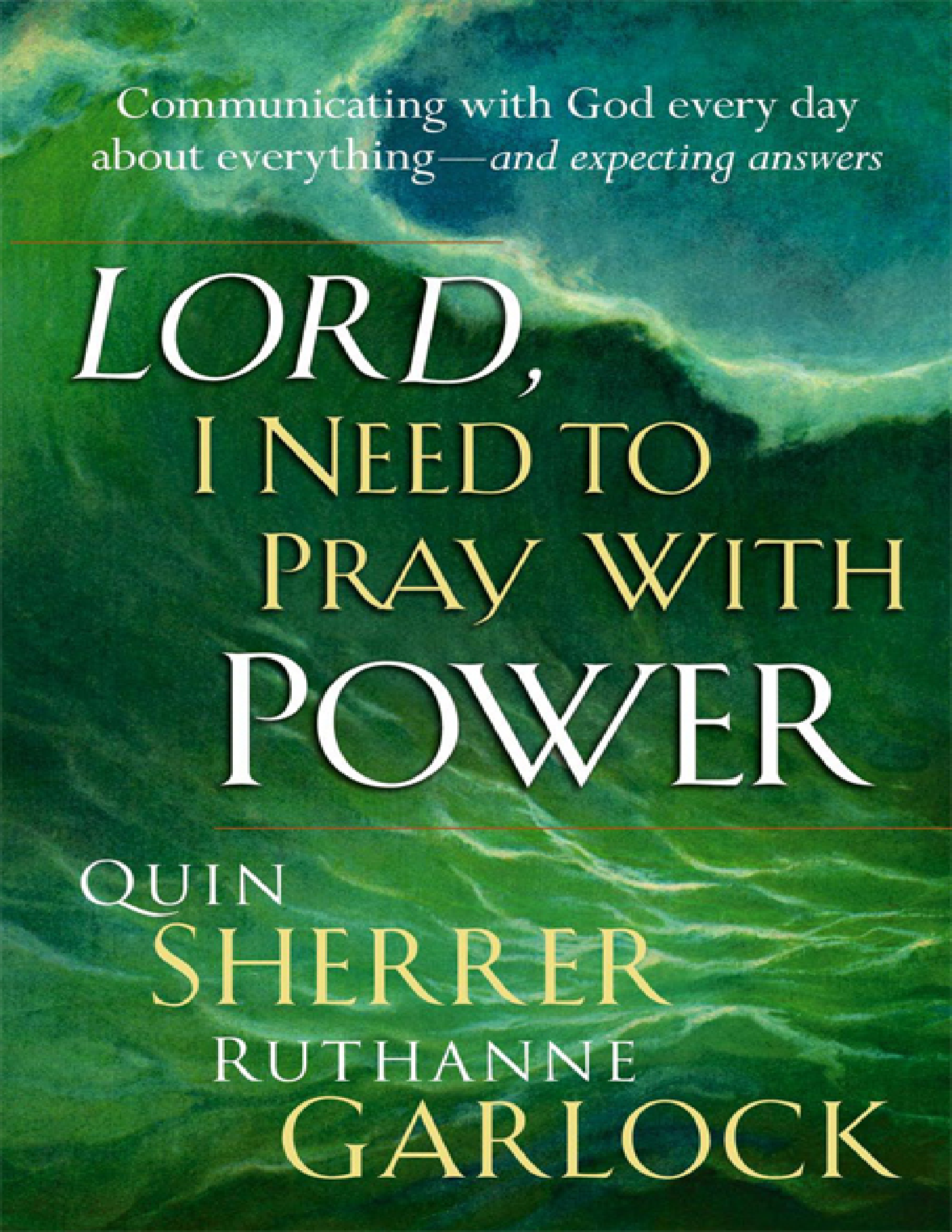




Communicating with God every day
about everything—*and expecting answers*

LORD,
I NEED TO
PRAY WITH
POWER

QUIN
SHERRER
RUTHANNE
GARLOCK

This book documents that where prayer is, God is, and that where God is, His power is! These two experienced intercessors and gifted writers present a rich tapestry of personal testimonies, principles for effective prayer, and promises from the Word of God. One becomes empowered while reading it!

—GARY P. BERGEL
President, Intercessors for America

Whether you are just embarking on your personal journey of prayer and need some help getting started or are a seasoned prayer warrior looking for a fresh injection of power into your prayer life, this book is for you. By sharing their experiences in prayer, sound scriptural teaching, and contemporary examples, Quin and Ruthanne have once again produced a volume that will strengthen the body of Christ in this most critical area.

—JANE HANSEN
President/CEO, Aglow International

For more than twenty years, Quin and Ruthanne's books have inspired believers to press deeper into prayer and spiritual warfare. My friends have done it again! This book will encourage you to pray with the power of the Holy Spirit and expect to see results.

—DUTCH SHEETS
Best-selling author, *Intercessory Prayer*
Pastor, Freedom Church

Help from any quarter is great news for those of us still learning to pray. Quin Sherrer and Ruthanne Garlock turned it out—a pretty practical course to steer ourselves to the kind of power prayers that break bondages and set prisoners free.

—MARK RUTLAND, PHD
President, Southeastern University

Filled with inspiring testimonies and practical guidelines, *Lord, I Need to Pray With Power* will boost your faith to stand in prayer for your own situation, no matter how impossible it seems. Quin and Ruthanne are seasoned intercessors who have been my friends and prayer partners for more than twenty years. I know their book will bless you.

—ELIZABETH ALVES
Author, *Becoming a Mighty Warrior*

Take one powerful subject, add two amazing authors, and you'll understand why endorsing this incredible book on prayer is a no-brainer!

—RACHEL BURCHFIELD
President, Texas Bible Institute
Co-pastor, Believer's World Outreach Church

Once again this gifted writing team has given me a book to keep by my prayer chair. The biblical scholarship is here along with an abundance of stories—historic and current. But above all, what shines through these pages is the conviction of two women whose own daily prayer is the mainspring of their lives.

—ELIZABETH SHERRILL
Author, *All the Way to Heaven*

LORD,
I NEED TO
PRAY WITH
POWER

QUIN SHERRER
RUTHANNE GARLOCK

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LORD, I NEED TO PRAY WITH POWER

by Quin Sherrer and Ruthanne Garlock

Published by Charisma House

Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group

600 Rinehart Road

Lake Mary, Florida 32746

www.charismahouse.com

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Cover Designer: John Hamilton Design

www.johnhamiltondesign.com

Design Director: Bill Johnson

Published in association with the literary agency of Ann Spangler and Company, 1420 Pontiac Road SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Sherrer, Quin.

Lord, I need to pray with power / Quin Sherrer and Ruthanne Garlock.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-59979-071-8 (trade paper)

1. Prayer—Christianity. I. Garlock, Ruthanne. II. Title.

BV210.3.S548 2006

248.3'2—dc22

2006100060

E-ISBN 978-1-59979-906-3

First Edition

08 09 10 11 — 9876543

Printed in the United States of America

*We dedicate
this book to
the Holy Spirit,
who
teaches us to
pray and who
intercedes for
us
according to
the will of God
(Rom. 8:26–
27).*



Prayer is a powerful thing, for God has bound and tied Himself thereto. None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience.^{[1](#)}

—MARTIN LUTHER

Acknowledgments

WE WISH TO thank:

- Those who shared their inspiring testimonies in the pages of this book.
- Our faithful prayer partners who prayed diligently for us.
- Ann Spangler, our longtime friend and agent, who greatly encouraged us in this project.
- Jevon Bolden, our editor, and all those at Strang Communications who had a part in getting this book into your hands.

Quin: I am forever grateful to some special praying friends who have helped me extend my prayer vision: Peter Lord, Dutch Sheets, Chuck Pierce, JoAnne Bailey, Beth Alves, Fran Ewing, Quinett Simmons, Martha Lucia, Mary Jo Pierce, Barbara Byerly, and Jane Droge. As I have listened to each of them pray, I have been encouraged to pray with renewed boldness and expectation.

Ruthanne: I express my appreciation for these teachers from whom I've learned so much about prayer: Joy Dawson, Mary McLeod, and Dean Sherman. Thanks also to the special prayer partners who have encouraged me and prayed with me over the years: Cindy Finberg, Beth Alves, Kay Hoffman, Florence Mukoro, Sharon Spencer, and Rebecca Jacob.

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Introduction

“PLEASE GIVE ME some tips on how to pray with more power,” I (Quin) asked Catherine Marshall, one of the instructors sitting across the dinner table from me at a writers’ conference. Since she had written several best-selling books on her prayer adventures, I yearned to glean all I could from her.

“When you pray, do you believe anything is really going to happen?” she responded. “Do you honestly think Father God hears your prayers and will answer?”

Her questions caught me off guard. I didn’t have an answer.

Looking me in the eye she said, “If you really want to know, go read everything you can find in the Bible on prayer; then apply what you have learned. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you.”

Her answer challenged me. I realized I needed to reach a deeper place of intimacy with God through prayer. I wanted to know with certainty that He hears and answers me. I began to dig through the Bible for answers. I discovered that the word *pray* or *prayer* appears in the Bible more than 225 times. I knew that God took this matter seriously, and I should, too. I focused especially on studying Jesus’s life of prayer.

That memorable day I began a pilgrimage that has stretched out over thirty-five years. Along the way I have come to a new level of trust, and, yes, I have seen God answer hundreds of prayers. Some are still in “waiting mode,” yet I am expectant, because I trust His faithfulness.

At about the time Quin began her quest, I (Ruthanne) also was in a season when I desired to strengthen my prayer life. I had come to feel that “praying as usual” was not getting results. I recognized that my tendency was to try to solve a problem through my own human effort, and only when that failed would I get more serious about

praying in earnest. Clearly, I needed to see prayer as my first course of action, not the last resort.

Through searching Scripture, I realized the missing ingredient was an understanding of spiritual warfare. I asked the Holy Spirit to teach me how to apply to my own life the principles and examples I found in the Bible.

Then, to my surprise, Pastor David Wilkerson asked me to work on an editorial project dealing with this very topic, based on Ephesians 6. It involved modifying the King James–style text of a seventeenth-century classic to more contemporary English.¹ By working on that assignment I was thrust into an in-depth study of prayer and spiritual warfare that continues to this day.

In fact, one of the first books Quin and I wrote together was titled *A Woman's Guide to Spiritual Warfare*² and was a best seller for several years. We learned to pray in the trenches and, as one friend says, in the “trauma and drama” of everyday life.

The various seasons and circumstances of our lives often determine when we pray and where. But finding the right time and place is a must-do for intimate prayer times. Over the years both of us have “worn down” several prayer chairs where we have our quiet times with the Lord.

Maybe you are at the same crossroads we were: hungry to know how to pray more effectively but not really knowing how. You will no doubt discover as we did that the form of prayer is not the most important thing, but keeping a daily appointment with God certainly is.

With that in mind, we invite you to set aside intimate moments to spend with Creator God each day. As you center in on things you need to talk to Him about, we pray this book will provide some helpful guidelines to make your prayer times more rewarding and powerful. It includes biblical illustrations entwined with contemporary stories and promises from God's Word for you. Some of the aspects of prayer we'll talk about include:

- Praying specifically

- Praying with the power of the Holy Spirit
- Learning to listen to His voice
- Using spiritual weapons in prayer
- Praying in agreement with prayer partners
- Overcoming obstacles to prayer
- Learning to pray the Scriptures
- Praying with perseverance

So, no matter how busy you are, be refreshed and renewed as you enter into what surely will be an exciting adventure for you. And let's learn to pray with the power of the Holy Spirit.

—QUIN SHERRER AND RUTHANNE GARLOCK

Throughout this book you will find these essential prayer ingredients to incorporate in your prayer time:

» **Be specific (Luke 11:5).**

» **Be persistent (Luke 11:8–10).**

» **Be in agreement (Matt. 18:19–20).**

» **Be open to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26–27).**

» **Be willing to fast (Matt. 6:17–18).**

» **Be open to trust and wait on God (2 Chron. 20:15, 17).**

In the middle of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus paused, looked at his disciples, and realized they knew virtually nothing about prayer. They knew how to say prayers....but they were ignorant when it came to having a conversation with God.

So Jesus warned them against “babbling like pagans.” He told them, instead of praying long public prayers, to go into their room, close the door, and talk to God as a child talks to his father. These words remain the best counsel for those of us who really want to know God.[1](#)

—*Jamie Buckingham*

1

Lord, TEACH ME TO PRAY

Building a strong foundation through regular, faithful prayer
puts us in a far better position to stand our ground in times of
crisis.

When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly,....In this manner, therefore, pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

—MATTHEW 6:6, 9–13

GEORGE MULLER OF the Bristol Orphanages in England had such an intimate relationship with God that he fully expected his prayers to be answered. Once, en route to Quebec, Canada, by ship, a heavy fog overtook them. The captain had remained on the bridge continuously for twenty-four hours when Muller came to tell him he had to be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon.

“Impossible,” the captain replied.

“Very well. If your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way. I have never broken an engagement in fifty-seven years. Let us go down into the chart room and pray,” Muller answered.

The captain thought he was crazy, but nevertheless he went with Muller to pray, explaining all along how dense the fog was and how impossible the situation.

“My eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, who controls every circumstance of my life,” Muller said as he knelt down and prayed a simple prayer. The captain was about to pray when Muller stopped him.

“Firstly, because you do not believe God will, and secondly, I believe God has, and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it. Captain, I have known the Lord for fifty-seven years, and there has never been a single day that I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up and open the door, and you will find that the fog has gone.”

Sure enough, when the captain looked out, the fog had lifted. George Muller was in Quebec Saturday afternoon for his engagement.²

What was his secret? He had a daily audience with the King. He knew Him intimately. He knew that when he was on kingdom business, God would get him there on time. In other words, Muller prayed, “Thy kingdom come...Thy will be done in my life, on this trip You have preordained.”

TOO BUSY NOT TO PRAY

If you are like most of us these days, you live a very active, crowded life. Finding—or taking—the time to pray may be rather low on your priority list.

But prayer is important because it is actually the link between God and us. It’s our way of communicating with Him and listening quietly for His response. You could call it the “divine connection.”

What exactly is prayer? In a nutshell, it is simply talking to God as you would talk to your best friend. Acknowledging Him as your

Father. Telling Him your deepest feelings. Honestly admitting your mistakes. Asking for His help, guidance, and wisdom for what you face each day, and then waiting for His direction. It also involves intercession for others.

Prayers of the Righteous

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

—HEBREWS 4:16

Avail Much

Praying every day does not mean that all our problems will suddenly vanish. But if we stay connected to our heavenly Father, we will begin to see things from His perspective and find His help to manage our lives.

In instructing His disciples, Jesus said, “When you pray, go into your [most] private room” (Matt. 6:6, AMP). This implies that God desires us to shut ourselves in with Him.

Do you have a secret place where you can go to pray? A particular room, a special chair, a private nook or spot where you can meet with God each day? Jesus frequently found such a place of solitude for prayer, often outdoors (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12). By both word and example He trained His disciples in the importance of prayer.

The classic prayer that we call the Lord’s Prayer is perhaps the most memorized portion of Scripture in the entire Bible. But it is much more than simply a prayer to recite by rote. This model from Jesus’s teaching shows us the important elements our personal prayers should include if we want to pray with power:

- Acknowledging God as Father and offering worship to Him
- Praying for His will to be done in the earth (and submitting our will to His)

- Presenting our personal needs to Him
- Asking forgiveness for our own sins and offering forgiveness to those who have offended us
- Asking for divine protection from temptation and the evil one
- Declaring God's almighty power and authority

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER

Effective prayer is based on a relationship with Father God, made possible through His Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus's life on Earth exemplified this loving intimacy with His Father. Thus, our prayer should begin with a most basic truth: acknowledging God as our Father. What a blessing that we need not fear some remote deity who must be appeased or approached with dread.

We can learn to pray with power not because we follow a certain formula or method, but because we know He loves us, we are in relationship with Him, and He is more than able to intervene on our behalf. When we are distracted by our own desires and concerns, we too easily forget that our Father is in fact the God of all power.

One Easter Sunday years ago, I (Ruthanne) attended morning worship alone as my husband was traveling and my son was away at college. For weeks I had carried a burden of prayer about a problem that, to me, seemed impossible to solve. I went to church with a heavy heart and sat by myself, too discouraged even to greet my friends in the congregation.

Suddenly the organ and choir thundered the refrain of the opening hymn:

Up from the grave He arose!
 With a mighty triumph o'er His foes; He arose a victor
 from the dark domain,
 And He lives forever with His saints to reign.
 He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!³

—ROBERT LOWERY

As I joined in singing those powerful words, my despondency lifted. When I sat down after the hymn, God quietly spoke to my heart: “If I could bring My Son back from the grave, don’t you think I’m big enough for this problem you’re so worried about?” It was an important lesson in trust that I’ve never forgotten. And yes, God proved to be big enough for that problem and every one I’ve ever confronted since then.

Beginning our prayer with worship is imperative because it helps to keep us focused on God’s sufficiency rather than our lack—His almighty power versus our human weakness.

YIELDING TO GOD’S WILL

The second element in following Jesus’s teaching on prayer is to pray for God’s will to be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Since He created us from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7), this means we’re asking for God’s will to be done in our own personal “earth” as well as in the world around us.

How often do we ask God to do things for us, sometimes even suggesting how and when we would like them done, without asking what His will is in the matter? Most of us could plead guilty to this. And in some situations, we can look back and be grateful that God in His wisdom did not give us the thing we had asked for! Over time, we learn to allow God’s agenda to take precedence over ours.

When we pray, “Your will be done...,” we acknowledge that His ways and His thoughts are superior to ours. (See Isaiah 55:8–9.) Our Father wants us to come voluntarily into agreement with His will and His ways as we pray for His kingdom to be revealed in our lives here and now, on this earth. This was illustrated by Muller’s example in our opening.

DOES GOD CARE ABOUT EVERYDAY NEEDS?

Is God truly concerned about our physical needs, such as what we eat, what we wear, and having a roof over our heads? Absolutely. He invites us to present our requests to Him. But once we grasp the truth of God's faithfulness, we will no longer be obsessed with our necessities.

Prayers of the Righteous

As for me, I will call upon God....
Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.

