fruit found" (Hosea 14:8b, KJV). "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5b).

A worldly spirit is not to be looked upon as a single sin. It is much more than that. It is death versus life. It is apostasy, and in it we cannot know or understand the things of God. We attempt to live a mixed life in which Christ is not the priority, and we live as though we belong to the world. Only in crises and needs do we come to our Father. If we are born again and live life as His followers, our hearts are fixed on Christ, and our minds hold His thoughts, motives, and actions. We are fixed on Christ, not mixed in the world's trappings. Otherwise, we may say all the right words, but the power of God is missing. The power of God has everything to do with our prayer life.

Learning the ways of God takes a lifetime, of course, and the final completion will take place in His presence when we go Home to live with Him forever. But in the meantime, His Holy Spirit wants to teach us what we need to know to make a difference in this life, to exalt and glorify Jesus Christ and to encourage others who are also walking along in the journey. There are reasons we do not actually learn even though we have seen truth about this. While He wants to, He cannot teach us if we are not teachable. Sadly, Christians can go through the whole of

life on Earth, living contrary to faith, exhausting hope not based on the One who is hope, standing at the candy bowl but never tasting the sweetness inside it. We even learn the language used in the ways of God but not the ways of God, and when we near the end of this life, we have regret and remorse instead of joy and peace. We have not received what He offers. When we recognize our resistance to Jesus, we must cry out in the prayer closet.

Our whole universe teems with mystery. We do not know the secret, but we know the One who does. Prayer gives security in Him when we doubt.

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. (II Chronicles 16:9a)

Full commitment can never be without a prayer life. It is simply not possible.

Rejoice always; pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (I Thessalonians 5:16-18)

This is simple but impossible apart from Christ who is all power while we are all weakness.

One of the people I am eager to meet in Heaven is Andrew Murray, who wrote the first Christian book I ever

read. I shared this in the opening of this chapter. Years ago I read this short paragraph and have never forgotten it:

We have thought of our work in preaching or visiting as our real duty, and of prayer as a subordinate means to do this work successfully. Would not the whole position be changed if we regarded the ministry of intercession as the chief thing—getting the blessing and power of God for the souls entrusted to us? Then our work would take its right place and become the subordinate one of really dispensing blessing which we had received from God. It was when the friend at midnight, in answer to his prayer, had received from another as much as he needed that he could supply his hungry friend.

—Andrew Murray (1828-1917)

I will bless thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing. (Genesis 12:2b, KJV)

We need to personally seek the will of God and should never make a move until we are sure of the Father's will in any circumstance. All that is spelled out in His Word, His general precepts and His teaching, is always His will. However, we need to personally seek individual guidance

through prayer and His Word as He communicates it to our hearts and minds. He is our personal Father, and He promises to guide our steps. Always give time until absolutely sure. Let Him move away the doubts and fears as you pray and quietly take in His Word. In the waiting period, write a record of your story as it moves from the beginning to the present. This will be good to have in the future to see how God worked and to clarify your own thoughts and how you see things.

We always submit to any authority in our lives unless or until this enters into betraying our conscience and sense of His ownership and authority. When we feel a request or command does this, it needs to be addressed, and we need to obey God and not people. In this situation as in all situations, be careful before the Father to hear His voice and stand unaffected by any accusation or verbal comments.

When speaking in a hostile atmosphere, "let your conversation be always full of grace" (Colossians 4:6) is our biblical injunction. We ask the Father to hold our emotions in check. Decisions and judgments may not be right when made emotionally. While we are emotional humans, we can know that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7, KJV).

In present relationships, be respectful, polite, courteous, full of grace and discerning, but we must never allow

ourselves to be manipulated and controlled personally while submitting to authority. There is a dividing line, and God will reveal it. Withdraw from being affected by anything outside of God and His Word during this time since knowing Him and His will does not depend on others. God is able to make Himself known to you and lead you in His pathway. He is not dependent on your friends, family, or circle of people to guide you though they may be helpful and useful. God is God, and you are His. Simply do as He says: Watch and pray. Spend much time with Him in the prayer closet. Listen with heart and mind until you know what He is directing you to think, say, do, etc. Make no move until you know you have His mind.