—PSALM 55:16–17

Avail Much

You may have a pressing need and wonder if God hears your prayer. Believe me, He does. When we pray for certain things that we know are in our best interest, and we have sought the Lord's counsel, we continue praying until the answer comes. The following story is an example.

When I (Quin) stopped by to see my friend Linda in her new home, she mentioned that the larger home they had moved out of had not yet sold though it had been on the market almost nine months.

"We felt God wanted us to be better stewards of our money by moving to a smaller house and not paying on a mortgage," she said. "The kids are grown and gone, and we don't need that much room. But the house hasn't sold, though my husband and I have prayed about it many times."

The housing market in our area had hit bottom following two hurricanes. Because of its size and location, Linda's former home had increased in value considerably since they first bought it. I knew that until this house sold, they had the burden of making two house payments. I also knew Linda and her husband are big givers to their church and to missions.

When I sought the Lord about how to pray with her for the situation, He dropped into my thoughts something entirely different from what I would have imagined.

“Let’s pray for the family who needs that house, can afford it, and will enjoy it immensely as their new home,” I said to Linda. “We’ll pray that the new owners will have as much happiness there as you did while raising your family in the place.”

So right then we prayed in agreement a “blessing prayer” over the future owners. I also suggested that Linda go back to her property and pray on-site. Less than a week later I got an excited call. The roomy, two-story house had sold to a family with several children who needed to live near the military base. It was ideal for them.

Linda and her husband were able to pay off their new house and sleep better at night with that burden lifted. Yes, God cares about meeting our needs.

FORGIVENESS IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Jesus spent much more time talking about forgiveness than about praying for personal needs to be met. When teaching on prayer, He emphasized that if we want to receive God’s forgiveness, we must forgive those who have offended us. (See Matthew 6:14–15.)

A young boy struggling to memorize the unfamiliar words of a popular version of the Lord’s Prayer prayed it like this: “Forgive us our trash-passes, as we forgive those who pass trash against us.”

Not very elegant language, but easily understood. If we are honest, we’ll admit to some “trash-passes” we’ve been guilty of that we know are displeasing to the Lord. And, of course, we desire His forgiveness. But in order to receive it, we need His help to forgive those irksome people who have “passed trash” against us.

One of the most painful areas in human relationships is learning to forgive a spouse who has rejected or betrayed you. Of course, for a marriage to be restored, both parties have to desire it and work toward that goal. But even when one party won’t pursue restoration,

God can bring healing to the relationship. Vicki shares in her own words her struggle to forgive:

Two years ago when our family gathered before Christmas to celebrate my grandson's birthday, I saw God do the impossible. After the meal, while he was opening his gifts, I walked into the kitchen to get a drink. His grandfather came in behind me, and we hugged and wished each other "Merry Christmas."

Now this may not seem unusual, except that I'd been divorced from this man for a long time, and his new wife was in the room with us. Believe me, it hasn't always been this way!

More than fifteen years earlier my husband had come home for lunch one day and told me he was no longer in love with me and was moving out. I felt I was a good wife and mother and simply couldn't believe this was happening.

But he didn't move out immediately—he kept me dangling for months. When he finally admitted he was having an affair, I knew we had to tell our two adult children. The almost unbearable pain made me feel that God had turned His back on me.

After four more roller-coaster years had passed, I gave up trying to reconcile and filed for divorce. When it was final, I felt as if I had been run over by a truck. But at last I came face-to-face with my ugly feelings of anger and bitterness and was ready to face the pain of changing. The only reason I didn't go over the edge was because my family and friends were praying for me.

One day while praying the Lord's Prayer I was struck by one phrase: "Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us" (Matt. 6:12, NLT). I certainly wanted God to forgive me, but could He possibly expect me to forgive someone who

had wounded me so deeply and had torn my family apart? Yes, He did.

And so I made the difficult choice to obey. As I repented for my pride and judgment of others, I discovered that no matter how badly we mess up, the moment we confess our sin, God cleanses us. And because Jesus took our sins to the cross, we are restored to the Father. He truly is a God of new beginnings.

Remember that hug my former husband gave me at my grandson's party? That happened because a few months before, I had felt the Lord prompting me to finish the circle of healing. My children had invited their dad to come see the grandchildren in a church activity, but he never came. I didn't think he ever would unless I opened the door, so I called and asked him to come talk with me.

I explained that I wanted him and his wife to come to church where we attended and to see the grandchildren when they were in plays. I promised him that I would not make either of them feel unaccepted or unwelcome. Two nights later they attended their first Little League ball game while a grandchild was playing. His wife walked right up to me and began a conversation.

All the time she was talking, I heard God asking me, "Are you ready to stop looking down on her? Do you really want the family to be at peace?" I whispered my "yes" to Him and began talking to her. Today, I believe the circle of healing is complete. We have had several family gatherings since that birthday party, and they've all been peaceful. I'm so thankful God didn't give up on me. His restoration is far better than anything we can think or ask for—my life is proof of that.

When we obey the Lord and make a choice as Vicki did, it not only pleases Him, but it also opens the way to receive His blessings and answers to our prayers. (See 1 John 3:21–22.) Bible commentator G. K. Chesterton wrote:

Forgiving means to pardon the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. And hoping means to hope when things are hopeless.⁴

HE IS OUR PROTECTOR

Jesus shows His concern for our personal well-being by teaching us to pray, “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

We live in a world filled with temptation, danger, and depravity. When we pray this way, we acknowledge our frailty and dependence upon God to guide us, to strengthen us to resist temptation, and to protect us from the enemy. He wants us to shine as lights in the darkness, not be overcome by it.

“The evil one” refers to our enemy, Satan, who has one purpose in the earth—to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Before going to the cross Jesus prayed for his followers, “Father, protect them by the power of your name...protect them from the evil one” (John 17:11, 15, NIV).

Daniel and Menorah, friends of mine (Ruthanne’s) who raised their children while serving as missionaries in Southeast Asia, have always prayed daily for their children’s protection. They are accustomed to having different members of the family traveling the globe, and they always apply the blood of Jesus in prayer over themselves and their children.

In November 2005 their older daughter was in Amman, Jordan, on a work assignment. One evening, instead of going to the hotel dining room for dinner as she usually did, Yasmina decided to order her meal from room service. As it turned out, such a seemingly minor decision saved her life. This was the same evening that Al-Qaeda

suicide bombers attacked three hotels in the city, killing more than sixty people.

She heard the blast, felt the building shake, and immediately knew it was a bomb. “I waited a few seconds to see if the hotel was going to collapse, then grabbed my shoes, coat, and purse and found the nearest fire escape,” she wrote.

When Yasmina reached the ground level, shattered glass was everywhere, black smoke was pouring from the lobby, and bodies were beginning to be pulled from the debris. She and several other evacuees spent the night with a kind Jordanian family. It so happened she already had a reservation and seat assignment on a flight the following day, so she was able to return to her job in New York.

Meanwhile, her parents were in Thailand—Daniel leaving on a trip to the Philippines and Menorah heading back to their base in Chicago. Shortly after arriving in the United States, Menorah got a call from one of Yasmina’s colleagues, telling her of the bombing incident and providing a contact number in Jordan.

“I was able to call my daughter several times during this horrific ordeal until she was safely back in the States,” Menorah said. “We cannot say enough about the value of prayer and our gratitude to God that Yasmina is alive today. We believe the blood of Jesus protected her.”

Prayers of the Righteous

When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches.
Because You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.
—PSALM 63:6–7

Avail Much

About nine months later, Daniel and Menorah were back in the United States on furlough for a few months. On a sunny July

morning, as their flight was taking off from Chicago and headed to Dallas/Fort Worth, Daniel had a heart attack on the plane. Thankfully, there were three doctors on that flight. One of them gave him nitroglycerin tablets, which probably saved his life. As soon as the plane landed, waiting paramedics got him into an ambulance and rushed him to a Fort Worth hospital.

Within an hour Daniel was in the cardiac catheterization lab, where the images showed a 95 percent blockage in a main artery. A surgeon immediately performed angioplasty, installed a stent, and reported that Daniel's heart had suffered very little damage. Three days later I was able to visit him and his wife before they returned to Chicago and rejoice with them for God's supernatural protection.

"Had this happened in parts of the world where I generally travel, I would be in eternity now," Daniel said. "What a miracle it is to still be alive and able to taste just how precious life truly is!" In the midst of his pain and uncertainty, he clung to these scriptures:

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.

—PSALM 37:23

I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.

—PSALM 118:17

GOD RULES

The Lord's Prayer ends with praise to God: "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matt. 6:13). Have you ever stopped just to declare God's almighty power? Maybe when you've:

- Watched a breathtaking sunset
- Heard a baby's first cry
- Felt the love of a friend in some surprising way

- Escaped an auto crash or some other accident
- Had a pressing need met from an unexpected source
- Felt the joy of a reconciliation you thought was impossible

A friend of ours took a stroll through the hills of Switzerland just to be alone with the Lord one day and was taken with the loveliness of the flowers and their delicious fragrance. As she walked through the vineyards and then the woods, she came into an open field where she could look out over a city with the Swiss Alps in the background.

“Standing in awe of God’s spectacular creation, I opened my mouth to sing praises to the Lord,” she said. “Suddenly, I found myself singing at the top of my lungs. I sang for some time about God’s loveliness and how my soul longs for His presence. ‘My heart sings for joy to the living God...You are my King, my God...’”⁵ We need such times of declaring God’s glory and worshiping Him for who He is. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, undiminished by our temporary troubles.

And so, as we learn from Jesus’ example, our prayer comes full circle. The prayer that starts with God and ends with God helps us stay focused on how truly great and glorious He is. Consider this summary of the Lord’s Prayer from Pastor Jack Hayford:

Jesus’ words “Your kingdom come” are more than a suggestion to pray for a distant millennial day, for everything in this prayer is current. The prayer is not a formula for repetition so much as it is an outline for expansion. Worship is to be longer than a sentence. Petitions are not confined to bread. Forgiveness is to be requested in specifics, not generalities, and prayer for the entry of God’s kingdom into present earthborn situations is not accomplished in a momentary utterance. The verb mood and tense of “Your kingdom come” essentially says, “Father, let Your kingdom come here and now!”

Such prayerful *intervention* is called *intercession*....
The praying is ours to do: unless we ask for the
intervention of His kingdom and obey His prayer-
lessons, nothing will change. All kingdom ministry
begins with, is sustained by, and will triumph through
prayer.⁶

You may want to stop now and pray the Lord's Prayer aloud,
making it personal by:

- Offering Him praises in your own words
- Asking what His will is for you to pray
- Presenting Him with your personal concerns
- Asking His forgiveness for a specific fault
- Choosing to forgive anyone you may be holding a grudge
against
- Praying for His divine protection
- Declaring His almighty power as you recall ways and times He
has come to your aid

WATCHING IN PRAYER

During biblical times walls were built around the cities to provide
security, and soldiers stood guard on the walls to sound a warning
should an enemy approach. The assigned periods for guard duty
were called watches, and in the New Testament era, the night was
divided into four such periods:⁷

6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m., evening watch
9:00 p.m.—12:00 a.m., midnight watch

12:00 a.m.–3:00 a.m., cockcrowing watch
3:00 a.m.–6:00 a.m., morning watch

When Jesus asked His disciples to watch and pray with Him in Gethsemane, they had the opportunity to participate in the most crucial prayer meeting of all time. Think of what they missed by falling asleep as Jesus agonized in prayer a short distance away! We get a sense of the Lord's disappointment with them when He returns to find them sleeping and says, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?" (Matt. 26:40).

Three times He withdrew to pray, and each time He returned to find the disciples still asleep. Because the record states that Jesus left and came back three times, it suggests Jesus was observing a three-hour prayer watch. Though He appealed to His followers to watch with Him for just one hour, they couldn't do even that. No wonder Peter responded in the wrong spirit and drew his sword when the multitude came to arrest Jesus. Surely his reaction would have been different had he been praying instead of sleeping.

However, before we judge Peter and the others too harshly for their human weakness, we might ask ourselves, "Would I have done any better?"

As intercessors, we should always be "on call" to pray whenever the Holy Spirit nudges us or when we become aware of an urgent need. These days we see a new interest in intercessors taking prayer assignments during the various "watches"—especially during the night season. We have one friend who often retires quite early, but she sleeps for only a few hours before getting up to keep a prayer watch from midnight onward. She feels that it is important to "watch and pray" during that period, especially when she's seeking God's guidance for a difficult decision or is interceding for a specific situation.

Prayers of the Righteous

Arise, cry out in the night,
At the beginning of the watches;

Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.

—LAMENTATIONS 2:19

Avail Much

When questioned about his prayer life, George Muller said, “I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk about, when I lie down, and when I rise up. And the answers are always coming. Thousands of times have my prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that a thing is right and for the glory of God, I go on praying for it until the answer comes. George Muller never gives up.”⁸

As we learn to follow guidelines provided in the Lord’s Prayer and respond to His call to watch and pray at any hour of the day or night, we can become intercessors who pray with power. And that’s the topic of our next chapter.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for loving me enough to send, Your only Son to die on the cross to take away my sins. Thank You for inviting me to come boldly and confidently to You in prayer. Please reveal the things on Your heart that I need to know and understand to help me pray more effectively. Purify my motives, and help me keep my trust in You. I want to serve You faithfully in intercession for whatever “prayer watch” You call me to. In Jesus’s name. Amen.

Prayer is the most valuable use of tongues for it is “speaking to God.”...The Holy Spirit is certainly not limited to the English language, nor is He confined to modern languages. He has access to every language ever used by mankind, and He is very familiar with the language of heaven. When deep intercession is needed, the Spirit often uses a language that is beyond the intellectual grasp of the speaker to bypass the censorship of his or her conscious mind, thereby enabling the Spirit to say what needs to be prayed without arguing with the faith level of the one through whom the intercession flows.¹

—*Judson Cornwall*

Lord,
HELP ME PRAY WITH POWER

God's purpose for sending the Holy Spirit was to empower Jesus's followers. This gift is still available to us today, enabling us to pray with power.

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

—ROMANS 8:26–27, NIV

CAN THE HOLY Spirit really help us pray more effectively? One of the greatest prayer gifts God provides to us is the infilling of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to pray in tongues, as Pastor Cornwall described in his book *Praying the Scriptures*.

After Jesus arose from the grave and before He ascended to heaven, He told His disciples, “I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven” (Luke 24:49, NLT). Another translation says they would be “clothed with power” (NIV).

Jesus knew His followers could not fulfill the commission He had given them to take the gospel to all nations until they were immersed

in the power that the Holy Spirit would bring. The word *power*, derived from the Greek word *dunamis* (from which we get the words *dynamo* or *dynamite*), also means ability or strength, or refers to a person who has administrative power.²

Prayers of the Righteous

[Jesus said,] “John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now....But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”...And they [in the upper room] were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

—ACTS 1:5, 8; 2:4

Avail Much

God’s purpose for sending the Holy Spirit was to *empower* Jesus’s followers. And this gift is still available to us today to accomplish the same purpose. If you have truly been born again, it was the Holy Spirit who convicted you of sin and drew you into a relationship with Christ. Scripture declares, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:15–17).

But as Pastor Jack Hayford explains, being baptized in the Holy Spirit occurs after the salvation experience:

The Holy Spirit’s power must be “received”; it is not an automatic experience. As surely as the Holy Spirit indwells each believer, so surely will He fill and overflow each who receives the Holy Spirit in childlike faith. When the Holy Spirit fills you, you will know it. Jesus said it, and the disciples found it to be true. Have you received the Holy Spirit? The promise is as fully

yours today as at any time in the past. (See Romans 8:9; John 7:37–39; Acts 1:5; 2:1–4.)³

The Holy Spirit can guide our prayer by giving us words to pray in our own language or by praying through us in a language we've never learned. Lucy,* one of our prayer partners who had been a Christian for many years, was baptized in the Holy Spirit when she studied the Book of Acts with renewed interest.

“My first reaction was to sense an overwhelming love for Jesus and a joy I'd never felt before,” she reported. “I was aware of a strength I'd never encountered—especially the power to pray. I received a prayer language when I asked for this gift, and my prayer life changed dramatically. Not only do I pray more ‘with understanding,’ I also pray in tongues almost constantly while going about menial tasks.”

Lucy's hunger for more of God led her to ask for the Holy Spirit, and it has made all the difference in her Christian walk. When we are at a loss as to how to “pray as we ought”—or when we are facing a crisis situation—we can ask for the Holy Spirit's help. In fact, one of His names is the Helper.

A HUSBAND TRANSFORMED

Nancy is another earnest seeker who received the Holy Spirit and saw a huge change in her prayer life as her relationship with the Lord deepened and she became constantly aware of His presence. She did have to deal with some opposition, however. She shares her story:

I had been married for seven years and had three children at the time I received the Holy Spirit. Because my husband, Dave, was very resistant to my newfound belief, I attended charismatic meetings with my aunt and uncle for several months. One weekend I attended a retreat at a local convent. While there I asked several

people to join me in praying for Dave to come to know Jesus as Savior. He never missed Mass, but he had no personal relationship with the Lord as I did now.

When I got home after being away two days, I found a transformed husband. God had met him while he was alone, with no human leading him in a sinner's prayer. By the bathtub, on his knees, Dave was filled with God's Spirit and wept joyfully. He embraced me when I got home, thanking me for praying for him.

God had given me the grace and wisdom never to nag him or argue. In fact, I would read my Bible with a flashlight under the bedcovers to avoid upsetting him. But I knew prayer was the key to his heart. Only three months after Jesus met me, Dave heard the call to follow Him, too, and was profoundly touched. For weeks and weeks he would weep at the prayer meetings we attended every Friday night.

As a father, he prayed his children through many crises. He combined fasting with prayer when one child was becoming rebellious. He told me he used to cry and pray in the shower. For two years he prayed daily as he saw another daughter become crippled with rheumatoid arthritis. Every morning before he left for work, Dave would come take my hand and pray for me. His heart was so tender toward the Lord and his family.

When Dave died unexpectedly one evening after supper, I saw how God had been preparing me for this crisis that was to call on everything I had stored in my spiritual cupboard. Those first few days, tragic as they were, were full of joy and anticipation for God's next chapter to unfold. Indeed, God's provision for me and for my children has been very tangible as He has sustained us through the dark valley. How grateful I am I learned to pray with power before this happened.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE

On the Day of Pentecost, one hundred twenty believers, after ten days of waiting in the upper room, experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and began speaking in languages they had never learned (Acts 2:1–4). The apostle Peter explained to the astonished crowd gathered there, “The promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (v. 39).

Peter, who only days before had denied he even knew Jesus, now boldly proclaimed the gospel of salvation through Christ, and three thousand people were born again. It became clear in the days that followed that the infilling of the Holy Spirit not only instilled boldness in Peter and the other apostles, but it also enabled them to pray with power, resulting in miracles of healing and rapid growth of the church.

We strongly believe that God intends believers today to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, just as the early disciples did.

Prayers of the Righteous

And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy....
And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

—JOEL 2:28–29

Avail Much

Brenda is a homemaker and “ordinary believer” who began praying with greater intensity and a stronger level of faith after she had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then she and her daughter enrolled in a class at their church that encouraged them to be alert to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to pray for people with needs wherever they saw them. Soon they had an opportunity to do just that when they stopped at a restaurant for lunch one day.

“Kate and I noticed our waitress was in obvious pain,” Brenda told Quin. “Her face reflected it, and her walk proved it. So we asked her if we could pray for her.”

The waitress admitted she had wrenched her back and that it was painful to walk. Brenda and Kate held both her hands as they prayed for complete and sudden healing. And that’s what she got. Her back pain disappeared as she saw a light coming down upon her.

“I could not refuse to do something for that poor, hurting woman that God led us to,” Brenda said. “As Kate and I prayed in agreement, it helped us both to fight through resistance that tried to keep us from doing it. The fact that the Lord showed up in power and the woman saw a manifestation of His presence was so exciting for us.”

Today, all of us are among those who are “afar off” still being invited to embrace this blessing and use it to impact the lives of those around us, just as Brenda and Kate did.

RESCUED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

My (Ruthanne’s) father-in-law, H. B. Garlock, had a spectacular intervention of the Holy Spirit decades ago when he served as a missionary to Liberia, West Africa. While living among cannibal tribes in the interior, he hired a party of men to trek to the coast to buy supplies. En route, one man was captured by an enemy tribe. The ones who escaped brought word back to the mission station. When Henry went to rescue the man, the enraged tribal leaders captured him also, with the clear intent of killing and eating both their prisoners.

Prayers of the Righteous

Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

—1 THESSALONIANS 1:5, NIV

Avail Much

But first a “trial” took place with the witch doctor launching into a long tirade accusing the white man of interfering with their tribal affairs. Finally he laid his wand at Henry’s feet where he was sitting on an elephant skull, indicating he could now speak in his own defense. The young missionary, who knew only a few words of the language, was praying desperately. Here’s the rest of the story in his own words:

Suddenly, I began to shake. This disturbed me, as I did not want the people to know how frightened I really was. Then I realized the Holy Spirit had come upon me and the words of Jesus in Mark 13:11 came to me: “Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak...but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost” (KJV).

Now, sensing the anointing of the Spirit, I stood up. Looking around the circle of hostile people I reached down and picked up the witch doctor’s wand that he had laid at my feet. I opened my mouth to speak a few words of their language by saying, “*Ny lay...*,” meaning, “Listen to me.” And then it happened.

The Holy Spirit took complete control of my tongue and vocal organs, and from my lips poured a torrent of words that I had never learned. Although I was speaking fluently and quite forcefully, I did not understand the language I was speaking. I spoke for several minutes—just how long, I don’t know. But when I had finished, silence reigned. Since receiving the Holy Spirit ten years earlier I had spoken in tongues many times, but never under conditions like these.

...The trial ended around midnight with the witch doctor, the chief, and the village elders pleading,

“Please do not harm us. We see that your God has power and fights for you.”⁴

The tribal leaders ordered food to be prepared for the missionary's workers so their trek to the coast could continue. Then they provided carriers to transport the wounded man in a hammock and accompany Henry back to the mission station. The Holy Spirit intervened to save my father-in-law's life and also to impact a cannibal tribe with the power of the gospel.

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Marsha,* a retired teacher, is one who believes the Holy Spirit made all the difference in her struggle. After twenty-seven years of marriage, her life had become one of turmoil as she watched her husband, Ted,* gradually turn into a different person. The kind man she had married was now someone with an evil personality she hardly recognized.

“He was living two lives—one as an upright businessman who regularly attended church, but the other as a very suspicious character, perhaps as a drug dealer—I never knew for sure,” she said. “At church he would put his arm around me, but at home he would shout vile obscenities and threaten me. He finally moved out of our bedroom—I suspected he might have contracted AIDS.”

Ted told Marsha's friends that she had suffered a nervous breakdown, and he had men following her wherever she went. Many nights he never came home. Through it all Marsha read the Bible and clung to Psalm 37:12: “The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming.” Somehow she knew the Lord would protect her.

One night while alone in her den, the Holy Spirit descended on Marsha as she was praying. She had just told the Lord all her problems, releasing them to Him. Then she said, “I love You, Lord, but I wish there was some other way to praise You.”

Suddenly she started speaking in a language she had not learned. She had never heard the term “baptized with the Holy Spirit,” nor did she know anyone who could explain what had happened to her. She just knew she was overjoyed and that God was in it. She would pray in English, then in her “new words” of exaltation.

Prayers of the Righteous

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

—LUKE 11:13

Avail Much

“Right in the middle of my battle, the Lord filled me with this gift,” she said. “It wasn’t long before the Holy Spirit convicted me of my need to tell Ted that I forgave him, and I obeyed. Then I asked him to forgive me for any way I had failed in our marriage. He stood speechless, just staring at me, then turned and left the room without uttering a word. But I knew God would honor my act of obedience and faith.”

Prayer, as Marsha learned, is not simply a formula of words to convince God to move on her behalf. Rather, prayer is built on her personal relationship with God. And it’s a powerful force to push back the influence of the enemy. As she allowed the Holy Spirit to help her examine her heart and confess her sins first to God, she was then able to face her betrayer to ask for and offer forgiveness.

“Once I released forgiveness, my life and circumstances turned a corner,” she said. “My husband stopped playing his mind games. Not long afterward he moved out of the house, filed for a no-fault divorce, and left town. I was free of unnamed dangers, no longer afraid of being harmed. While I didn’t believe in divorce and no one in my family was divorced, I was safe at last. I determined to go on with God.”

Some time later Marsha was tutoring a seventh-grade Hindu girl from India. One day she told the girl, “I’m going to say some words in a different language. If you recognize them, please interpret for me.” Then she prayed for a few moments in her prayer language.

“You are asking the God in heaven for food...no, for bread...Stop! I am not allowed to hear that,” the girl responded.

Marsha realized as they talked that she had been saying the Lord’s Prayer in the girl’s Indian dialect. Was it in vain? No. She believes that someday the girl will hear about the Holy Spirit and remember the schoolteacher who prayed in her native tongue without ever having learned it. Marsha uses her prayer language often and has had several experiences when her words were understood by a listener.

We have interviewed dozens of Christians who have shared their experiences of receiving the Holy Spirit. Gloria* was one of them. Reared an Orthodox Jew, she could not speak Hebrew. But after she received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, she began spontaneously speaking in tongues; she recognized it as Hebrew from her years of attending synagogue. She told us the Word of God became alive for her, her prayer times were enriched, and, for the first time since becoming a believer, she knew she definitely was still a Jew. After all, her Savior was Jewish, too.

THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US PRAY

Praying with the Spirit helps us to communicate more directly with God since we’re not analyzing the situation with our human logic. Our prayers are in greater alignment with God’s will, and we can hear from Him more clearly. Here are some things the Holy Spirit—sometimes called our “indwelling prayer partner”—can do for us:

- The Holy Spirit increases our desire to pray and draws us to prayer.

- The Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance scriptures to use in prayer and praise.
- The Holy Spirit brings specific needs to our attention to pray for.
- The Holy Spirit puts prayer burdens on us, and we may keep them for however long it takes for a breakthrough. The Holy Spirit calls us to prayer at times of crisis—in moments of danger, decision, or opportunity.
- The Holy Spirit adds depth, power, and faith to our prayer, directing and guiding us to intercede with deeper compassion than we have a natural inclination for.
- The Holy Spirit invites us to pray for issues worldwide, sharing God’s heart for the poor, the orphans, the atheists, world leaders, nations, and so forth.
- The Holy Spirit calls us to fast from time to time as a means to more powerful prayer and greater results.⁵ (See chapter 4, “Lord, Equip Me for Battle.”)

Not only does He—the third person of the Trinity—help us to pray, but also when we pray in our prayer language we are revitalized. Soon after I (Quin) received the baptism in 1972, if I woke up at night I’d begin to pray in tongues. In the morning I was surprised at how refreshed I felt despite losing sleep, and I realized I had been building myself up in the Holy Spirit. (See Jude 20.) Some of the time I was interceding in the Spirit for others. (See Romans 8:27.)

STEPS TO BEING BAPTIZED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

In our book *The Beginner’s Guide to Receiving the Holy Spirit*, we list some steps used by the pastor who led Quin in prayer to receive

the Holy Spirit. Reading the Book of Acts will give you a solid background as to why this gift was needful for the early church as well for us today. You may desire to follow these simple guidelines as you pray and ask the Lord for this powerful gift:[6](#)

Prayers of the Righteous

I [Paul] thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all....Desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.

—1 CORINTHIANS 14:18, 39–40

Avail Much

1. Acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.
2. Confess and repent of any sin in your life. Forgive anyone who has ever hurt you, disappointed you, or falsely accused you. Ask the Lord to remind you of any resentment you may be harboring, and release it through prayer. (Read Mark 11:22–26; Ephesians 4:32.)
3. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any involvement you may have had with the occult. (Read Deuteronomy 7:25–26; 18:10–12; Acts 19:19–20.) Repent and ask forgiveness, no matter how naïve you may have been when you participated. Receive God’s forgiveness; then renounce your actions and any occultic influence in your life.
4. If you have ever mocked or made fun of anyone who spoke in tongues—even in casual joking—ask God to forgive you for not honoring the Holy Spirit.
5. Ask for the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the ability to pray in tongues. Then open your mouth and begin to speak the

syllables the Holy Spirit gives you to say. Your lips may begin to tremble or your tongue to stammer, but don't be fearful—just begin speaking out the sounds, though they seem strange to you. An excellent way to receive is through singing—for example, begin to sing the simple chorus, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah...,” and then sing syllables to that tune as the Holy Spirit enables.

6. Pray in tongues every day in intercession. As you exercise this gift you will become more fluent in your prayer language, and your vocabulary will increase. It helps you to stay close to the Lord and strengthens your prayer life.

TAKING AUTHORITY

Of course, we don't always pray in our prayer language when we are interceding; we also pray with our mind as led by the Holy Spirit. Paul said specifically, “I will pray with my spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me], but I will also pray [intelligently] with my mind and understanding” (1 Cor. 14:15, AMP).

If you have ever battled for a loved one to accept Christ as Lord, take encouragement from Pastor Kenneth Hagin's experience. In the early days of his ministry he was concerned about his older brother's salvation. For fifteen years he had prayed, “God, save him.” But the more he prayed, it seemed the further from God his brother was. Finally he heard the Lord telling him he had authority to do something about it.

“Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ, I break your power over my brother's life, and I claim his deliverance and salvation,” he declared.

“The devil tried to tell me that my brother would never be saved, but I just laughed and kept claiming his salvation,” he said. Sure enough, he soon got word from his wife saying that his brother had received Christ. He wrote her back and said he had known it for over a week, because he had broken the power of the devil over his life.⁷

CONTINUALLY BEING FILLED

When Paul gave instructions to believers to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18), he did not mean this was to be a one-time event. Again, Pastor Jack Hayford gives valuable insight:

The tense of the Greek for be filled makes clear that such a Spirit-filled condition does not stop with a single experience, but is maintained by continually being filled, as commanded here. The Spirit is to influence all aspects of our lives, overflowing in transformed relationships, dynamic ministry, and enhanced worship, which includes a personal prayer language.⁸

Now that we have explored how the Holy Spirit can enable us to pray more effectively, perhaps we need to stop and ask Him to fill us continually and invade our lives more completely. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit because He knew every believer would need His help. It's our choice to believe and receive, and keep on receiving.

Next, we'll examine ways to listen and discern God's voice—a vital step in learning to pray with power.

PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. I acknowledge my need to receive this gift in greater measure and to enter into a deeper level of praying in the Spirit. Lord, help me to lay aside any prejudice I may have about the work of the Holy Spirit and to open my heart to all You desire to accomplish in and through me. I yield my will to You to receive Your work of grace in my life. In Jesus's name. Amen.

**The Lord is wanting to say something to you now—
at your age, where you are this week, this day, this
period in your life....Are you seeking His voice?**

**...As the Lover of my soul and yours, He wants
us to be close, to disclose Himself to us, and yes,
to speak with us, for our ears alone.^{[1](#)}**

—*Jack Hayford*

Lord,
HELP ME LISTEN

The Holy Spirit, who can prepare us for what lies ahead, sometimes gives specific warnings. He also gives strategy for our spiritual battles, but it requires that we listen to Him.

But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word?

—Jeremiah 23:18, NIV

WAITING IS NOT a favorite thing for most of us. Listening is even further down the list. One of the hardest disciplines during prayer is to wait and listen—for God’s direction, assurance, or correction.

Prayer involves having a conversation with God. And He places a lot of emphasis on hearing. For example, in the New King James Version of the Bible, some form of the word *hear* appears 538 times and *listen* some 112 times. So we would be wise to position ourselves expectantly as we pray, believing we will hear from heaven.

God can speak to us anytime, anyplace, in any manner He wishes. It may be through a Scripture passage that seems to leap off the page into our thoughts or through words from a song, a sermon, or another person’s remark. Or we hear His voice as a whisper in our spirit. But anytime we sense that God is speaking, it’s a good idea to grab a pen and write down the message. Then we can recall it later when we need clarity or reassurance.

Sometimes He speaks in our solitude, during complete silence. Other times He may commune with us during a stroll on the sidewalk or beach, a walk through the woods, or while riding in a boat, car, train, or airplane. Some people hear Him while enjoying an invigorating shower or a soak in the tub.

Prayers of the Righteous

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

—REVELATION 3:22

Avail Much

Others find direction as they listen to worship music, letting the words penetrate deep into their spirits. God may speak through dreams or visions, and sometimes through prophets. He can speak while you are working, reading, watching TV, or playing with a child.

Just as babies learn to walk, we grow in our listening skills as we mature in our Christian faith. We also become increasingly grateful when we realize that God Himself—the Creator of the universe—wants to speak to us, and not just when we cry out during times of trouble. He knows our individual personalities and how best to communicate with each one of us.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S VOICE

In this chapter we will explore the ways God speaks to us and how we distinguish His voice from other voices. But consider the question “Did they really hear from God?” in relation to these true incidents:

- A woman moved to another city because a prophet gave her a word that she would find her husband there. Several years later she is still waiting.

- God wakened a woman early one morning and told her to prepare a large meal for a neighbor up the street. When she delivered it, she learned there had been a death in the family and a crowd of relatives was expected.
- While sitting in church a woman “heard” a warning that her house was being robbed, so she asked God to send warring angels to protect it. She discovered thieves had ransacked the place, but nothing was missing. The investigator concluded something frightened them away.
- A young woman living with her boyfriend felt God told her to move out unless they married. Though she loved him deeply and friends said she was foolish, she moved to a place of her own. Some months later the boyfriend asked to date her, and a year later they were married.

Prayers of the Righteous

When he [the shepherd] brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

—JOHN 10:4–5

Avail Much

“Did I really hear God?” Maybe you have asked yourself that before. Most of us have. As we wait on the Lord and listen for

His voice, we quickly realize that other voices also clamor for our attention. Perhaps you’re asking, “How can I be sure what I’m hearing is actually God speaking?” It may seem you’re hearing many voices in your mind all at the same time, but actually there are only three sources:

1. *God's voice.* As already mentioned, He speaks in numerous ways, but His message always will be consistent with His character and with His Word.
2. *The voice of your own human ideas.* Our logical reasoning, erratic emotions, or selfish desires can influence what we think is a word from the Lord.
3. *The voice of the enemy.* He cannot read your mind, but the evil one certainly tries to plant wrong thoughts there that lead you in the wrong direction. 1. Two examples from Scripture are Peter and Judas. (See Mark 8:31–33; John 13:2.)

This means we need a solid understanding of God's Word and His character to evaluate the impressions in our minds. Intense desire—even when it's purely motivated—can hinder our ability to hear God clearly. For example, the case of the woman who moved to another city, believing she would find a husband there. Her great yearning for a mate was stronger than her desire to wait on God for His plan for her life.

When we make a mistake, we simply need to acknowledge we were wrong. Other times, we wrestle to resolve the issue and the enemy taunts us, "What makes you think you heard from God?" In my (Ruthanne's) experience of grappling with this issue, I've drawn a few conclusions.

In most situations, it's best to have confirmation on my "word from God" from someone who is not as emotionally involved in the matter as I am. A close prayer partner is a great asset in such cases. Her objectivity can protect me from deception.

Even when I do hear God's heart in regard to a particular situation, I must acknowledge that God honors a person's free will. Occasionally a person's wrong choice—mine or another's—may sabotage God's best plan in the matter I'm praying about. In this instance, I can ask God to do a work of grace despite the consequences of someone's unwise decision.

Sometimes events later confirm that indeed I had heard from God but was mistaken about the timing. Someone once said, "God is

never late, but He passes many opportunities to be early!” Before taking action on what I feel I’ve heard from God, it’s important to seek His direction in regard to timing.

In some cases my only recourse is to release to God what I thought was His revealed plan. My prayer becomes, “Lord, I don’t understand what is going on here. But I release to You my own desires and expectations in this situation. I declare Your lordship over my life, and I choose to believe that You love me. Please reveal any wrong attitudes I need to change, and enable me to do it. Thank You for working in people and events in unseen ways that ultimately will bring You glory. Lord, my faith is in You alone. Help me to walk in Your peace. Amen.”²

We don’t discount the valuable ministry of prophecy in the body of Christ today. God does still speak through the prophetic voices of anointed men and women to alert us as to how to pray more specifically for issues on His heart and to confirm the guidance He has already given us. But it’s important to use our spiritual ears to listen and discern whether the prophecy aligns with Scripture and with God’s character, and then act accordingly.