As time passes, He will guide you into all truth. He will show you the way. He will whisper His presence in your human spirit. You will come through this experience, and all others in life, whether He guides you to go or stay, knowing Him in ways never known before. Prayer is an absolute. The following are two of my favorite verses:

But those who wait for the LORD [who expect, look for and hope in Him] shall change and renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up [close to God] as eagles [mount up to the sun]; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired. (Isaiah 40:31, AMPCE)

For from of old no one has heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who works and shows Himself active on behalf of him who [earnestly] waits for Him. (Isaiah 64:4, AMPCE)

To have the mind of Christ, which is the gift of God to us, takes time and prayer. Right asking comes from a right relationship with the Father. Only right asking will obtain for us His promises. My right attitude toward the Father begins the day I bow my knee, and He is satisfied. Pride and arrogance are my natural ways in life, and it is the Father who brings me to brokenness and humility, producing right asking. God owes me nothing. I have nothing to bring to the table, clearly the reason my prayer life with Him is all grace. Even what faith I have is a gift from Him. At His feet I cast myself.

The nearness of your presence makes my
day.

The nearness of your presence drives all
doubt and fear away,
Fills my soul with peace and gladness,
Keeps my heart and mind from madness,
Plants my feet in pathways sure
Gives me faith that shall endure,
When I pray.

–Anonymous

After I have committed to Him my life,
After I have given Him my heart,
I still must pray,
"Lord Jesus, come and conquer me."

–Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661)

Jesus said:
No one comes to the Father except through
me. (John 14:6)

No one can come to me unless the Father
who sent me draws them. (John 6:44a)

Everyone who has heard the Father and
learned from him comes to me. (John 6:45b)

What have we learned? That Christ is EVERYTHING!

He made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7). He had no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58). He came not to be ministered unto but to minister (Matthew 20:28). He set His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). This is the same One who meets us when we pray.

We come initially for forgiveness. We come incessantly for help. We come anytime He calls us to serve Him. We come when He says, "It is time to come Home."

We move from the country of revolt into the country of redeemed, from the minor music of sorrow and regret to the magnificent melody of joy and gladness, from the ugly course of rebellion to delight in His court of praise. But only in the pathway of obedience. Obedience to God is born in prayer.

Sometimes God's work in the world is like world news. Bad news makes headlines, but His good works are seldom reported. It is rare that we hear good news and never in headlines. It is easy to assume that God's Kingdom, God's work in this world, takes a back seat and is not great nor awesome but that evil abounds. But remember that God says that when sin abounds, grace much more abounds. In Matthew 6, good works are secret between God and His children. The enemy likes large headlines and works to have such, giving a negative dark spirit to society. But God most often works quietly in hearts and minds to do His will. Someone has said that no battle is won by noise or headlines. Battles are won in the kneeling position!

And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it. (Psalm 90:17, KJV)

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went

out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. (Mark 16:19-20)

They began with a prayer gathering.

It is the resurrected Christ who comes to indwell us. He works in us and through us with resurrected power. The first work He does is call us to prayer.

And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. (Luke 1:45, KJV)

Spiritual maturity is the acknowledgement of our weakness and need. In this state of grace there is an open line to God, whom we seek in an ongoing way, and as a result, we abide in Christ. Spiritually mature believers know their total dependence for everything is from Him, the One we love supremely, the One we see increasingly as Sovereign Lord.

Spiritual maturity is not knowing all the answers but knowing the One who is all wisdom. It is not in feeling spiritual but walking in the Spirit of God with fear and trembling. It is not confidence in ourselves, or in our prayers, but it is loving the experience of faith and trust in a faithful God. Spiritual maturity is resting with confidence in Christ in the midst of enemy activity, standing with

Christ in the midst of darkness, knowing we are being held in the arms of the One who never leaves us nor forsakes. It is growing more like Jesus every day in every way, delighting in Him and being His delight.

Spiritual maturity is knowing the shelter in the time of storm and running to such a hiding place. It is meeting the challenges of life, even with tears, sometimes afraid, learning the power and might of the One we worship because He is giving us more revelations of Himself. Spiritual maturity is not becoming strong, but it is coming to know who God is and His greatness and who we are in our dependence. We depend on Christ alone through the progressive work of His Holy Spirit. Always the deep personal thought and realization is "Father, I am yours."

Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. (Psalm 25:4, KJV)

He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. (Micah 4:2b)

Who is this "we"? Jesus and I together.

Blessed are all who fear the LORD; who walk in obedience to him. (Psalm 128:1)

His ways are everlasting. (Habakkuk 3:6b, KJV)

Scripture is filled with information concerning the ways of God, the ways of transgressors, the ways of those who come to Him for transformation to follow Him, and the ways of those who worship and serve Him. God has much to say about the ways of life. Perhaps this will cause us to realize that God wants His ways to become our ways. When we know a person's ways, we know the person. To walk in His ways means we have come to know Him and also to surrender our ways to His ways and to become changed people who bring the presence of God into a world that knows Him not. These are reasons to study and learn as we seek Him in prayer.