We agree with Pastor Dutch Sheets, who wrote, “When God speaks there is power in His words: to change us, equip us, empower us, mature us, save us, heal us, prepare us—the list could continue. Indeed, the very key to life is listening to God: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’ (Matt. 4:4).”³

LEARNING TO PAY ATTENTION

Besides the admonition to listen for God’s voice, we are also urged to “keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance” (Eph. 6:18, AMP).

In other words, we should be aware of our surroundings, keep abreast of important events being reported in the news, and remain open to directions or warnings the Lord may communicate. Many times God speaks to us through ordinary, seemingly mundane events. When we ask Him to guard our thoughts and guide our

actions, we can count on Him to give us answers in the course of routine things of life.

Over time we can learn to hear the voice of the Lord for ourselves and “test” the word according to Scripture. (See 1 John 4:1.) It is important to guard against developing a rebellious or independent spirit, while at the same time avoiding an unhealthy codependence on others. A wise safeguard is to ask trusted spiritual friends or mentors to pray with us about major decisions, but be aware there may be some who just won’t agree with you. Remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit as you move in the direction you feel God is leading.

Prayers of the Righteous

I will listen to what God the LORD will say;
he promises peace to his people.

—PSALM 85:8, NIV

Avail Much

Arlene* attended a conference one summer where the speaker had emphasized listening to God’s Spirit. Not only had she taken notes, but she had also asked God to keep her spirit alert to hear His voice. During the lunch break a friend who was with her drove them to a nearby restaurant to eat. “I feel a red-flag warning that something is wrong here,” Arlene told her friend. “Let’s not go in this place.”

The other woman, who had just heard the same message on listening, replied, “Come on, let’s go order. I don’t see why we shouldn’t go in.”

Reluctantly Arlene accompanied her, but she chose a table near the door in case they needed to exit quickly. Just after they had placed their order, a car filled with young people hit the wall at the back of the restaurant when their car went out of control. Had the two sat in that area, they could have been injured by the flying debris.

Yes, God protected them. Arlene had heard His voice of warning, but she couldn't convince her dining companion to listen—and she was the one driving. How many times has God spoken to us but we didn't recognize His voice or we ignored the promptings?

STANDING IN THE GAP

An intercessor stands in the gap to pray for a person or situation even when they may not know all the circumstances.

Prayers of the Righteous

I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart,
And watch to see what He will say to me.

—HABAKKUK 2:1

Avail Much

Ellen* had such an experience one Sunday night when she unexpectedly found herself stopping to pray for her husband, Shawn,* to have discernment for whatever he was doing that evening. With a sense of urgency she continued praying for some time. Less than two hours later, Shawn, who was on a weeklong business trip, was robbed at gunpoint. Ellen tells the story:

After a quick errand to a convenience store about 9:30 p.m. that night, Shawn returned to the hotel and found the only available parking was behind the building. When he got out of the car and opened the back door to get his computer, a man pounced on him out of the darkness. Pointing a gun at his temple, the man demanded Shawn's wallet, warning he'd shoot if he didn't hand it over.

Shawn obeyed. Then the man ordered him to get into the back seat and lie down, which he did. The robber got behind the wheel to drive away, but seeing the rear door was still ajar, he yelled at Shawn to close it. Shawn tried, but he couldn't get the door closed from his lying-down position. Unknown to him, this was because the computer bag strap was hanging outside the door. As the robber kept threatening to shoot, Shawn realized the man's left hand was on the wheel and he was waving his right hand in the air. The gun, he reasoned, had to be in his lap.

When the abductor backed out and cleared the other cars, Shawn knew the rear door could now open freely. He quickly grabbed the handle, pushed the door open wide, and bolted out of the car. Running faster than he'd ever run in his life, he zigzagged to the front of the hotel to get inside.

As he rounded a corner and fell, he was sure he was going to be shot. But he got to his feet, made it inside, and called the police. Then he called to tell me what had happened and assured me he was OK. The robber had gotten Shawn's wallet, computer, and passport—all of which could be replaced—but he now had access to personal identity data.

The police said usually in such cases the kidnapper drives to an ATM, forces the victim to withdraw money, and then takes him to a remote location and kills him. In fact, there had been several such assaults in that area.

I'm so grateful that God alerted me to pray and that I responded to His prompting. I know the Lord enabled Shawn to think quickly and get out of the car at the very moment when he could escape and run for his life. Later that night when we talked on the phone, we prayed together that the man who tried to abduct him would find the Lord and be delivered from bondage. It's been over a year now since this incident. The robber

was never apprehended, though the car was found.
Shawn realizes how blessed he is to be alive.

DREAMS AND VISIONS

Does God ever speak to us through dreams and visions today as He did in biblical times? Tracey Gregory says an emphatic yes. At least He does to her.

During a time of what she calls “revival” in her life, she had a prophetic dream in which she was walking down a road carrying a baby with dark complexion and curly hair. She told a friend with her, “I love this child.” Later, another dream confirmed that this was a little girl from somewhere near Sri Lanka. God planted a strong desire in Tracey’s heart to adopt this specific round-faced girl.

At the time she and Sam already had two children—Sara and young Sam were seven and four. Convinced the dream was God’s promise to her, Tracey began researching adoption possibilities. She learned Sri Lanka does not give up babies for adoption, but India was close by. What did a little girl from that region look like? The day she asked that question she received a catalog in the mail with a picture of a doll from India.

A while later God spoke to her husband, assuring him he would have plenty of love for a new little daughter, as well as for the rest of his family. That night, all four family members danced for joy, knowing that somehow God was going to give them this child.

Tracey and Sam signed up with a Christian adoption agency and began filling out dozens of forms and paying the multiple fees required. Finally they got a phone call that their one-month-old baby girl born in Southern India—not far from Sri Lanka—was waiting for them. Her birth date: August 8, 1998, which is Tracey and Sam’s wedding anniversary. Tracey took this as a further sign that this was her baby.

Months of paperwork plagued by delays followed. Papers were lost. Then the U.S. government denied papers sent from India because they were blurred and illegible. One setback followed

another. Tracey kept crying out to God and calling the immigration office every single day. At last the paperwork was accepted.

Prayers of the Righteous

The LORD is good to those who wait for Him,
To the soul who seeks Him.

It is good that one should hope and wait quietly.

—LAMENTATIONS 3:25–26

Avail Much

They named the baby Sadie-Anna, meaning “God’s graceful princess.” Weeks dragged into months. When the enemy tried to put doubt in Tracey’s mind, she said she’d “holler” to the Lord for help. Church friends continued praying with them night and day.

Then came the day they got the go-ahead call to fly to Washington DC to meet their now seven-month-old daughter. She was escorted to the United States by an Indian citizen recruited by the adoption agency. When they cleared immigration and came into the arrival area, it was obvious they’d had a long, tiring journey.

“The moment we saw her I recognized her face from the one in my dream,” Tracey remembers. “But this little baby was dirty and empty-eyed, showing no emotion, not even to cry. I took her into the airport restroom to give her a bath and dress her in clean clothes. Before our plane took off we prayed, giving her back to the Lord as Sam anointed her with oil.”

They arrived in Tennessee to a host of family and friends gathered for a welcome home party. Throughout the entire evening the baby never smiled or showed any response. But at 2:00 a.m. the next morning when Tracey went to check on her, Sadie-Anna looked up at her new mom and laughed. Though she was seven months old, she couldn’t sit up alone or even roll over. But it wasn’t long before she was able to do both, as well as to cry and laugh and love. Sara and little Sam gladly welcomed her as their baby sister.

At age five Sadie-Anna accepted Jesus as her Savior, and when she was six, she asked to be water baptized. Many times she has said, "I must go back to my own country someday and tell them about Jesus." Tracey and Sam concur.

"God entrusted us with this child, and we will raise her and prepare her to return to India as a missionary someday," Tracey told Quin. "Right now she is eight, and I can say she has been a great blessing; however, we also must resist the enemy's attacks against her because of the call on her life. But we happily accept this task from the Lord. Clearly, God spoke to us through that dream."

OBEDIENCE IS ESSENTIAL

Not only is it important to be attentive to listen for God's voice, but also we must be diligent to respond with prompt obedience when He gives us an assignment, as our next story illustrates.

Liz* and Rob* had prayed for her uncle Leonard* for years. When Aunt Georgia* married him after her first husband died, they were all dismayed that he wouldn't go to church with her. Of course, when he got sick, he wanted the family to pray for him.

One year Liz gave Uncle Leonard a large-print Bible, and in the back of it she wrote out the prayer of salvation. Aunt Georgia was a faithful intercessor who prayed for her husband year after year, even though he showed no interest in spiritual things.

Then Uncle Leonard was hospitalized with heart problems. Because of his advanced age, doctors said surgery was not an option, so they released him to go home and enjoy his last days. "He seemed to be doing fairly well after he got home," Liz reported. "But one morning I felt a tremendous urge from the Holy Spirit to talk to Leonard about his salvation. When my husband called me on his way home from work that day, I shared this with him, and he said he'd go by and talk with Leonard right then."

As he drove Rob began praying, "Lord, help me. Prepare the way for my visit and show me what to say."

When he arrived, Aunt Georgia and Uncle Leonard were watching a TV news clip about Tommy, the Mississippi farmer who had taken a job in Iraq, been captured by terrorists, but then miraculously

escaped. Since this man lived in the area, they were following the story closely. In the interview, when Tommy gave thanks to God for his escape, it was a perfect opening for Rob to start his conversation.

“You know, Uncle Leonard,” Rob said, “when that man was kidnapped he didn’t know whether he’d see the next day or not—and we don’t either. Nobody has the promise of tomorrow. If you were to die tonight, do you know where you would go?”

“No, I’m not sure,” he replied.

“Well, you can be sure,” Rob told him. Pulling his knife from his pocket, he said, “If I told you I’d give you this knife, what would you have to do for it to be yours?”

“I’d have to reach out and take it,” Leonard answered.

“Well, Jesus offers us eternal salvation, but we have to reach out to Him and accept it,” Rob said.

After he continued with a bit more explanation, Leonard closed his eyes and prayed, “Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.” He repeated the sinner’s prayer as Rob led him.

Amazingly, just forty hours later, Leonard died suddenly with no warning. At his funeral several nephews from another state rejoiced when they heard their eighty-nine-year-old uncle finally had accepted the Lord, knowing he was now in God’s presence. They reported that because of being wounded by people in the church in his younger years, he had dropped out and never gone back.

Liz was thrilled that God had used her and Rob to bring this man into the kingdom—she by hearing God’s nudging, and Rob by going that very evening to talk to Uncle Leonard when he was open to respond.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

God wants to teach us to listen. But when praying about emotional issues concerning our children, we may be torn between our own wishes and our desire to hear Him and obey.

Rena* and her husband, Jack,* naturally wanted God’s best for their beautiful, multitalented daughter. Connie* attended Bible school, got her nursing degree, and served a term aboard a

Christian medical ship in Africa. Then she returned to the States and took a job working nights in ICU at a nearby hospital, staying with her parents in a crowded apartment while their new home was being built.

Because of their work schedules, Rena and Jack had very little time with their daughter. But to their great surprise, Connie came to them one day and said that for six months she'd been seeing a male nurse she met at the hospital, and they wanted to get married.

"This man was a stranger to us and certainly didn't fit with the dream I had for my only daughter," Rena told Quin. "He was several years older than Connie and had been married before. Emotions were running high for several days. Finally, we invited Dean* to dinner one weekend. I had four pages of questions to ask him, and he patiently responded to all of them."

Rena and Jack strongly urged the two to delay any marriage plans until after completing their church's extensive premarital counseling. After that, if the pastor approved, they promised to give their blessing to the marriage. Both Dean and Connie agreed to the arrangement.

"Because I'd heard several leaders teach against remarriage following a divorce, I had a huge struggle with this," Rena reported. "Occasionally Connie and I exchanged words that could have caused a serious breach in our relationship. 'O Lord, help me know what to do,' I'd pray. 'This is my daughter—I don't want to be alienated from her.' I'd pray and agonize and pray some more, asking God to direct me."

Prayers of the Righteous

Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For in You do I trust;
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You....
Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God.

—PSALM 143:8, 10

Avail Much

“Then the Lord showed me I had a choice either to be a help or to be a big stumbling block to them. He mercifully helped me change my attitude. Marriage is never easy, and newlyweds need their families’ support, love, and prayers. I decided I could and would give my daughter that.”

Following the counseling sessions, their pastor was convinced that Dean had sincerely trusted Christ as his Savior and was growing in his faith, so Rena and Jack gave their blessing to the marriage. Now, five years later, the couple has been blessed with twin baby girls that are a delight to their grandparents’ hearts, and Rena babysits them two days a week. Connie and Dean are praying together and living their lives to please the One who has shown this family so much mercy and grace.

“Connie amazes me with the maturity and patience she has in mothering her own daughters,” Rena said. “Had I stubbornly held to my own ideas and plans, I could have lost her and lost the opportunity to know my twin grandbabies. Sometimes when we ask for God’s direction, He first wants to deal with us about the need to change our fixed mind-sets. I’m so glad I listened and obeyed.”

PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION

Supplication in prayer is an earnest request or the act of humbly beseeching God. Paul provides excellent guidelines for prayer in Philippians 4:6–7:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

In his book *Crafted Prayer*, Graham Cooke suggests that we need to combine our supplication with thanksgiving. When we don’t know exactly how to pray, we should enter God’s presence with thanksgiving and praise to Him. Then ask questions such as:

- “So, what are You up to?”
- “What’s happening here?”
- “I know You. You’re up to something...what is it?”
- “What does that look like?”
- “What’s the plan, Father?”
- “What do You want me to do?”

After that Graham prays, asking God to show him His ways, for he truly desires to hear and obey—to joyfully cooperate with Him.

“And then I’m simply still. And I listen. And I meditate on God, waiting for Him to speak,” he explains. “He will give you key words and phrases and a sense of His objective. Then He might supplement that with Scripture or pictures. Write everything down as it comes to you. As you do, a peace will fall on you, and a confidence will begin to rise in your spirit.”⁴

This pastor records the many answers to prayer he’s seen since he has learned to ask, “What is God up to?” When he hears, he aligns his prayers to cooperate with the Lord’s plan. But it all involves learning to listen!

WAITING EXPECTANTLY

We began this chapter by saying that *waiting* is not a favorite thing for most of us. But waiting is part of the process of trusting God that, in His timing, we will see results.

When the word *wait* appears in the Bible, it often means “to look for, expect, and hope.” Found some fifty times in the Old Testament, the word *wait* is the root of a noun meaning hope or expectancy. So it expresses the idea of “waiting hopefully with expectancy.”⁵

Prayers of the Righteous

But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

—ISAIAH 40:31

Avail Much

It doesn't mean that we stop praying, asking, and believing. In our waiting times we plant our trust in Him even more firmly, building "spiritual muscle" by:

- Realizing He wants to speak to us, anywhere and anytime He chooses
- Learning to discern His voice from other voices
- Becoming more patient in waiting for Him to speak
- Remembering to write down what He says so we have it for future reference
- Evaluating what we've heard, making sure it lines up with Scripture and God's true character

When God does speak, may we be like young Samuel and respond, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Sam. 3:10), waiting expectantly, anticipating His voice.

As we gain experience in hearing from God clearly, we become better equipped to do battle against the enemy and his strategies, as we'll see in the next chapter.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You that You still yearn to speak to us today. Help me be alert to hear Your still, small voice, whether through a Bible passage, a friend, a thought, or a song You drop into my mind. Lord, give me discernment to know which is Your voice, which is my own, and which is the voice of the enemy. Give me ears to listen only to Your voice and a heart willing to obey. Holy Spirit, be my teacher, I ask in Jesus's name. Amen.

Prayer is not so much a weapon, or even a part of the armor, as it is the means by which we engage in the battle itself and the purpose for which we are armed. To put on the armor of God is to prepare for battle. Prayer is the battle itself, with God's Word being our chief weapon employed against Satan during our struggle.^{[1](#)}

—Dick Eastman

4

Lord, EQUIP ME FOR BATTLE

Though the goal of our enemy always is to steal, kill, and destroy, God can equip us for battle and lead us to victory in our prayer assignments.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against...spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

—EPHESIANS 6:10–13, NIV

HAVE YOU EVER tried to pray, only to have trouble with sleepiness? Or struggled to sleep, but your mind is bombarded with disturbing thoughts? Or you discover your teenager is playing occultic computer games or visiting questionable chat rooms?

Satan is at work. Do you recognize his strategies? Paul instructs us to take a stand against his evil schemes.

When Satan came to tempt Jesus after His baptism, Jesus rebuked the enemy by declaring, "Satan, it is written..." as He quoted Scripture. Some people hesitate to do this, but we are on safe ground when we follow Jesus' example. "To Jesus the devil is a real person," wrote E. M. Bounds. "He recognized his personality, felt

and acknowledged his power, abhorred his character, and warred against his kingdom. We should do the same.”²

God provides us with weapons for every enemy attack. We can resist the devil and his demonic plans through using the name of Jesus, declaring the power of His blood, and proclaiming the Word of God. (See chart “The Weapons of Our Warfare” on page 68.) We are empowered to do this because Jesus has invested us with His authority, but we must boldly take our stand in that authority to see the enemy defeated.

HEAD KNOWLEDGE OR HEART KNOWLEDGE?

Sometimes we have head knowledge of Jesus’s promise to believers, “I have given you authority...to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you” (Luke 10:19, NIV). But when fear tries to make us think otherwise, head knowledge has to move to heart knowledge with the assurance that God’s Word is true.

My (Quin’s) friend Carol learned this lesson in a dramatic way one night when a masked intruder burst into her home while she and her husband, Dick, were watching the late news.

“Give me all your money!” he shouted, waving a handgun and brandishing a knife. “I want money, and I want it now. I’m sick.” Clearly, he was high on drugs.

Fear gripped Carol’s heart. Just that morning during her prayer time she had meditated on Psalm 91:9–10: “If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster come near your tent” (NIV).

Admitting her cowardice to the Lord, she had written in her prayer journal, “Lord, I am such a chicken. I don’t want to live in fear.”

The intruder took Dick’s heirloom ring and then marched them upstairs to where Dick’s wallet was put away. When the robber opened it and found only eight dollars, he began cursing furiously. Suddenly Carol remembered where some gold coins were hidden. Pointing to the bureau, she said, “You can have our gold coins in one of those drawers.”

Still holding the gun on them, the thief dropped to his knees and pawed through the drawers. Carol knew the jittery man could shoot them at any moment. She was praying silently, “Help! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, help us!”

As soon as he found the coins, Carol felt a surge of strength, boldness, and courage rising up within her. Looking the robber in the eye, she raised her voice and declared, “In the name of Jesus, this is *our* house!”

Prayers of the Righteous

Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
fight against those who fight against me.

Take up shield and buckler;
arise and come to my aid....

May those who seek my life
be disgraced and put to shame;
may those who plot my ruin
be turned back in dismay.

May they be like chaff before the wind,
with the angel of the LORD driving them away.

—PSALM 35:1–2, 4–5, NIV

Avail Much

The result was immediate. “I didn’t want to hurt you, I didn’t want to hurt you,” he whimpered apologetically. Still on his knees, he fell over on his side as if a giant hand had shoved him. Stumbling to his feet, he ran down the stairs and out into the night.

Carol didn’t know who was more surprised, she or the fleeing man. But she no longer felt like a coward. She had been emboldened to declare her property off-limits to a criminal. By simply speaking the name of Jesus with authority, her courage increased and her fear dissipated. The Lord, her refuge, had protected my friend and her husband.

Over dinner in her home one evening, Carol told me of that watershed moment when fear was broken from her during a night of terror. “Now I know in my heart that I don’t have to fear. I use God’s Word and His promises daily,” she said.³

Because she had meditated on Scripture earlier in the day, Carol was better prepared for the enemy’s sudden attack. She definitely learned the importance of being battle-ready and armed with the Word of God.

Arthur Mathews writes, “In a conflict situation a soldier’s best friend is his weapon, because it is his one resource for disposing of the enemy, securing his own safety, and accomplishing the will of his captain.”⁴

A REAL ADVERSARY

Satan is God’s enemy and ours. His very name means “adversary, or one who opposes.” Scripture confirms that he’s been our foe since the beginning, and his goal is clear: to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

Keep in mind, however, that Satan is a created being; he does not have the attributes that God possesses. Satan is not omnipotent—his power is limited. He is not omniscient—his knowledge is limited. And he is not omnipresent—he cannot be everywhere in the universe at the same time. That’s why he relies on demons and emissaries to carry out his work.

Prayers of the Righteous

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.

—1 PETER 5:8–9

Avail Much

Some may say, “But talk about Satan, demons, and evil principalities frightens me. Besides, if Jesus defeated him on the cross, I have no reason to be concerned.”

Satan can do nothing to change the fact that his final defeat was settled by Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. But this fallen archangel still tries to wreak havoc with our minds, families, jobs, cities, and nations—wherever he can secure a foothold. So what is our role? To enforce Christ’s victory through prayer and spiritual warfare. Ours is not a passive role—we must use our authority. And we must carefully discern the works of the enemy against whom we are to war as we’re led by the Holy Spirit. Scripture refers to Satan with names such as deceiver, destroyer, tempter, liar, god of this age, angel of light, and accuser. Such names reveal his character and also help us understand his methods.⁵

Our friend Dean Sherman shares helpful insight on the authority we are to walk in:

The balance of power on the earth rests with man in the name of Jesus Christ. The authority is complete in man as long as man is in relationship with God through Jesus Christ. With our authority comes the responsibility to use it for God’s purposes. If we don’t rebuke the devil, he will not be rebuked. If we don’t drive him back, he will not leave. It is up to us. Satan knows of our authority, but hopes we will stay ignorant. We must be as convinced of our authority as the devil is.⁶

EXERCISING OUR AUTHORITY

To use our spiritual authority effectively we need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s promptings and guidance. Parents need to be especially discerning because the evil one targets our children, as our next story illustrates.

One evening when Doris’s* thirteen-year-old son returned from visiting a friend, he threw his backpack in his bedroom and joined his

parents and some visitors in the living room. Somehow she sensed something was wrong. “God, what is it?” she prayed.

“Roger* brought something into the house that is not holy,” she felt God told her. When Doris went to the bedroom and searched his backpack, she pulled out a pornographic video and took it to her bedroom.

After their guests had left and she showed her husband the video, they agreed to pray before talking to Roger. The next morning they confronted him with the evidence, telling him they knew he was not using the small television in his bedroom just to play Nintendo, but to watch blatant pornography.

“I need my privacy,” he argued.

“Privacy is a privilege—when you abuse it, you lose it,” Doris replied. “Your father and I have established the standard of Christ in our home. You live here by that grace.”

As she prayed over his room, Doris anointed the television set and in essence commanded that no more unrighteousness be released through it. Three days later it literally blew up with a big puff of smoke.

When Roger continued to exhibit deep-seated rebellion, Doris enlisted prayer partners to come to her home to pray for her son. Asking them to pray without criticizing him, she said this was key: no judgmental attitudes, only concern for a son who needed the Savior. Sometimes the group of intercessors would sit on his bed and just sing praises to God.

Realizing they were in a spiritual battle for Roger, they wrote Scripture verses on paper and placed them around his room—under his mattress, on top of the fan blades, in the closet. This was one way they fought with the Word of God. Doris was claiming Isaiah 49:24–25 (NIV):

Can plunder be taken from warriors,
or captives rescued from the fierce?

But this is what the LORD says:

“Yes, captives will be taken from warriors,
and plunder retrieved from the fierce;
I will contend with those who contend with you,
and your children I will save.”

While the prayer battle continued, Doris and her husband showered Roger with love while remaining mindful of his need for parental oversight. Doris says whenever there was a hint something was amiss, she would get a picture or a word from God, and then she would confront Roger with it. She was always accurate, and he would admit his sin.

Month after month as the spiritual battle dragged on, discouragement sometimes set in. But two years later Roger asked his parents for forgiveness. After asking them to help him get deliverance and healing, he was set free and is serving God today.⁷

While writing this chapter, a friend phoned me (Quin) to help her in fighting the enemy's tactics. Her daughter was at that moment at the courthouse in a child custody battle. Her husband bragged that he could play mind-control games with his wife, lawyers, and even judges. Wealthy and highly educated, he was determined to maintain control of the children and prove he could have his way. The enemy used this abusive man to bring much grief to my friend's family.

“This calls for spiritual warfare,” I told her. While she was on the phone, we bound the devil's interference and quoted several warfare scriptures. Later that week the judge saw through this man's lies and craftiness and ruled in favor of the Christian mother by giving her sole custody of her children.

When looking at seemingly impossible circumstances, it is good to remember something our minister friend often taught: “Don't tell God how big your mountain is—tell your mountain how big your God is!”

THE BLOOD OF JESUS

It was the shedding of Jesus's blood that secured our salvation and opened the way for us to be declared righteous by Father God. We can use this mighty weapon of warfare to declare the devil's defeat

because it will never lose its power to deliver. It is our shield of protection from the evil one. Many intercessors use this weapon by “pleading the blood” when praying for unsaved loved ones, for protection, and in various situations.

This is a declaration to the enemy that the blood of Jesus establishes a boundary that he is forbidden to cross. It is based on God’s instruction to the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and put some of the blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses for protection from the plague of death. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” He promised them (Exod. 12:13). Of course the sacrificial lamb was a foreshadowing of Jesus becoming our eternal sacrifice.

H. A. Maxwell Whyte writes:

In the natural world, we would have no difficulty understanding how to apply disinfectant to an infection. ...Now we should have no difficulty in doing the same thing spiritually. Wherever Satan is at work, we must apply the only corrective antidote there is—the Blood of Jesus. There is absolutely no alternative, no substitute. ...The Blood of Jesus is the only effective counter-agent to corruption.^{[8](#)}

WORSHIP IS A WEAPON

We generally have no problem with shouting and praising God after we have had a breakthrough or received a great victory report. But worship also is a weapon to be used while we are still in the thick of battle.

The story of King Jehoshaphat teaches us that when he sent singers ahead of the army to sing praises to God, the enemy was defeated (2 Chron. 20:18–23, 29). And when Paul and Silas sang and praised God after being beaten and thrown in prison, an earthquake shook the place and freed the prisoners (Acts 16:16–26). As worshiping warriors, we fight from a position of victory, not defeat (Eph. 1:18–23; 2:6–7).

This powerful offensive weapon has a threefold purpose:

1. It exalts and glorifies God, declaring His lordship.
2. It sends confusion to the ranks of the enemy.
3. It encourages us by reminding us that God's power is greater than the enemy's attack.

Pastor Jack Taylor reminds us of the power this weapon has in warfare:

Nothing terrifies the devil and his demons like praise. Praise brings the consciousness of the presence of God with all that accompanies it....Praise, the continuing exercise of heaven, is clearly etched into the memory of the devil and every other fallen angel. The memory of the aborted revolution, in which they all lost their lofty positions, is haunting and all too clear in their minds....When they hear biblical praises they are driven to panic....Their ranks are broken.⁹

THE POWER OF PRAISE

Joyce Mays, in her mid-forties, thought she was going through early menopause because of intense pain in her abdomen. One November day in 2004 she screamed as searing pain shot through her like hot coals. In the emergency room, doctors ordered an intravenous morphine drip to ease her pain.

After conducting extensive tests, the doctors did surgery to remove a tumor the size of a large grapefruit, which thankfully was not cancerous. They also performed a partial hysterectomy. After surgery, though her pain was gone, Joyce could not keep any food down, and she rapidly lost forty pounds. Her hair was falling out, her memory was fading, and she would pass out if she bent over. It was too risky even to climb into bed, so she spent most of the next six months lying on a mattress on the floor of her bedroom. During much of this ordeal her Air Force husband was stationed in Iraq.

Prayers of the Righteous

Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?...Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

—JEREMIAH 32:26; 33:3

Avail Much

“All I could do was sing and praise and worship the Lord—I’d make up songs and sing the hymns I could remember,” Joyce said. “I also prayed in tongues a lot—it was easier because sometimes I couldn’t formulate prayers with my mind.”

On some Sundays one of her daughters would drive her to church. “There I praised the Lord—probably too loudly for some church members—but praising was my medicine,” she recalled. “I’d sing and raise my hands as much as I could. By the time the preacher gave the sermon I couldn’t focus anymore, but I was in an atmosphere of worship.

“I believe praise can be the release for deliverance to come in our lives. I learned I needed to continue to thank Him and praise Him even when I didn’t see much change in my condition. The more I praised God, the more strength I received.”

Doctors never established a clear diagnosis, even after she went back to the hospital for additional tests. Joyce embraced as her own the promise of Psalm 30:5: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

“My body wasn’t able to take in any nutrition and keep it down—it was virtually shutting down. I knew if medicine couldn’t help, only God could. He was going to be my Healer as I totally leaned on Him. When the apostles laid hands on the sick, the Bible says they recovered. Well, I was in a ‘progressive recovery’ as I praised my way to healing. Today I take no medications and can eat whatever I want—I’m probably 96 percent back to normal. Others who see me are amazed at how well I look now.”

PRAYER WITH FASTING

Experienced prayer warriors have learned that fasting is a significant element in spiritual warfare and intercession. We see many examples of fasting throughout Scripture, including Jesus's instructions for how to pray. In Matthew 6:16, He said, "*When* you fast," indicating that this is a characteristic of prayer He expected from His followers (emphasis added).

When Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He fasted for forty days, He prevailed in three confrontations with the devil by declaring the Word of God. Afterward He "returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Luke 4:14). It seems clear that Jesus's fasting led to His operating in increased spiritual power. Arthur Wallis provides this perspective:

You should expect that a season of fasting would prove to be for you, as it was for your Master, a time of conflict with the powers of darkness.

...Often in seasons of prayer and fasting you will find the going harder instead of easier, and will seem to experience less rather than more liberty. This is often when most is happening. This is wrestling. This is heavenly warfare. Your Captain did not promise you a walk-over but a fight, and gave you the weapons to win....When exercised with a pure heart and a right motive, fasting may provide us with a key to unlock doors where other keys have failed.[10](#)

There are many different ways to fast: abstaining from meat, abstaining from sweets or a favorite food, eating only vegetables, taking only bread and water or only liquids, fasting one meal, or fasting from sundown one evening until sundown the next. Then there are prolonged fasts: a week, ten days, two weeks, up to forty days—the longest fast recorded in Scripture.

Some people who for health reasons cannot go without food choose to give up sweets, television, or a favorite food or activity as an act of denying themselves and setting aside a time to pray.

It's advisable to seek the Lord's guidance as to the length and type of your fast; try shorter periods of fasting before you launch a prolonged fast. You will find this weapon has several benefits:

1. You can concentrate on prayer and the reading of Scripture, taking time to meditate and wait on the Lord.
2. You become more sensitive to the spiritual realm, more aware of the Holy Spirit's leading.
3. You gain deeper insight into the Word of God—sometimes it speaks to you with conviction and correction, sometimes with comfort.
4. The Holy Spirit often gives you revelation about the enemy's plans, as well as strategy for how to wage your warfare.

Years ago when the Lord called me (Ruthanne) to a one-week fast to pray for my son, I was sure I wasn't "spiritual" enough to complete it. I don't claim that it was easy, but each day God spoke to me through my Bible reading and gave me understanding and strategy for the situation I was praying about.

I would prepare meals for my family, go to the bedroom to pray while they were eating, and then enjoy fellowship with the Lord while doing dishes. Since this was my first time to fast for seven days, I took water and clear juices or broth. After that I fasted every Friday for a year. As I allowed the Holy Spirit to work in my own heart, the relationship with my son improved.

THE GOAL OF OUR WARFARE

Why do we engage in spiritual battle? The eighteenth-century Moravians lived by this slogan: "To win for the Lamb the reward of His suffering." The reason we use our spiritual weapons is to see the enemy defeated in people's lives, in churches, in communities, in nations, and in whatever situation God assigns to us.

Victory means final and complete supremacy in battle—the triumphant end of a military engagement or success in defeating an opponent. We battle to overcome whatever obstacle or opposition is preventing God’s plan from being fulfilled. Victory is assured when we carry out His directive, operate in His will and timing, and refuse to concede to the enemy.

Prayers of the Righteous

Through God we will do valiantly, For it is He who shall tread down our enemies.

—PSALM 60:12

Avail Much

The Book of Nehemiah is an excellent example of this. After fasting and seeking God’s direction, Nehemiah tried to rebuild the broken-down walls of Jerusalem. He scouted out the land at night, then shared his plans with the elders and got their cooperation.

Sometimes after we have “scouted out” the spiritual problems in our families, we may want to gather a few intercessors to join us to “rebuild the wall.” We pray until it is repaired and the family member(s) rescued or restored.

Because the walls were in disrepair, Nehemiah’s foes could move freely in and out of the city. They mocked and ridiculed Nehemiah, tried to get him to negotiate, and even accused him of rebellion against the king. Doesn’t that sound just like the devil when he taunts us?

Nehemiah’s answer to his enemies is one we can use when the adversary scoffs at us: “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it” (Neh. 2:20, NIV).

When the Israelites grew fearful and complained to Nehemiah, he said, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes” (Neh. 4:14, NIV).

Likewise, we need to continue fighting while clinging to God's promises for ourselves or our family and friends. Our next story illustrates how we can resist the enemy by declaring God's truth.

“I’M FREE TO BE ME!”

“Don’t you ever laugh or have fun?” I (Quin) asked Leigh* as we drove down the mountain following the conference where I had spoken. Leigh had been among the select intercessors engaged in prayer both before and during the meetings. I knew she was a serious Christian—almost too serious.

“I want to be able to laugh, I really do,” she admitted. “I guess I’m bound by fear—afraid to have a good time.” Those of us in the van prayed against the fear that was holding her back while she struggled with the idea that she could get rid of it. We encouraged her to say aloud over and over, “You spirit of fear, go in Jesus’s name! You have no more power over me.” What followed was an intense spiritual battle as she squirmed in the backseat.

The rest of us prayed quietly in our prayer language for her freedom. About ten minutes passed, and then we heard Leigh scream, “I’m free, I’m free! I’m free to be me!” She was so free that shortly afterward she attended a wedding with her family and danced and laughed and had a ball. Her children couldn’t believe she was the same mom!

What had caused this great intercessor to get so bound? In her younger years, after a spiritual leader accused her of being “too silly,” she fell into a trap of wrong thinking about herself and God.

“I thought being serious was spiritual and more pleasing to God,” she told me. “Having fun was a waste of time and less productive, so I was trying to please God and gain His approval even if that meant being someone I wasn’t. But after getting set free, I stopped striving and focusing so much on my performance.”

It’s important to be alert against receiving darts from the enemy’s camp that distract us from fulfilling God’s purpose. Today Leigh is one of the key intercessors in her large city church and has since prayed with many people and seen them delivered. Thankfully, she recognized her bondage and today is free to laugh and enjoy life.

As Dean Sherman says, “Every good soldier goes into battle well prepared. Not only is he appropriately armed to defeat his enemy, but he knows what to expect when he arrives on the battlefield. More importantly, he understands the nature of his enemy and of the war in which he is engaged.”¹¹

Once we are fully equipped for battle, we simply need to determine that it is always too soon to quit! It is by refusing to give up that we become overcomers, as we see in the next chapter.

PRAYER

Lord, enable me to fight my spiritual battles valiantly with Your authority, using the weapons You provide. Help me always to get Your strategies and battle plans and avoid acting in presumption. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide me. I praise You in advance for the victory that will bring glory and honor to Your name! Amen.

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

The Name of Jesus—Our Authority

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

—LUKE 10:19

The Blood of Jesus

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

—MATTHEW 26:28

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

—1 JOHN 1:7;
see also 1 PETER 1:19

The Word of God

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

—HEBREWS 4:12, NIV

Praise and Worship

Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

—2 CHRONICLES 20:22,
but read all of this chapter

Clapping and Shouting

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
For the LORD Most High is awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.
He will subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.

—PSALM 47:1–3;
see also ZEPHANIAH 3:14–15; PSALM 144:1

Joy and Laughter

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.

—PSALM 126:1–2

Guidance by the Holy Spirit

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

—ROMANS 8:26–27

...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

—EPHESIANS 6:18

Fasting With Prayer

Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?