Where we set up our tents, there we will build our altars. Our tents determine our style of life, and our altars determine our relationship with God. Altars are places of prayer. Someone has asked, "Is our life fixed or mixed?" The answer is known in the prayer closet.

For 13 years after Abraham and Sarah took things into their own hands, God was silent. I have known that silence when God watched but left me on my own to learn His ways. Have you heard that silence?

The capacity to "catch the vision on the Heights" is acquired in a valley, the valley of vision, found in the prayer closet.

We change greatly as we walk with God, our Father. Conversion takes place when we are new believers,

described as “renewing our minds,” and we find ourselves having thoughts that are new to us, so new at times that we recognize we have been born again. Who can do this but our Creator?

But also, as we walk daily in close relationship with Him, we become increasingly changed in every facet of our beings. One noticeable change has to do with our relationship to the world around us. God opens our eyes, and we begin to think differently. The new thoughts He places and often cements in our minds change everything, and especially our prayer life.

The secret prayer chamber is a bloody battleground. Here violent and decisive battles are fought out. Here the life of souls for time and eternity is determined, in quietude and solitude, without another soul as spectator or listener.

–O. Hallesby (1879-1961), *Prayer*

If I were to write down all my thoughts in this chapter, the record would never end, so I stop here. But may I encourage you to keep pen and paper handy and when your Father talks to you, shares something or opens up a new thought, keep a record. Over time, you will see that Jesus is with you. The Father is making you over to be like Him. The yoke Jesus offers to us is none other than “the will of My Father,” and your prayer life will never be the

same. It will move away from the "me" circle into the circle of His world He that has never stopped loving and longing to save. He becomes our awesome prayer closet companion.

WATCH AND PRAY

Three of the Gospels record the injunction of Jesus to His disciples, "Watch and pray." Like other Scripture this is meant also for us. It is serious because it was spoken by our Lord but also because of its full message to us.

When we are not watching, we miss all kinds of things. Looking implies having our eyes open, casually seeing what is evident or what we almost can't miss just because it is obvious. Watching implies long-term looking and considering the fullness of what we are seeing. We talk about seeing what is below the surface, recognizing things that may remain hidden to others. Watching involves the mind and the heart, not just the eyes, and watching records information.

If we are not watching in the car, we are driving dangerously. In our lives, we can miss the evidences of sickness and disease. We allow ourselves to become involved in complex situations and consequences of life. Or, in a positive sense, we miss a sunset. We overlook a kindness or an act of love. Watching in a spiritual sense is

important, or Jesus would not have bothered to talk about it.

In two of the Gospel statements using this phrase “watch and pray” Jesus was speaking to the disciples He took with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane just before His arrest and crucifixion. While He left them on a bench, His heart in awesome sorrow and pain, He went a little space away from them to pray. It must surely have been a great heartache when He returned to them and found them sleeping. Because they knew Him well after three years of great times together, it is hard to understand that they would not have recognized His deep sorrow, so much so that they would have prayed for Him and what He was facing. They really had not grasped all He had shared with them. They really did not see it and did not feel it, so in their own personal tiredness, they slept. He said, “Could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:40-41, KJV). After His third time of prayer, we are told He returned and said to them, “Rise, let us be going; behold he is at hand that doth betray me” (Matthew 26:46, KJV).

In Luke, Jesus uses the same phrase, but it is part of His teaching in the synagogue. This was deep teaching about the condition of the world, about the bondages and captivities of the human race and the sorrows involved in it that His followers could easily become a part of. These burdens would weigh them down as anxieties in their

lives. And then He told them to always be on the watch, and pray, so they would escape this kind of entrapping and bondage and be able to stand before the Son of Man.

Again, these words of Jesus should grip us. Watch and pray. He did not simply say to watch nor did he simply say to pray, but He put the two words together. Let us hear it with heart and mind.

If we are not watching spiritually, we will not see pitfalls before we fall, dangers before their happenings, enemies before their arrival. If we are not watching, we will miss the signs Jesus told about: the world's demise, the wickedness of human hearts, depravity as it spreads. But as all these are seen, He instructs us to pray. Prayer will provide the strength and wisdom and ability to keep our hearts and minds pure in Christ because the Holy Spirit will be welcome in us to do what He does.