—ISAIAH 58:6;
see also Nehemiah 1:4, 7; Daniel 9:3, 5

Our entering into a one-to-One relationship with Jesus enables Him to handle not only our immediate material and physical needs, but also deeper needs, the hidden ones involving right attitudes and healthy emotions, proper motivation, and how to solve our relationship problems. There's so much I want to learn about that: "Lord, teach me to pray."¹

—Catherine Marshall

Lord,
HELP ME OVERCOME

When we learn, with God's help, how to deal with the personal issues hindering us, then we can be overcomers in other prayer burdens the Lord gives us.

...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

—1 JOHN 5:4–5, NIV

WHEN YOU HEAR the word *overcomer*, what comes to mind? Someone who prevails in spite of difficulties or obstacles? One who triumphs over sickness? A winner? Or one who conquers negative emotions? Yes, all these describe an overcomer. But Scripture assures us that we can be “more than conquerors.”

Paul wrote, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37). The phrase “more than conquerors” means “over and above.” It describes one who is super victorious, who wins more than an ordinary victory.²

As we seek to pray with power, we must be alert to areas that hinder us from walking close to the Lord and seeing our prayers answered. We may need to address and resolve our own vulnerable areas such as grief, fear, anger, unforgiveness, unbelief, disobedience, self-reliance, or selfishness.

GOD'S WAYS ARE HIGHER

In December 2003, I (Ruthanne) was hit with a tidal wave of grief and bewilderment when my husband suffered a massive heart attack early one Saturday morning and never regained consciousness. This happened on the third morning after his return from a three-week missions trip to South Africa. Of course I prayed for him. I rebuked death. Then I began screaming "Breathe! Breathe!" Finally I dialed 911 and tried to administer CPR as the operator gave me instructions over the phone. No response.

Riding in the ambulance with the siren wailing, I was calling prayer partners on my cell phone and asking them to pray. Yet, somehow I knew in my heart that John had already entered the Lord's presence before I'd even had time to pray for him or call for help. When the emergency room doctor gave me the grim news, immediately the Lord brought to mind Isaiah 55:8–9:

My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways....
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Upon returning home I walked into an empty house, and it hit me: "*I'm a widow!*" I had been so happy to have John home again, and we were making plans for Christmas and a big birthday celebration for him just after the holidays. It seemed so unreal that he was gone in an instant, and I was now overwhelmed with planning a funeral instead of a party. In the end, we turned his memorial service into a celebration of his life and ministry.

Prayers of the Righteous

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My

Father on His throne.

—REVELATION 3:21

Avail Much

In the perplexing days that followed, I clung to those verses from Isaiah for assurance that this was God's time to take John home—that He had a plan for my future and that He would help me overcome. Slowly I began to realize how, in the preceding months, God had been preparing me for this season of my life.

About a year earlier, God had dealt with me about making my personal prayer time my top priority. John and I prayed together every morning when we were both home, but I had allowed the busyness of life to infringe upon my own time with the Lord.

I began getting up earlier each morning, spending time upstairs alone in my “prayer chair.” Those months of reordering my spiritual priorities strengthened me for what God knew lay ahead. When a wave of despair would roll over me, I would put on my favorite CDs and enter into worship, thanking God for His faithfulness through our almost forty years of marriage and ministry. Playing worship music when I couldn't sleep kept me reminded that the Lord was always near. Slowly I have regained my equilibrium.

Now, in my fourth year of widowhood, I have to remain determined to guard my time with the Lord to prevent grief from overtaking me and hindering my prayer life. By keeping my priorities in order and staying connected with the Holy Spirit, I continue to overcome.

Yes, with God's help we can deal with our personal issues head-on. And in the process we gain spiritual strength to be more than conquerors in the prayer assignments He gives us.

SHE GAVE GOD HER HURTS

In the following story we meet Anita* who, through a painful process, was able to relinquish her hurts and fears to God. Her struggle had a happy ending, but it was no overnight victory.

Anita and Rick* had been married nineteen years and had three children. Yet for much of that time Anita felt she had to walk on

eggshells since Rick was verbally abusive and extremely controlling. His berating, harsh words penetrated her soul. “I wouldn’t stand up for myself because I thought I should keep the peace at any cost. God had to teach me that marriage consists of equal partners,” she remembers.

“Rick was a successful businessman, but a workaholic who lugged his work home. We had no fun as a couple or as a family. Though I stayed in the marriage for years, I grew discouraged and hopeless. I attended church regularly and prayed often. I was involved in our children’s activities and kept books for my husband’s business. I tried to do everything I thought a good Christian wife should do, but it seemed I was working against an impossible obstacle. His rejection of me played havoc with my mind.”

Prayers of the Righteous

Despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels can’t, and the demons can’t. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can’t keep God’s love away.

—ROMANS 8:37–38, NLT

Avail Much

God occasionally gave Anita glimmers of hope. One was a picture of herself standing at a window with lace curtains looking out into the night. Staring into that darkness she’d see a tiny light in the distance, which told her that somehow she was going to make it through the blackness of her hurts, fears, and unforgiveness.

“Even though I had married for life and divorce wasn’t even in my vocabulary, I got a divorce to protect myself from Rick’s verbal abuse,” she said. “God told me He had called me to peace, and I didn’t have peace—nor did my children. Sometimes I was too

overwhelmed even to pray. Once at a conference a woman I didn't know said to me, 'You are so weak, I am going to stand in the gap and pray for you.' She did pray, and every once in while she would call and ask for a progress report."

Anita remained a single mom for eight years while keeping a friendly relationship with Rick because of their children. Going to counseling helped her face her need to forgive, and she worked hard at it, giving it to God over and over. Every time she'd read the Bible, she was impacted by the power of God's grace extended to her as a free gift. But it also reminded her that she needed to extend grace to her ex-husband. Step-by-step she was able to truly forgive him.

"I never planned to marry anyone else," she said. "I was going to keep myself pure before God, so that if one day I did remarry Rick, I would have no regrets."

Then, miraculously, Rick had a three-day encounter with God that caused him to recognize what he had done to his family. Devastated, he asked Anita and each of their three children to forgive him for his horrible behavior. He even asked Anita's parents and sister for forgiveness and told his own parents he was going to change.

Not only did Rick begin attending church, but he also developed a genuine relationship with the Lord. When he felt God assured him that in time he would win Anita back, he bought a new diamond ring, waiting for the day he could ask her to remarry him.

Five years after his commitment to the Lord, following a sixmonth courtship, Rick popped the question. And Anita said yes. They went for counseling together, acknowledging that God had changed their hearts. That summer, some twenty-seven years after they had first exchanged vows, they had a beautiful outdoor wedding surrounded by family and friends.

And did this man change! They built a lovely new home, and instead of bringing his work home, Rick spends that time with Anita, and they go to church together. They've been remarried for five years. The peace Anita had so longed for now permeates her home.

WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK?

A major obstacle to being able to overcome in prayer is fear. The Greek word for *fear*, *phobos*, from which we derive the word *phobia*, first meant “flight”—then, “that which may cause flight.” In other words, when something makes us afraid, our human reaction is to run away.³

Prayers of the Righteous

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind...put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

—EPHESIANS 4:22–24

Avail Much

In the natural realm this may be a means of protecting ourselves. But to overcome in the spiritual realm, we need to confront and resist these obstacles. When we allow fear or doubt to dominate our thoughts, it blurs our spiritual vision and weakens our faith. Essentially, we’re telling God that we don’t trust Him. The late Paul Billheimer offers this antidote:

The missing element in prayer that does not prevail is triumphant faith. And the missing element in faith that does not triumph is praise—perpetual, purposeful, aggressive praise. Praise is the highest form of prayer because it combines petition with faith. Praise is the spark plug of faith. It is the one thing needed to get faith airborne, enabling it to soar above the deadly miasma of doubt. Praise is the detergent which purifies faith and purges doubt from the heart. The secret of answered prayer is faith without doubt (Mark 11:23).⁴

The greater the obstacle we face, the greater our test of faith. But when we press through to victory, God alone receives all glory and honor. This was the experience of the young Texas family in our next story.

BOLDNESS TO OVERCOME

When Jennie's thirty-one-year-old husband, Erik, was suffering from congestive heart failure, they moved from their West Texas home to a hospital in Dallas where he was to receive a heart transplant. He had been hospitalized on and off for most of a year while doctors did everything possible to keep him alive. Then they got devastating news. Two social workers came into Erik's room one morning and told them their insurance was not sufficient to cover the cost of the transplant surgery and associated treatment. Jennie shares the story of their journey:

According to the hospital and our insurance company, Erik's heart replacement was an optional procedure, so if our insurance didn't cover it, they intended to stabilize him and send us home to await the inevitable progression of his heart failure. No transplant workup, no more lifesaving measures.

I was indignant and scared out of my mind that they would release Erik. By that afternoon I received word that the next morning I was to meet with the hospital's head transplant physician and the director of financial services. This meeting would determine whether Erik could qualify for the transplant or if we'd be going home.

All that night I prayed my heart out. My parents, who were keeping our children, prayed. Friends from our church gathered to pray—everyone who knew us was interceding before the throne for mercy in this situation.

I began reading the story of Gideon in Judges 6 and 7. Over and over I read these chapters about the Israelites crying out to God because they were being oppressed by the Midianites. The angel of the Lord came and told Gideon to go against the intruders and that He would save Israel. Victory was promised, but it would be done with only a small band of fighters, not a huge army, so that no man would receive the glory.

What a revelation! Just as He had done with Gideon's army by reducing it to a small number, God wanted to remove any other source of help and strength we had so that He alone would receive the glory! I prayed that I would be bold like Gideon and trust God to intervene on our behalf.

Prayers of the Righteous

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

—2 CORINTHIANS 2:14

Avail Much

The next morning I walked into that insurance meeting with enormous confidence. My dad offered to handle the whole situation for me, but I knew God had anointed me as Erik's ambassador in this situation. Of course, had I gone into that meeting without the power of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of the Word and Gideon's example, I would have failed miserably. But the Word empowered me to confront the hospital officials boldly. Later that morning I walked out of the meeting with a guarantee that the hospital would accept our insurance and begin Erik's transplant workup.

Within a few months he had the transplant, and six months later he returned to work full-time. He has remained healthy and active, and less than two years after the surgery we welcomed a baby girl into the family. We had surrendered the dream of having another child after Erik got sick, but God is so good to do more than we ask for or expect. We recently celebrated his three-year anniversary and are optimistic that Erik will walk his daughters down the aisle and see his grandkids. God is that big!

This adventure of faith started my lifelong pursuit of the knowledge of God and changed my perspective on praying the Word. Without the huge outpouring of prayer from our families, church, and friends, I don't know how we would have made it.

GETTING OUT OF GOD'S WAY

For Jennie and her husband to overcome the challenge they faced, God directed her to take specific action. But God deals with each of us in different ways, depending on the situation.

Anthea is an intercessor whose husband, Nick, suddenly faced a crisis when he caught a virus that seriously affected his heart muscle, causing him to have to fight for every breath. After he was admitted to the hospital, Anthea stayed by his bedside, praying day and night for many days.

"I now realize that my prayers were becoming more and more 'frantic' as I saw his life slowly ebbing away," she said. "Then the Lord graciously spoke these words to me: 'If you will get out of the way, I can get to him.' My heart was heavy as I left his room that day, but I knew the Lord had spoken. I had to entrust my husband into God's hands."

The next morning she hurried back to the hospital, only to find Nick much improved.

"This is his story," Anthea reported. "The night before, Nick 'saw' himself going down into a dry, burned-out place. Then Jesus appeared below him, led him back out of that valley, and spoke to

him concerning direction for his future. Over time Nick returned to normal life, obeyed the Lord's direction to him to attend Bible school, and found his place in ministry until the Lord took him home some years later."

Anthea said she learned from this experience that, when praying, "I could get in God's way! I could be praying from a fear base rather than a faith base. I could reach a point where I needed to release a person or situation to the Lord, particularly when praying for family and loved ones where I'm emotionally involved.

"Although I've continued to find these insights valuable in certain situations in order for prayer to be answered, I've also realized they're not always easy to apply," she concluded.

Today Anthea serves as coordinator for a prayer ministry in Virginia, where she is able to share the useful lessons she's learned in prayer.

LISTEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Humble myself? Admit I'm at fault? You've got to be kidding! These thoughts might run through our minds when the Holy Spirit is trying to spotlight a sin we need to acknowledge and ask His help in overcoming.

Clara* shares how God dealt with her until she acknowledged that her unforgiveness was obstructing her relationship with God. Actually, revealing such heart issues is one of the roles of the Holy Spirit. But He also is the one who comes alongside to help us follow through with obedience.

She was an officer's wife, working for a branch university on the military base where she lived. Clara and her boss, Ben,* a retired colonel, were the only two in the office. At first they got along well. But before long Clara discovered Ben was being unfaithful to his wife during the week, only going home on weekends. His air of superiority and constant references to his military rank caused her to lose respect for him. Gradually their relationship deteriorated.

After she had worked for him just over a year, Ben suddenly fired her. "He said one of us had to go, and it wasn't going to be him,"

Clara reported. “I was shocked, angry, and upset with feeling such rejection.”

She nursed her hurt with a big dose of unforgiveness. Over and over she tried to forgive him in her heart. But nagging thoughts kept coming to mind: *I did a good job for him. How could he fire me? It just isn't fair.* Then she'd offer another prayer asking God to help her forgive.

Not long afterward Clara and her husband moved across the country when her husband was transferred. Four months passed. Clara prayed many times about her need for a heartchange. One day she prayed in deep anguish, “Lord, help me resolve this struggle and get closure on it. Show me what to do and how to get peace in my heart toward Ben. I must not have forgiven him, or these thoughts wouldn't still plague me.”

She was surprised at His direction to her. “He showed me that Ben had dismissed me because he was offended,” she said. “My attitude toward him was wrong—I hadn't been a perfect employee. God wanted me to call and ask him to forgive me for offending him. I had no idea I shared any blame for the situation.”

Prayers of the Righteous

But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God....But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

—JAMES 1:19–20, 22, NASU

Avail Much

Knowing she had to humble herself and obey God, Clara asked her husband's advice. “Go for it,” he said.

“It was Thanksgiving Day, not exactly the ideal time to call someone and ask for forgiveness,” she remembers. “But I couldn't live with this burden much longer. I had Ben's old home number and

took a chance that he still lived there. With shaking hands I dialed the phone, and he answered.

“I told him I’d been praying and the Lord wanted me to call him and apologize for my behavior while I worked for him. He said something like, ‘Sure, these things happen.’ He was kind and cordial, and we wished each other a happy Thanksgiving.”

Their conversation was short and to the point, but that one phone call gave her the relief and closure she had been longing for. She knew the matter of his unfaithfulness to his wife had to be left to God’s judgment, but by admitting her own sin, she felt she received forgiveness from her ex-boss and also from the Lord.

Most of us have found ourselves in a situation like Clara’s when we try in our own strength to forgive someone who has offended us. Jesus’s words are very clear: “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25, NIV).

“To forgive is like acquitting a defendant, clearing him even if he’s guilty, and dealing with him as though innocent,” one pastor often says. “It frees one, as it were, from prison.” Forgiveness is not an emotion; it’s a decision or act of the will. When we *decide* to obey God’s Word and forgive the person who wounded us, the Holy Spirit will strengthen and guide us in that decision. (See the prayer to forgive at the end of this chapter.)

LEARNING TO TRUST

Many times our own wrong judgments and attitudes keep us from God’s best in many areas of life. Charlotte,* a young military wife, had to face the reality that fear, insecurity, and dependence on her husband were hindering her walk with the Lord. She tells her story:

After finishing officer’s training in Alabama, my husband, Brad,* got orders to go to Arizona where he was to fly a fighter jet—his dream come true. But before we could make the move, he received new

orders for Syracuse, New York—and it wasn't a flying job. Brad was distraught, feeling this may end his Air Force career. We had been Christians for only a year and had little experience in trusting God.

That evening while walking my dog, I prayed, "Lord, I just can't understand...please, please change this situation. Have You forgotten us? Don't You care about our welfare?"

I began singing an old hymn I couldn't remember having learned, but I listened to the words almost as if someone else were singing them to me:

All the way my Savior leads me;
What have I to ask beside?...
For I know whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.⁵

I felt at peace, assured that God would take care of us. I now know that He was planning to lead me much farther than to New York—which for a southern girl seemed like the far side of the moon.

Less than a year later, Brad got orders for Saudi Arabia, and of course our family couldn't accompany him. I was terrified at the thought of living in the Snow Belt with three children a thousand miles from my family. But once again the Lord calmed me, this time with Psalm 23:1: "Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need!" (TLB). God sees me where I am and will lead me where He wants me to go, I reassured myself.

When Brad returned, we transferred to Panama City, Florida, for a two-year assignment that stretched into six years of blessing. We became active in a Spirit-filled church and grew in our faith, and another Air Force wife became my covenant prayer partner. I was able to finish nursing school, and Brad was promoted to colonel.

We were feeling so at home when he got orders to go to Brazil for a diplomatic assignment at the embassy. I didn't feel prepared to handle the responsibilities of a wife of someone in such a position, so I begged God and my husband not to make me go. Because of my fear I actually was willing to stay behind with the kids for four years.

I should have known by now where those thoughts came from and that what the Lord calls you to do, He will equip you to do. After much prayer I did go, and with God's help we experienced four wonderful years. God supplied every need, right down to a Christian maid who also was a gourmet cook who could handle any menu, whether for generals, diplomats, government officials, or visiting missionaries.

Shortly before we were to return home I became gravely ill with peritonitis and couldn't be moved. But again, God intervened by providing an excellent U.S.-trained surgeon. Although I lost a lot of my large intestine, I survived. As I lay in the hospital thanking God for sparing my life, He showed me He had protected me in other dangerous situations, too. What more could I ask, when my Savior leads me, goes with me, provides for me, and protects me? Everything He does, He does well.

I (Quin) was a part of a Bible study group that prayed for Charlotte and encouraged her to give God her fears and trust Him to go with her to Brazil. I've remained in close contact with her and can truly say she is an overcomer.

OVERCOMING ADDICTIONS

Most of us learn the power of prayer by experiencing firsthand the difference it makes in our personal lives. As illustrated in our next

story, such change may come through our own prayers or when someone else intercedes for us.