Spiritually speaking, if we are not watching, we will not "see God." In the midst of human dilemmas we will not see "His parting of the Red Sea." In the midst of life's battles, we will not see the Lord and "His horses ahead of us fighting for us." In the midst of huge obstacles, we will not see "mountains being removed," and we will miss "that personal direction and guidance of the Great Shepherd of the sheep." We will not see all of these acts our Father promises to do for His children because we are not watching. Seeing these things is coupled with praying. Praying is recognizing that our God is all-

powerful, all-knowing and loves us. Praying is saying to Him that our confidence is in Him. Our trust and hope are in Him. If we are not watching, we will be looking at the problems, which results in fear, anger, unbelief, and ultimate disobedience so that we will not stand before the Son of Man who backs us in the issues of life when our life belongs to Him. Our surrender to His will, the will of God, is the banner over our heart and mind.

Watching should always accompany our praying, so we will see God. We do not pray to an unfeeling, unloving, unfaithful, untruthful, unmerciful Monarch. The more we watch Him as Creator, as the sustainer of life and world who is at work in the affairs of all people and see the evidences of His grace and mercy to all generations, the more prayer will become a part of our personal world. We will be drawn continually to recognize the validity of His Word, the truth of what is written. We will watch more and pray more, just as He told us to do, watch and pray.

ONLY THROUGH PRAYER

Called not only to follow Christ, but to bring others with us...how will this happen? How will we lead others? How will others follow us? Only through prayer.

Called to understand and receive guidance from God...how will this happen? Only through prayer.

Called to bear the burdens of others, sometimes countless others...how can we do this? Only through prayer.

II Corinthians 5:9 says, "we make it our goal to please Him"...how will this happen? Only through prayer.

Called to bear fruit...how will this happen? Only through prayer.

Called to have a continual heart of mercy and compassion for everyone...how will this happen? Only through prayer.

Called to overcome the power of enemy...how will this happen? Only through prayer.

How will we manage to meet the demands of ministry our Lord has brought into our life? Only through prayer.

Called to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh...how can this be done? Only through prayer.

How will it be possible to have strength and energy when things appear too difficult to handle? Only through prayer.

Spending intimate time with the Father is the most important thing we will do from now until we are with Him.

PRAYER LISTS

Of course, you will receive missionary information perhaps from personal friends or from your church. Hold these for prayer purposes.

If you are in ministry yourself, you can pray for other organizations in ministry or people by name. If you are a pastor, what other pastors and churches are in your city? If you receive prayer letters from organizations or people, the letters will help you to pray for actual needs or circumstances. Keep them for the month, and then replace them with the next month's update.

If you have a career, you know people in your professional field. You also know major issues in your field, such as deceptions or injustices, relational problems, etc. You know key people who may not know Christ. You know weaknesses you deal with or did in the past. Your prayers are important.

What about your neighborhood, your neighbors? Make lists of those whose names you know or of addresses. One

of the ways you can share Christ is to say to a neighbor even in “accidental” meeting, “I have been wanting to tell you that I pray every morning, and I am praying for all my neighbors including you. If you ever have anything special you might like me to pray about, call me or knock at my door. Otherwise I will just keep praying for you.” I have never had prayer turned down.

If you are a student or a teacher, keep a copy of your classmates’/students’ names in your prayer material. Keep in mind that around you everywhere are people for whom no one has ever prayed. Our prayers can do what conversation will never do. There are Christians everywhere, but sometimes silence reigns, and they are not known to each other. Pray for people associated with shopping centers, car repair places, dry cleaners, government offices, airlines, trains and restaurants. Pray for sports teams, medical teams, government leaders in your city and state as well as national and international leaders. You will find it helpful to make written lists of people as your prayer life expands, and God calls you to do this.

Pray for our military men and women. Do research online about them. Did you know that in 2016-2017 the suicide rate was very high for military people? Pray for those leading military forces and for the different branches.

Then, of course, are our prayers for children who are without hope in our world without Christ. Many children today have no one who prays for them.

PRACTICAL PLANNING FOR THE PRAYER CLOSET

I hope you will not mind my sharing the personal story of how God led me in the development of my prayer life. While I would like to do this to be helpful if you feel you have not grown in this area or it is just not together for you, I feel somewhat reluctant to share this for fear it will be looked upon as a personal plan for your own life, apart from seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit to help you. I have often benefited from the experiences of others in the things of God but came to see that as a good parent, God treats His children as individuals with different temperaments, personalities, abilities, talents, gifts, understanding and levels of maturity. So, it is important to come before Him asking for His direction in this as in all areas of our spiritual lives. He has a personal plan for each of us and wants us to pray, so He will help us know the best plan personally.

When I was born again, as an adult, my life was filled with complications and consequences resulting from choices and actions pre-determined by living totally apart from

anything God had to say in my self-centered philosophy of life. My prayer life reflected this context. Dealing with personal problems and issues, my prayers were also self-centered and desperate, just like I was. I cried out to God daily on the basis of feelings, and I mostly prayed for me and my circle. My prayers included family members, of course, but were often prayed from the vantage point of how their lives affected mine. I am describing the selfish heart of one who “turned to her own way,” and while my sins were forgiven and God had truly taken up residence in me, there was great change ahead that only He could reveal and bring about. Frankly, at this point, I never knew I needed some of the changes God knew.

The very day I came to Christ at home in my bedroom I searched in our house, knowing somewhere there was a Bible. I found it and began reading it that day. God came to my rescue and became very personal to me, and every day made His Word real, personal, and practical. With the firm grip He had on me and my feeble hold on Him, I submitted to Him, built personal altars, and followed after Him, with many tears over the years as He made me into the new creature in Christ the Bible talks about. He is still working. All of this is to say that my prayer life began to change accordingly. I began to pray for others outside my personal world, recognizing God’s power and might in His love and the fulfilling of His Word for others. Slowly but seriously, God rearranged my prayer life.

Over years, God has worked through His Word and Spirit to cause me to see the awesome love and power of God, to hear His heart for people, to embrace what He embraces and to believe Him in everything, all of which has caused the circumference of my prayer life to grow.

However, the more I engaged with others who had needs, the more missionaries I came to know, the more ministry my life moved into, the more concern I had for the lost, and for the found who needed to grow, the more God put into my heart as prayer requests, the more difficult it became to pray for all these things. Daily, I would do the best I could, remembering and naming, but after each prayer session, I would feel guilty over those for whom I did not pray, those I had forgotten, especially those to whom I had committed to pray in verbal comfort to them. It seemed as though there was never enough time to cover all things and people.

So, many years ago it came into my mind that my prayer closet needed to be organized just like any other closet or file. So, I went to an office supply store and purchased a package of envelope file jackets. On the top, right hand corner of each one, I wrote one of six days of the week.

I did not record for Sunday but determined that Sunday mornings I would pray for God's Church throughout the whole world, for pastors and teachers, for church leaders, and for the day of worship, for the church I was part of, and for those around the world. Sunday would be a day of

worship and praise in my heart for Him, and I would treat this day as a day to worship God, praying only for other people who had emergency needs. In recent years, God has spoken to me about Sunday being His day entirely, so I evaluate the possibilities of activity for Sunday and, if possible, use the day entirely for Him.

But the other six days are as follows:

Monday: the day of prayer for family members, problems, issues, and special needs I know about. If there are special things coming up for them or physical and material needs, I keep a written list so as not to forget. I pray for the babies, children, teens and about life experiences including dating, engagements, weddings, long-term illnesses, death, loss to families, for all that is a part of our human experience. I sometimes keep photos in the notebook or notes, and I pray for future generations.

Tuesday: the day of prayer for missionaries and spiritual leaders. I keep monthly prayer letters from missionaries and as I read them upon receipt, I circle prayer matters they have included along with personal notes in which they mention specific people, needs, etc. It is missions prayer day. I keep their letters until a new one arrives.

Wednesday: the day of prayer for organizations. Again, I keep letters and circle prayer requests in the letters each time, and these are usually replaced with new ones each month. On Wednesdays, I pray individually for each of these and all the requests they mention.

Thursday: the day of prayer for nations and governments. Maps are very helpful for my prayer life in this, and I keep track of nations in trouble and conflict making public news. If I know of special mission outreaches in a nation, I keep track of that for praying purposes. I also pray for the United Nations and Christians involved in ministering to heads of governments and nations. This is a good day to pray for our military people and our own government in this capacity.

Friday: the day of prayer for the persecuted Church around the world. I pray through the Christian publications and also all other emails, mail and circular information regarding the persecuted Church. I pray for people involved in ministry to them.

Saturday: the day of prayer for friends and acquaintances and those who contact me with special needs along the way. I pray for schools, and people involved in special outreaches, for new requests received throughout the week needing intercessory prayers. I pray for those who have physical and emotional needs brought to my attention. And this is a special morning to pray for children and for neighbors, for my own ministries and the people involved. It is a morning for prayer for all kinds of intercessions.

I keep a tablet and pen near the phone so I can write down people's names and prayer needs along the way. That

same tablet stays close when I do email, so that as I record requests and needs, they will not be forgotten.