Billie Jo's drinking began when she was immersed in grief over her dad's untimely death. Because of her husband's job, she attended many social events where alcohol was readily available, and her drinking increased until she became an alcoholic. Yes, she was a Christian, but she had to have several drinks every afternoon.

One day she was reading Exodus 14 about God's mighty power delivering the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians and overthrowing them in the midst of the sea. As she studied the chapter, she came to believe God could deliver her from her craving for alcohol. God spoke to her through these verses:

Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you.

—EXODUS 14:13–14

Billie Jo prayed, asking and believing that even as God had delivered Israel from oppression, He would deliver her from her secret sin. That night she had no desire to drink—nor the following night, nor the night thereafter. Soon after this victory she helped teach a youth group at her church on the dangers of alcohol and drugs, which helped hold her accountable not to drink again. And it gave her an opportunity to share her own testimony about the dangers of relying on anything besides God during times of stress and adversity.

It has been more than ten years since she has had a drink. However, she had another habit she was not at all willing to give up—her dependence on nicotine.

Prayers of the Righteous

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Avail Much

One day Billie Jo was relaxing with her daughter beside a swimming pool, celebrating Sarah's twentieth birthday. As they talked, Sarah suddenly said, "Mom, the best present you can give me for my birthday would be to stop smoking—it could ruin your health."

"But I enjoy it," Billie Jo insisted. "I really do—I actually like it. Now, if you want me to quit, you need to pray and ask God to take away my desire to smoke, because I can't stop on my own. I've tried too many times."

"Well, I will pray right now," Sarah responded. And she did.

That evening Billie Jo had no desire to smoke, and the desire has not returned in the six years since Sarah prayed.

"I believe it was my daughter's prayer and God's power that helped me overcome my pleasure in that dirty habit," she said. "It's amazing, but I've had no withdrawal problems and no more craving for a smoke. Only God could have done that, and I'm so grateful to Him."

In this chapter we have seen that if we endeavor to pray with power, it is helpful to examine our hearts from time to time and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any wrong attitudes or habits. When we do, we may need to call on God for help, as Billie Jo did, to overcome specific things we know are displeasing to Him. The examples and inspiration we find in Scripture can encourage us on our way to seeing "overwhelming victory" through Christ (Rom. 8:37, NLT).

Next we will examine the important role of an intercessor—one who stands in the gap in prayer on behalf of others.

PRAYER TO FORGIVE

Father, I confess that I have been bitter and angry with [say the names of those you need to forgive individually]. But I choose to forgive and release from my judgment all those who have hurt me. Thank You

for doing a work of grace in their lives and healing my hurts. Lord, strengthen me to walk in love and constant forgiveness according to Your Word. Thank You that Jesus shed His blood to pay the price of forgiveness for all of us. I give You praise. Amen.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, please help me overcome in any area of my life that is hindering my prayer life—whether it is fear, anger, unforgiveness, unbelief, disobedience, self-reliance, selfishness, or prolonged grief. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to be my helper and teacher and for Your promise that I can be more than a conqueror through Christ. Thank You for loving me just as I am, right now. Amen.

The real question is: Does a sovereign, allpowerful God need our involvement or not? Is prayer really necessary? If so, why?

I believe it is necessary. Our prayers *can* bring revival. They *can* bring healing. We *can* change a nation. Strongholds *can* come down when and because we pray. I agree with E. M. Bounds when he said: “God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world, the better the world will be.”^{[1](#)}

—Dutch Sheets

Lord,
MAKE ME AN INTERCESSOR

Intercessors stand before God asking for His intervention on behalf of a situation, but they also push back the forces of darkness in the name and authority of Jesus.

So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.

—EZEKIEL 22:30

INTERCESSORS STAND BEFORE God, praying on behalf of a person, a situation, a church, a city, or a nation, beseeching Him to intervene and pour out His mercy.

But they also push back the forces of darkness in the name and authority of Jesus by declaring to Satan and his emissaries, “No more. Back off. You have no right to this territory.” Our intercession restricts demonic forces and allows the Holy Spirit to bring conviction, repentance, and godly change. Throughout Scripture we see many examples of intercession:

- Moses praying for God to spare Israel (Exod. 32:9–14)
- Daniel praying for Israel’s restoration (Dan. 10)

- Jesus praying for His followers (John 17)
- Paul praying for believers in the churches he had established
- (Eph. 1:16–19; 3:16–19; Phil. 1:3–6, 9–11)

Our friend Dick Eastman says:

No single phrase in Scripture more accurately describes the work of an intercessor than the phrase “stand before Me on behalf of.” The intercessor always comes “before God” on “behalf of” others. Also significant is the intercessor’s twofold responsibility. Not only would he “make a wall,” which suggests he would restore a breach caused by an enemy, but he would “stand in the gap,” or plug up that breach against that enemy throughout the building process.²

A true intercessor is “on call” 24/7, available to intercede for others as the Holy Spirit connects her or him with the person or situation needing prayer.

UNEXPECTED ASSIGNMENT

Martha Lucia has spent much time interceding over land, monuments, and government facilities, as well as traveling to numerous nations. One year her team completed a prayer journey into all thirty-nine counties of England.

On the morning of July 7, 2005, Martha and her associate, Sharon, were on a commuter train heading to a Christian meeting in London. Suddenly the two knew God had prophetically ordered their steps that day.

As their train pulled into Victoria Station, people were flooding out of the terminal. Just minutes before, a series of coordinated suicide bombings had occurred on three London underground trains, all

within fifty seconds of each other. The area was evacuated and nearby streets cordoned off; only emergency vehicles were allowed into the areas. An hour later a fourth bomb exploded on a bus.

Dragging their suitcases to a nearby pub, Martha and Sharon waited for the pub to open, then settled at a table where they spent the next seven hours praying. “I asked God to paralyze the terrorists—their hands, their arms, their plots and plans,” Martha remembers. She and Sharon had no idea whether more bombings might be imminent, but they took authority over demonic forces, declaring that they would not take any more lives. They prayed in English and in their prayer language.

Prayers of the Righteous

He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.

—PSALM 18:17–19

Avail Much

A television set in the pub gave sketchy updates, also providing prayer points for them as the news unfolded. “I had lived in England for four years and had been exhorting believers that they must rise up as a praying army of the Lord so they would not see their land taken over by false gods,” Martha said.

After seven hours they struck out on foot to check into the hotel where they had reservations. Upon arrival they were stopped at a barricade, as the first floor of the hotel was being used for a triage center where the wounded were brought for medical attention.

Explaining to police that they had reservations, they showed paperwork to prove it and declared their legal right to be there. Then

they told the officers they were “priests” and could help by praying for people. They were allowed to check into their room, but after putting away their bags, they hurried back downstairs to pray for the wounded and the aid workers.

One shaken policeman, who said he was not accustomed to seeing so much carnage, wept on Sharon’s shoulder as she prayed for him. Both intercessors prayed for a long time at the triage site.

Islamic terrorists claimed responsibility for the fifty-six people killed (including the four bombers) and the seven hundred injured in the attacks that day. Five days later four more explosions took place at underground train locations and on a London bus. But while the fuses of all four bombs went off, none of the main explosive charges detonated. No casualties resulted from the second round of attacks, and the suspected bombers were later arrested. Also, more than a dozen unexploded bombs were found in a car at the Luton train station.³

“As Sharon and I watched the news that night in our hotel room, we knew our prayers had been effective—two other bombs had been found that had not exploded,” Martha said, recalling the night following the first bombing. The prayers of these two alert intercessors may have averted further attacks. No doubt many other believers were on their prayer watches, too.

You may question what right they had to declare themselves priests. Martha says they base this on 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

“We are strategically positioned in the heavenlies with Christ by the Holy Spirit,” Martha often says. (See Ephesians 2:4, 6.) “The Christ in us places us in a position to engage the enemies of God through spiritual warfare. We must settle in our own spirit the truth regarding our authority in Christ.”⁴

PRAYERWALKING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

I (Quin) once lived in a city far from family or friends where we knew no one. With two toddlers, another baby on the way, and a husband who was on the road except for weekends, I wasn't a happy camper. I greatly disliked the place with its erratic, unpredictable weather and a teenage bully living across the street. We didn't know if this was a temporary or a long-term assignment.

One day as I was complaining to the Lord, He directed me to read Jeremiah 29:7: "And seek (inquire for, require, and request) the peace and welfare of the city to which I have caused you to be carried away captive; and pray to the Lord for it, for in the welfare of [the city in which you live] you will have welfare" (AMP).

Immediately I was convicted of my judgment against the city. God was asking me to pray for its welfare and peace; in so doing, I'd find peace. As I started praying for the city and our neighborhood, I even began to like the place.

Before long my husband got a call offering him a job back in Florida, our home territory. We were going home to sunshine and beaches and friends; however, I had learned a lesson while living "in captivity" in that dust bowl. From then on, I prayed earnestly for every city and neighborhood where we lived.

"Let the King of glory reign here, Lord," I'd pray on my walks; then I'd sing in the Spirit. Later, I especially enjoyed doing this when I would stroll down the streets with my grandchildren. This type of intercession has now come to be called prayerwalking.

"Prayerwalking is on-site prayer—simply praying in the very places where you expect your prayers to be answered," writes Steve Hawthorne. "Walking helps sensitize you to the realities of your community. Sounds, sights and smells, far from distracting from your prayer, engage both body and mind in the art of praying. Better perception means boosted intercession."⁵

Prayers of the Righteous

As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall
save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray,

and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice. He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me.

—PSALM 55:16–18

Avail Much

Theresa Mulligan, former editor of the prayer newsletter *Breakthrough*, saw incredible results as she and another Christian on her block prayed together for their neighborhood. They learned names of families who lived nearby and prayed for each household on the street to receive the Lord. Several neighbors did, and even after she moved, she continued to hear of others coming to Christ. Her guidelines for praying for your neighborhood include:⁶

- Ask God to show you what strategy He wants you to use in reaching out to your neighbors—get-acquainted meals, coffee klatches, or similar social gatherings.
- Ask God to open up opportunities for building friendships and performing services for your neighbors. Think creatively!
- Ask God to show you any areas where perhaps you need to be reconciled with one or more of your neighbors. Confess any sins the Holy Spirit reveals in this area.
- Search Scripture for a word for each neighbor and expect God to speak to your heart specifically.
- After any neighbors commit their lives to Jesus, be willing to continue to walk with them as they are nurtured and grow in the Word.

PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH

Naturally, besides praying for their communities, intercessors should pray for their church leaders, outreaches, members, and all those

who attend. A biblical example of such an intercessor is Epaphras, a leader in the church at Colossae. While a prisoner in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the Colossian church about this man's prayer life:

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

—COLOSSIANS 4:12, NIV

Paul compared our spiritual struggle to a wrestling match against the forces of darkness. He was a “gap-stander” for all the churches and leaders he had contact with, and he commended Epaphras for doing the same.

Because pastors are a prime target for the enemy, it is especially important that they have intercessors covering them in prayer. Pastor Terry Teykl writes:

Satan knows that if he can strike a shepherd, the sheep will scatter, and he loves nothing more than to see an effective spiritual leader fall....By choosing to pray for your pastor, you are not only choosing to speak blessings, claiming all that God has for him or her, but you are also building a shield against all kinds of devices meant to halt or harm them.⁷

Many churches have designated intercessors who are committed to pray for the pastor and other church leaders, as well as rotating prayer groups who are in constant prayer during each service. May all of us follow Epaphras's example and wrestle in prayer for our churches.

GOD REIGNS

Many times intercessors may pray for nations or situations for years before they begin to learn of the results. But what a faith booster it is

finally to see breakthrough!

I (Quin) had such an experience in Russia shortly after the Soviet Union's communist regime had collapsed in 1989. Along with twenty other Aglow women from the United States, I stood in Moscow's Red Square that October Sunday morning as we held a short, impromptu worship service. Once hundreds of communist troops had displayed their strength by marching before Soviet leadership here to show off their weapons and military might.

After our praise service, I walked over toward Lenin's nowdeserted mausoleum where crowds once stood in line to view him on his glass-enclosed bier. I lifted my Bible toward his tomb and then toward heaven and shouted, "Lenin is dead, but Jesus is alive!"

For years I had dreamed of doing this because Russia had long been my "prayer burden." Thousands of Christians worldwide had prayed against the principalities holding millions in bondage to communism. What a privilege to stand there and know the people were now free to openly worship the Lord Jesus.

Prayers of the Righteous

We...do not cease to pray for you...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

—COLOSSIANS 1:9–10

Avail Much

In the mid-1990s I (Ruthanne) went with my husband to teach in the first-ever Bible school established in Mongolia, a former Soviet-bloc nation. Animism, Buddhism, and then communism had ruled this land for hundreds of years, but at last the gospel was being proclaimed in Mongolia for the first time.

On one trip there I joined a resident missionary on a prayerwalk to a national monument overlooking the capitol city of Ulaanbaatar.

After a time of fasting and prayer, Betty and I climbed up the hill, praying as we went. At the top we walked around the structure and declared the Word of God over the nation. Then we took the prophetic Scripture verses we had written out and hid the slips of paper in various places around the site.

Behind the monument was a big pile of rocks—a makeshift Buddhist shrine where people had left various offerings of crepe paper flowers and other such items. As we were praying and declaring God's Word over the shrine, two goats suddenly climbed up on the rocks and began eating the objects left by Buddhist pilgrims.

Today, after years of intercession and outreach by many Christian ministries, Mongolia has tens of thousands of Christians. The light of the gospel is overcoming the darkness as churches are being established across the land.

BEING AVAILABLE TO GOD

Some Christians have the mistaken notion that because they don't spend hours on their knees weeping and storming heaven's gates, they're not intercessors. Wrong! God calls every believer to pray and intercede. (See Philippians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:1, 8.) When we are alert to His promptings, we can easily slip into a mode of intercession, as the following story illustrates.

While on a rafting trip in California, Paula's raft overturned, and she went swirling under the water, out of control. She soon realized her left leg was stuck in the tree roots, and she was possibly going to drown. Instinctively she kept calling on the name of Jesus in her mind. Not a moment too soon, her leg miraculously came free, and she shot to the surface, out of danger.

At this very moment, she learned later, an acquaintance in Holland was praying for her safety and protection. The woman was thousands of miles away and wasn't really a close friend—only an acquaintance. But she responded to the Holy Spirit and was available to pray.

"I came to her mind; she sensed I was in danger and interceded for me," Paula told Quin. "I believe her prayers were instrumental in

my life being spared. I realize how important it is to respond to those little 'nudges' we get from the Holy Spirit. It can be a matter of life and death for someone.”⁸

Very likely you have had similar experiences of suddenly having a person's name come to mind or of having a dream about an individual. Have you considered this as a call from the Holy Spirit to pray? We may find ourselves praying about a situation we know a bit about, such as a crisis reported on the television news or a friend suffering in the hospital. But suddenly, unexpectedly, we “know” something, which only the Holy Spirit could reveal. When we quiet our minds and put away anxious thoughts, the Holy Spirit can inspire our prayer and show us hidden things to pray.

HARD DECISION...RIGHT CHOICE

Because intercessors inflict damage on the kingdom of darkness, the enemy targets them for all sorts of spiritual attacks. So they must be aware of the enemy's devices and strategies. Candace* shares in her own words her life-changing journey in learning this critical lesson:

I was not raised in church and had no idea what the average Christian's walk was like. But after accepting the Lord at age thirty, I would put my children to bed at night and then go to my room to read my Bible and pray. Since my husband traveled extensively, I had a lot of time for prayer and Bible study.

I prayed about things and people that came to mind until I felt that a burden for the situation had lifted, whether for an hour or all night. I realized that I heard, saw, or had impressions of things that others didn't. If I prayed as led by the Holy Spirit, I saw quicker answers to prayers. God was training me to become an intercessor, but I wasn't prepared for the attack against my marriage.

Prayers of the Righteous

In that day the LORD Almighty will be...a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

—ISAIAH 28:5–6, NIV

Avail Much

One day Drew* came to me with great remorse, confessing that four years earlier he'd had an affair while on a business trip. He asked for my forgiveness. The previous year he had accepted the Lord, and now he wanted to make things right.

As I closed my eyes and began asking God for the words to say, He reminded me that I had been forgiven of my sins. He said He had already forgiven my husband, and then asked, "Why can't you?"

I won't trivialize the pain I felt that day, but God gave me strength to forgive Drew when I had none. Once I made that quality decision, the Lord began taking me down the path toward healing. I loved my husband, but I still had times of weeping over his affair and asking God to bless my marriage.

One night in prayer I had a "faith vision" of Drew and me in a happy, fulfilling marriage. It encouraged me to believe our marriage could be completely healed, but I had to trust and rely on God for it to happen. Over time the Lord performed a miracle restoration. Today, several years later, my marriage may not be perfect, but we are truly happy serving the Lord in our church. Drew truly is the man I saw in that vision. Was forgiveness easy? No. But my choice was the right one—not only because Jesus forgave us, but also because I wanted to continue as a prayer warrior.

Recently when a group from our church went on a missions trip to Nicaragua, one woman asked me to be her intercessor. I prayed for the group before they left and each day that followed. On the third day of their trip, as I was making lunch for my children, I suddenly felt an urgency to pray for my friend and for the missions team.

I stopped and prayed a hedge of protection around them, then continued praying in the Spirit until the burden lifted. I later learned that at the time I was praying, the church group had been traveling

down a back road when armed “guerrillas” suddenly surrounded them and ordered them off the bus. Once the thieves got the money they demanded, they left the team members unharmed.

Experience has taught me to listen to the Holy Spirit and obey, no matter where I am or what I am doing. It’s a vital part of being a successful intercessor.

A MOM INTERCEDES FOR HER CHILDREN

In the above story Candace saw breakthrough in her marriage because she chose to obey God and persist in prayer. Mary Beth is a mom who learned early on that crises often could be avoided when she prayed over situations in advance. She began interceding for her five children when they were still babies.

“God told me He would take care of them if I would stand in the prayer gap for them and counsel them to fulfill His purpose for their lives,” she says. She covered them with prayer and prayed about their future as they were growing up, and her assignment continues today. She shares her experiences:

Every day in my prayer time I appropriate or “plead” the blood of Jesus over each member of my family, over our bodies, souls, and spirits. Because of His covenant with us, I believe we also can claim the benefit of His protection over our houses, cars, property, and possessions. I’ve seen the hand of God protect us countless times in amazing situations.