In this tablet I also write special Scriptures or thoughts I want to send to individuals who may need encouragement and re-focusing on Christ. These are written for the sake of remembering to send them.

Of course every morning I pray for the personal encounters I will have that day. Our lives are all different and lived in different places, but wherever you live and move and have your being, there are people. God leads me to pray for such people. Sometimes I have the thought that perhaps this person or that one has never had anyone praying for them. When walking, we can pray for certain buildings, housing, businesses and people on buses and subways; God would keep all our minds prayerful in our movements. He wants to bestow His blessings on our world. He wants to move light into darkness, He wants people to have opportunity to know Him, and often it is our prayers that open that door, and it is through us that He makes Himself known. This is because of prayer.

In other words, setting ourselves up in an organized way with our prayer material will cause us to cover the full spectrum of what has been brought to our attention, and as we present these to our Father, none will be forgotten. We become His prayer warriors in a world held tightly by God's enemy and ours.

As I said earlier, this is not necessarily the way you need to arrange your prayer materials, but it is how God led me to do this for reasons given along the way. I am sure He will help you to set yourself up, also enlarging your circles of prayer. He leads us until we are embracing the world He created, the people He loves, the leaders in whose hands He has placed awesome responsibility. He will be with you in that prayer closet, and He will help you.

PRAYING CHILDREN

I would love to share with you the burden of my heart that all children should learn to know who God is and pray to Him. This desire awakened for me when I was still in a New York City ministry, and God opened doors for my involvement in a prayer movement for children. Three years later when I moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, I brought this with me in my heart. While in New York, God opened doors for me to work with others with the same calling, and it was a privilege to be invited to share with pastors gathered for conferences and other meetings. Several were open to initiating this in their churches, and one such pastor after a few short months told me what a difference it made in his church to have the children very involved in their prayer functions. He expressed his feeling that God had brought great blessing because of it. This will always happen because, according to Scripture, God wants children around Him in prayer and praise. The following is the reprint of a pamphlet I wrote regarding this subject. I repeat it here for you.

Jesus loves the little children,

All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
they are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children
Of the world.

–C. Herbert Woolstein (1856-1927) &
George F. Root (1820-1895)

We surely agree that our world is a difficult world for children. Each new generation faces more and more complex circumstances than ever before. For most children in past years, there were many great safety boundaries and security in parental care. Guarding the little ones was something we've taken for granted. We know there have always been children with need because of economics and unusual situations, but most children, at least in the USA, could depend upon certain things, and they did. It gave them a sense of their own value and peace. But many children today feel they can count on nothing stabilizing, and they experience severe basic losses. Consequently, they feel insecure because they have no "hiding place."

To begin with, if you were born after 1972, consider yourself a "Survivor of the Abortion Holocaust." One third of your generation has been killed by abortion in the USA. So the mother's womb in today's world is no "hiding place."

Some researchers say that many delinquent children are moved into that classification by delinquent parents because some delinquency is a result of a child's anger over knowing that he's a child and feeling that there should be someone looking out for him. But, he can find no person who gives him comfort and safety within boundaries and guidelines. Sometimes there is no one who will even give him their time. He can find no "hiding place."

In New York City, where I served in ministry for forty years, over 60% of children have been exposed to violence in their daily lives and about 6% of these children have been sexually victimized. One in ten children in NYC have seen one family member assault another, which plants fear and anger.

To add to these problems, children are often told there is no God. One little girl I knew from our neighborhood was told, "We are all gods. Don't worry about it."

All over our world today there are many children of sorrow, sorrows of significant losses and broken hearts. Do you know that in the United States one out of every 50 children experiences homelessness? This year's statistics in the city of New York indicate that there are 16,000 homeless children, not to mention those who are latchkey kids or those who have been and are sexually and physically abused. These have no "hiding place."

Is there concern? Yes, the answer is yes. Great concern by psychologists, teachers, doctors, and ordinary people living ordinary lives in ordinary places who see these things and feel for the children of the world but don't know what to do. And there are good parents, stable and loving, and they sometimes look around at the other children caught in the cracks of our lost and needy society. There are religious leaders and strategists and well-intentioned people who are truly concerned for the children. But actually, these children are the by-product of a society that is lost, and their condition and circumstances are the symptoms of our brokenness.

We live in the same world and are exposed to its fallout even as adults. However, somewhere along the way, if we have come to know our Creator/Father, we face the issues of our troubled society, but with our hand in His, our hearts and minds planted in the loving security of His promises. His peace is ours and we are concerned for others.

Should this not also be true for the children?

Many of us as Christian parents pray for our children. We pray for them and with them, and those of us who have established what once was called "the family altar" teach our children to pray around our circles, etc. However, we place our hope for our children in our prayers, the prayers of grandparents, Sunday school teachers and fellow church friends, thinking that our children are too young to learn real prayer and too young to have a significant

prayer life. So instead we set about to entertain them and keep them happy so they “will follow the Lord” when they become adults.

We know that Jesus said, “Let the children come to Me,” (Luke 18:16), and as His disciples, we should remove all hindrances that might keep children from coming to Him. As we study the Bible, those hindrances are clear, and we feel committed to work at this, but we may still not see the value of the prayer life of a child.

There is a movement taking place in many other countries and in some places in the United States. God appears to be ushering in an awesome movement of prayer, the prayers of children. Children of all ages are praying. Some of the very young ones are crying out to God as their Father. Some of these children are fatherless and draw to Him as their Father. Some find their hope and security in the Father and over time become little ones bearing the burdens of their families and personal worlds. Some children are becoming major intercessors in our world.

But it is not only for today that we must train our children to pray but also for that which is to come. When we read Scripture regarding the “end of the age,” it is critical that every child knows how to speak directly to our Father. As we read the Word of God concerning their tomorrows, life will become even more difficult for the little ones of our world. They need to know how to pray and become praying children.

Children shouting in the temple courts,
"Hosanna to the Son of David". . . (Matthew
21:15b)

Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause
people to stumble are bound to come, but
woe to anyone through whom they come. It
were better for them to be thrown into the
sea with a millstone tied around their neck
than to cause one of these little ones to
stumble." (Luke 17:1-2)

All your children will be taught by the LORD,
and great will be their peace. (Isaiah 54:13)

Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against
your enemies, to silence the foe and the
avenger. (Psalm 8:2)

If you work with children as a Sunday school teacher, a
worker in Child Evangelism or Christian clubs, if you are a
parent, grandparent or relative or if you have a heart for
children to know God and be personally in touch with Him
and would see the need and possibility of teaching
children to pray, please ask our Father to show you what
to do about the children in your circle of life. God will
guide you. And as you do this, pray for the children of our
world. I am including a prayer sheet for children.
Remember these will come behind you into an even more

complicated world than you and I are now a part of. They need to know who God is and learn to pray.

PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

1. Children in the ISIS training groups
2. Children of refugees
3. Children where war is raging
4. Children of prison inmates around the world
5. Children forsaken by their biological fathers or mothers or both
6. Children of broken homes
7. Children who experience various kinds of abuse
8. Children of poor and uneducated families in need
9. Children of neglectful parents
10. Children of drug houses

11. Children of parents with addictions to drugs/
alcohol
12. Children living on the streets, some searching for
food to eat at city dump sights.
13. Children in orphanages and foster care
14. Children never told about God and His love for
them
15. Children born into diverse world religions
16. Children who are churched, from families who pray

PRAYER COVENANTS

In October 2014 I was introduced to the 40-Day Prayer Covenant group, people whose sole objective is to help Christians learn how and commit to praying for each other. The more I researched and learned about them, the greater became my appreciation. I later discovered that they were also developing a prayer ministry for children, which is being taken to many nations around the world. Teaching children to pray is one of the passions of my own heart, and I began using this card to do it. (If you want to know more and help groups with covenant praying for each other, you can find them online.)

I loved the concept of prayer covenants between people, but this is because I love the prayer itself. I began using it when I found it and still do so daily. This is a prayer of authenticity and covers our spiritual need. Even when I consider the very first petition, many times I have been moved to tears because I know that it was and is all His grace that worked in my heart and mind. It was His grace that caused me to recognize Him as Savior and Lord. It was His grace that brought me to repentance, bowing

before Him. It was His grace that showed me that when Jesus was born, Heaven proclaimed Him as King. And He is still King. As you pray through these clear petitions, you are speaking to the King. He is King forever!

These ten petitions also speak the longings of a human heart wanting to know Jesus Christ in the fullest possible way and to share Him with others. Let these be your longings. Age is not a factor. The man whom God used for this prayer and ministry is 85-years-old, the same age as I.

Sometimes I have wondered what those who have gone before us are doing in Heaven. What are they doing now since the Bible says that those "away from the body" are "at home with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8)? What are they doing with the Lord? I often wonder if they could be praying with the Lord Jesus who is our advocate with God the Father. If they pray with Him, it would be with awesome praise as they would know Him personally in His Prayer Sanctuary. Of course, I am only wondering.

But there is no wonder about prayer while we are on this earth since God's Word so plainly challenges us and promises us about prayer. It is usual when we first learn to pray to pray mostly about ourselves, bringing requests to Him about family, friends, and our own circles. However, as we grow in our understanding of God's ways and listen to His guidance for us, we come to know that He wants us to become world intercessors because this is His world.

Jesus died for the redemption of every person on the planet. Prayer often involves struggling with the problems created by fallen human beings who have made messes that only God can possibly handle. He is involved. This is personal and national and international in scope. He tells us to enlarge our tents. He wants us to learn to pray for the advancement of His Kingdom, for world leaders, nations and governments.

As we grow older, our prayer lives should grow larger. God Himself will do this because of His love for His created world and beings. He is concerned for nations and governments, for world leaders and spiritual leaders. He is concerned for the children of our world and their plight. He knows all about the dissolution of families and the heartbreak of husbands, wives, and children. When we sense His longing for growth in our prayer lives and say yes to Him, we will be led by God's Spirit.

Perhaps this card, a copy of which I am sharing with you could inspire new prayer requests and motivation in your personal prayer closet. Consider it.

40 DAY PRAYER

COVENANT

FOLLOWING JESUS TOGETHER

GRACE Dear Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

LOVE By your grace make knowing, loving and obeying you my highest priority.

COMPASSION Empower me to love others the way you love me.

REPENTANCE Wash me clean from every sin.

WORSHIP Enable me to praise you, O Lord, with all my heart.

COMMITMENT Jesus, be Lord of my life today in new ways, and change me any way you want!

DEPENDENCE Fill me with your Holy Spirit.

INFLUENCE Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

DISCIPLESHIP Use me today for your glory, and to invite others to follow Jesus Christ as Lord.

AUTHORITY Gracious Father, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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40 DAY PRAYER

COVENANT

For Kids!

FOLLOWING JESUS TOGETHER

GRACE Dear heavenly Father, thank you for loving me and making me one of your children.

LOVE Help me love and obey you.

COMPASSION Help me love others the way you love me.

REPENTANCE I am sorry for my sins. Wash me clean.

WORSHIP I will praise you with all my heart!

COMMITMENT Jesus, I want to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

DEPENDENCE Fill me with your Holy Spirit.

INFLUENCE Make me an instrument of your grace, truth and justice.

DISCIPLESHIP Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

AUTHORITY In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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THE PRAYER CLOSET

The Prayer Closet is a holy place because God is holy. It is through Christ Jesus alone that we can know God and through Christ Jesus we receive the blessings God offers us. Christ Jesus is our great High Priest and through Him our prayers are accepted in the Father's heart. "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (II Corinthians 1:20a). As we bow in the presence of our God, sharing with Him what He Himself lays on our heart to share, our Father is open to us. Could we possibly ask for more than this?

Jesus Christ presides over the Prayer Closet as Mediator between our Father and us. He is present as we bow before His throne of government and authority for the whole world. As we walk with Jesus, it is the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of prayer, who calls us to pray and teaches us how to pray. He enlarges our personal world so that we see our Father's world and enter into the intercessions of our Lord. Awesome activity throughout this world moves out from the Prayer Closet because He is God.

Sometimes we enter this Holy Place with tears of earthly sorrow and suffering; sometimes with shame we bring our doubts and fears; it is always His call to our hearts that causes us to join Him in intercession for His Kingdom building, for governments and rulers of this world and its broken, wounded people. It is not only a holy place, but it is a place where the resurrected power of Christ comes from His altar of sacrifice for His lost creation. What happens in that prayer closet is world changing when His people pray.

“Father, thank you for clothing us in the righteousness of your Son, Jesus Christ, so we are properly dressed for this holy place. We pray with the Psalmist, ‘Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me’ (Psalm 51:10). Keep us fit, watching and waiting, for our assignment in your Prayer Closet. Amen.”

THE LAST PRAYER OF THE BIBLE

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. (Revelation 22:20-21)

Lois Ewald came to Christ in her late 20s. She and her husband, John, raised five children. Within a year after her conversion, she began teaching Bible studies, and God gave many opportunities to share her faith. She and John moved to New York City in the mid-1970s to serve Christ together, directing a ministry called Hephzibah House. John went to Heaven in 2004, and Lois served with this ministry for 40 years. She now lives in Indianapolis, Indiana, and directs the Global Springs Ministries, Inc. Lois has had many awesome privileges in serving Christ such as ministry to international students, airlines personnel, and prisoners as well as corporate Bible studies, prayer gatherings, the children's prayer movement, etc. She has spoken for groups of all kinds, sharing Christ.

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