Two of my children have been on the mission field for several years, while another daughter, Tricia, has been traveling the world. I’m confident that I can commit them into His hands and know He will take care of them.

I’ve sent them many boxes and important mail, including credit and debit cards. Each time I always

pray for protection over the package and its contents, asking God to assign angels to deliver it quickly and safely without loss, theft, harm, or being searched. I also ask Him to assign angels to hide the package from anyone of evil intent. Not a single piece of mail has ever been lost, stolen, or searched, and they received every item, sometimes in record time.

Recently I sent two pairs of shoes and other items to my daughter in Mozambique with a young man from our church who was flying there with a team. I had anointed each item with oil and prayed over the package, but we soon received word that everyone's luggage was lost, including the package for Tricia.

My prayer partner and I continued to declare that those shoes would safely reach her, and we prayed the same for all the luggage that had been lost. Amazingly, thirty days later, that parcel was in her hands. A plane had arrived in Mozambique with every piece of lost luggage, including Tricia's package. Not only were the missing things found, but also each item got delivered to its rightful owner. Thank God for His faithfulness!

A SPIRITUAL WAR ZONE

Julie,* a friend who trains intercessors, discovered an often overlooked reality that intercessors must guard against. While visiting her sister over the Christmas holidays one year, she was interceding for her sister and brother-in-law, their children, and his extended family.

"I felt my main reason for being there was to pray for the salvation of these people who are involved in various cults and seem totally isolated from any godly influence," Julie shared. "I was the only Christian in this 'spiritual war zone.'"

Her brother-in-law's father, host for the Christmas dinner, asked Julie to pray a blessing over the meal. "This was a breakthrough—it seemed he wanted to acknowledge that this was a Christian holiday, even though people from other religions were present," she said. "Though he claims to be an atheist, he has a biblical name, so I bought him a Bible and marked scriptures where his name appears. As the Lord gave me favor, I was able to plant spiritual seeds in their lives."

Upon returning home, Julie was hit with such disabling depression that she was bedridden for two days. Though her life is far from being problem-free, depression and fear usually aren't issues that trouble her.

"At first I thought this was fatigue from the trip," she said. "But then the Lord showed me it was backlash from the enemy because of the intercession for my sister's family. I tried to pray against the depression and fear, but it was so entrenched I couldn't seem to shake it off."

Although she's an experienced prayer warrior, this attack took Julie by surprise at first. But God was faithful to prompt another intercessor to pray for her.

"About 6:30 one Friday morning, after I'd been awake most of the night crying and depressed, I got a call from a friend I hadn't heard from for a long time," Julie reported. "She'd been praying for me, and the Holy Spirit told her I was awake and that she should call. She said, 'The Lord wants you to know that He loves you, Julie, and He is pleased with you. You're being too hard on yourself.' Then she prayed part of Psalm 121:2–5 over me: 'My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.'"

Feeling a surge of God's love and presence, Julie got out of bed and began praising and worshiping the Lord. The depression began to lift and soon was gone.

"The intensity of Satan's attack against me revealed the power of my prayer and warfare against the kingdom of darkness," she said. "Now, years later, I continue to stand for this family's salvation."

Although my sister is closer to the Lord now, her husband, children, and in-laws are the same. But I believe prayer will prevail.”

Julie told us she has learned two important principles about enemy counterattacks: one, praise is the most valuable weapon against depression and fear; two, she can take “spiritual showers” by pleading the blood over herself and asking the Holy Spirit to cleanse her of all defilement and residue from the enemy’s camp.⁹

STANDING IN THE GAP

We end this chapter where we began: with a story of remarkable intercession of Christians who “stood in the gap” for a man they didn’t even know. The setting: a Hong Kong prison cell. The inmate: Alie, once studying to be a Buddhist monk, now facing charges as an alleged accomplice in the murder of a rival drug lord. The key intercessor: Jackie Pullinger-To, who had moved to Hong Kong to reach the lost for Christ.

Jackie visited this Hong Kong jail every week to speak to the inmates about Jesus. Four of the men jailed with Alie came to the Lord almost immediately. But though Jackie had testified to Alie during the nine months she had visited the jail, he was unmoved. “I know you are afraid, Alie,” she said to him one day. “I know that you are terrified of death, but I want to tell you that there is a loving God. There is a God of justice who knows all things, and He is a Father of mercy. I have enlisted Christians from all across the world to pray and fast every Wednesday for you, Alie.”

The man’s heart remained unchanged.

One day the governor of the jail passed by Alie’s cell and smelled a strange fragrance coming from it—like a delicate perfume. When authorities asked Alie about it, he was as perplexed as they were. Their search of his body and cell brought no clues.

After they left, Alie remembered, “Oh, it is Wednesday.” Hadn’t Jackie said prayer would be offered up for him by people fasting on this day? *He was smelling prayer.* He realized his entire jail cell was filled with the fragrant aroma of the prayers of the saints.

As Jackie continued to visit Alie, they talked of this incident, among other things. Then one day Alie accepted Jesus as his Lord as Jackie prayed for him. The Holy Spirit came upon him, and he began to speak in another language. Later, when he went to court for his trial, the judge released him without ever hearing the case!

So many prayers were directed to God on his behalf that the very air in his tiny jail cell was saturated with the sweet incense of intercession. Even the unbelievers could smell it! As a result of the dozens of praying “gap-standers,” Alie came to the Lord.[10](#)

Scripture says that “wherever we go he [God] uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God” (2 Cor. 2:14–15, NLT). We know our prayers impact the spiritual realm. And sometimes we have the privilege of actually seeing or hearing of the results when He changes people and circumstances for His kingdom purposes.

As we see in Alie’s story, our prayers can have an even greater effect when we join forces with one or more prayer partners—which is the topic of our next chapter.

PRAYER

Lord, help me become a more faithful prayer warrior, standing ready day or night for You to use me in intercession. Show me specific ways to pray for the people, neighborhoods, cities, and nations You desire to put on my heart. Thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit to help me. Thank You for all those who have prayed for me over the years, many of them unknown to me. I give You praise. Amen.

Your prayers can make a vital difference, especially when you harmonize in prayer with others and carefully target your prayers. Since prayer is unhindered by time, distance, or language barriers, you can join any ministry team on earth....For God's sake, get on somebody's team....Your prayers actually can influence world leaders and activate the resources of God.[¹](#)

—Jim Goll

Lord,
LEAD ME TO PRAYER PARTNERS

Establishing a network of prayer partners among family members and friends to pray in agreement with us creates a powerful coalition of prayer.

Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

—MATTHEW 18:19–20

WHAT DO YOU think of when you hear the word *agree*? In the Scripture verse opening this chapter, the word derives from a Greek root from which we get our English word *symphony*, meaning “to sound together” or “be in accord concerning a matter.”²

Praying in agreement or “in accord” with one or more other believers can be compared to a symphony orchestra.

A symphony orchestra is composed of many different types of instruments—some playing the melody, some harmony, and some rhythm. Yet all the musicians follow the same composition, in the same musical key, under the direction of a conductor. What a picture of praying in agreement! The participants may have different styles of praying, and some are louder than others, but all should be

reading the same score (the Scriptures) and following the director (the Holy Spirit).

When the 120 believers gathered in the upper room following Jesus's resurrection, they were "with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). After waiting in prayer for ten days, they were "in agreement, having group unity, having one mind and purpose." And then the Holy Spirit came and filled them all.³

Clearly, the prayer of agreement leads to results and action.

THE POWER OF AGREEMENT

While we don't find the words *prayer partner* in the Bible, we do see that Jesus placed great value on relationships. He chose twelve special friends whom He was always teaching, encouraging, and praying for. And within that group of disciples, three were particularly close—Peter, James, and John.

When He gave them and us the prayer model we call the Lord's Prayer, Jesus used plural pronouns: "Our Father...give us...forgive us...do not lead us...but deliver us..." (Matt. 6:9–13). It appears He expected them to pray together.

Prayers of the Righteous

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

—AMOS 3:3

Avail Much

If you have been a Christian long, you have discovered how beneficial it is to have prayer partners to pray in agreement with you. Such a coalition strengthens your intercession and increases your faith as you pray and share with one another. The next story about two friends becoming prayer partners will inspire you to establish a prayer support team if you don't already have one.

Jodi* and Annie* grew to be like-minded in their prayer goals when they were neighbors more than thirty-five years ago. The two began praying together for their families and continued to pray via phone or occasional meetings after Annie moved away. They learned battles are not won in a day. But they also discovered that praying in agreement, with a common goal, is powerful and effective. Jodi writes about it:

We realized this partnering was a threesome: God, Annie, and me. He was always there. If we came together to pray feeling heavily burdened, weary, and discouraged, we always left unburdened and joyful. The answers to prayer came as we walked through some tough situations—a wayward daughter living with a boyfriend, cancer healed (one quickly, another through a long recovery), family rifts reconciled, job transfers, and many moves as our husbands climbed their career ladders.

Over the years Annie has been a challenger to me. When we'd see a step we needed to take in our studies in the Scriptures, she was quick to say, "Let's do it." She'd ask questions that challenged, provoked action, or sent me searching for answers. She always was supportive, offering me acceptance, loyalty, and a place to be real, where I knew what we shared would be kept in confidence.

Because of health problems, we're no longer able to meet and pray together, but we still keep in touch. Recently she shared about all twenty-three members of her family having dinner together at a camp in the mountains. "I looked around the table and burst into tears as I realized all of them were serving the Lord," she told me. What a great praise report! There were many times when Annie and I desperately sought God

on behalf of one or the other of those loved ones, and she literally has seen the answer to those prayers.^{[4](#)}

PRAYER COVERING

Years ago when the Lord caused Cindy and me (Ruthanne) to cross paths, I realized the value of a prayer partner. When she learned my family and I were taking a months-long missions trip visiting more than a dozen countries, she committed to pray for us throughout the journey. In addition, she fasted every Wednesday and kept a prayer diary noting the ways God led her to pray during those months.

That diary was her gift to me when I returned, and we've been prayer partners ever since. On comparing her prayer journal with my own notes jotted down during the trip, I was amazed to realize how "right on" her prayers were. This was before the convenience of e-mail, and we had no phone contact during that time. But the Holy Spirit transcended all barriers and led Cindy to pray specifically for the very situations I was facing.

Recently she gave me a lovely pen for my birthday inscribed with the message, *I've got you covered*. She literally has "covered me" with prayer for more than twenty-seven years in all my travels, ministry opportunities, and family challenges, and I've done the same for her. God also has blessed me with several other prayer partners in various states and one in Europe—this is the group my husband used to call my "prayer posse." We stay connected via e-mail and have lots of telephone prayer meetings, often referring to Malachi 3:16 and asking the Lord to receive our conversation as prayer.

After Quin and I began writing together in 1988, we also became prayer partners, praying over our writing projects, ministry activities, and for one another's families.

We have learned it's important to be cautious about praying in agreement for something that's questionable just because someone asks us to. One time a woman came to my (Quin's) prayer line after I

had spoken and asked me to pray in agreement with her for a matter that I felt was simply wrong. So I politely refused, but instead prayed for the Holy Spirit to reveal to her God's will and plan and to guide her steps. It's always safe to pray this way.

When a person asks you to pray a prayer of agreement with them, we suggest you ask the following questions:

- Is this in agreement with God's will according to His Word?
- Is it God's prayer assignment for me?
- Do I have adequate prayer cover myself for this type of
- spiritual warfare?
- Am I on God's timetable, or am I praying prematurely?
- Do I need a different prayer strategy?

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER PARTNERSHIPS

I (Quin) have had some rewarding experiences praying one-on-one, as well as being a part of a small prayer group. The reason: we had one common goal in prayer.

For seventeen years, every weekday morning at 8:00 a.m., I prayed on the phone with my friend Lib for just five minutes. We had seven youngsters between us who were near the same age, so our children were our prayer focus. We were just two moms praying for our kids, but we saw some wonderful answers to our prayers.

My more mature prayer partner, Laura, lived forty miles away, so we met at least once a month at her house or mine for a morning of prayer and fellowship. She was my cheerleader. "You're going to make it," she'd say when I had a crisis prayer need. "God turns situations around in His time—just wait and see."

After I moved to a new location, I met with five other women from our church for prayer every Monday at 5:30 a.m. After getting coffee

or juice from Fran's kitchen, we went into her living room where we worshiped and then prayed for our families. We did this for three years until several of the women moved away. I was always glad we talked to God more than to each other, because I'd been in so many prayer meetings where more time was spent talking to one another.

In our busy twenty-first century when time is short, relationships hard to come by, and privacy guarded, we can give all kinds of reasons for not seeking a prayer partner. But victories seem sweeter when you can share with someone who helped you fight the battle through prayer. And it's comforting to know you have someone praying for you when a crisis hits.

We encourage you to look to the Lord to lead you to the right prayer partner or support team, trusting His timing and recognizing that He wants to be included in any prayer partnership. Of course, we must keep in mind that it is always God Himself on whom we depend—not a lone prayer partner or even a prayer group. People may sometimes let us down, but He never will!

Prayer partnerships should consist of those who can pray with shared concerns and similar goals. If you are praying one-on-one, you should choose someone of the same sex, except for your spouse. Consider these guidelines:

- Try to settle on a specific time to pray, and commit to it.
- Set a time limit.
- Know your sphere, your purpose for prayer.
- Don't hog all the prayer time; give others a chance.
- Maintain transparency, confidentiality, humility, and forgiveness.
- Guard against judgment and unforgiveness.
- Be accountable: speak the truth to each other without fear of rejection.

One seasoned intercessor trains another

For more than a dozen years now, each morning before going to work, Pam drops by a friend's house for a twenty-five minute prayer meeting. Pam, from England, calls JoAnne, who is twenty years older and a seasoned intercessor, her "spiritual mum." When she expressed a desire to learn more about prayer, JoAnne invited her to join her for her daily "praying around the world" session.

Sitting in JoAnne's living room with Bible and prayer lists in hand, they always begin by worshiping God. Then they pray for their city, state, country, and other specific nations. They bless the city leaders from the mayor on down to the firefighters.

For evangelists on their list, they ask God to help them win many to Christ and to extend His protection and provision to them. They especially pray for the salvation of Jews and for a spiritual harvest among Muslim nations.

Prayers of the Righteous

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.

—2 CHRONICLES 7:14–15

Avail Much

Issues close to Pam's heart include the countries where her son has served as a missionary and for the schools in their community. "We pray for wisdom and protection for those responsible for our local schools, as well as for the students and their families," she said. "Also, we never fail to pray for the persecuted church around the world or for the peace of Jerusalem, as well as for our own nation and president."

JoAnne chimed in. “We want to see godly leaders and staff members at every level of government, so we pray for those from the courthouse to the White House. Often we meet with other prayer groups to pray specifically for our community. We have seen topless nightclubs closed and adult video game rooms outlawed. Churches have linked arms to pray together, often in 24-hour prayer watches.”

Praying with spouses

In the latter years of our marriage, I (Ruthanne) prayed with my husband, John, on a regular basis, especially when we were facing an important ministry decision or considering a move. Our prayer time was centered around reading *The Daily Light* devotional book,⁵ and often the Holy Spirit provided guidance through the Scripture verses from that day’s reading.

Since his sudden death a few years ago, I continue the tradition of reading *The Daily Light* during my prayer time, and some of my prayer partners do the same. Now my prayer connection with them is even more valuable to me since John’s departure.

My (Quin’s) husband and I have prayed together each morning for years, as do many couples, but it wasn’t always our habit. Pastor Peter Lord challenged the men of our church to make an appointment for a prayer time with their wives; thus he was willing to give it a try. We started out meeting once a week, then three times a week, and finally every day.

A word of caution to women: don’t expect your prayer times with your husband to be exactly like experiences you may have had when praying with women prayer partners. One friend wrote that she was loud, while her husband prayed softly or silently. She felt his prayers were too short and insensitive. He thought she was too boisterous. She confessed that her judgmental attitude hindered them from receiving answers to their petitions. When the Lord dealt with her about her criticism, she gave up trying to change her husband. Today they accept one another’s different styles of praying, enjoy their special prayer times together, and have begun to see wonderful answers.

Another couple, our friends Kathy and Mike, made a decision on their wedding night to pray together regularly. They have never

missed a night in over thirty years, unless one of them has been out of town.

When their four children were small, Kathy sometimes wondered if she was just too fatigued to pray coherently. Once she even questioned God about her effectiveness.

“You have no idea how important your prayers are,” God lovingly rebuked her. His voice was so startling and clear that she shared it with Mike and never again questioned the value of their prayers.

She wrote us, “Because we pray together daily about simple matters, we have found that when bigger troubles strike, we are well equipped to pray together. We have prayed our way through life-threatening illnesses, the severe mental illness of a family member, seven years of infertility, three miscarriages, sudden unemployment, financial trials, major decisions, the deaths of parents and friends, and the rebellion of one of our children.”⁶

Praying with children and grandchildren

Children also need to be involved in our prayer efforts. Parents have an awesome responsibility both to pray with their children and to teach them to pray. Learning to pray in their formative years can help them establish habits of prayer to last a lifetime. Esther Ilnisky, who headed up the Children’s Global Prayer Movement for years, wrote:

If youth and children are now making up half the world’s population, then I believe half the Christian world’s prayer warriors should be youth and children. Godly children are the most untapped resource of prayer today, both in the home and in the Church worldwide....Equipping and liberating them to use godly authority over evil powers could transform them, you, your home, and the Church and could ultimately revolutionize the world.⁷

Grandparents, as well as parents, can provide prayer models for children in a society where intergenerational bonding is so badly needed. It’s beneficial for the younger ones both to hear their

grandparents pray and to know they can rely on their prayers in times of need. We can pass a prayer mantle on to the next generation.

My (Ruthanne's) friend Betty has developed a curriculum she calls "Come Children, Let's Pray." She has taught the material to her eight older grandchildren and now has four younger ones she is teaching. Next to her chair is a folding screen with photos of her twelve grandchildren mounted on it. Painted across the top are the words, "Children of Destiny—God's Polished Arrows."

"I compare them to the twelve stones on Aaron's breastplate that he wore into the holy place before the Lord (Exod. 28:29)," she wrote. "I can carry before the throne of grace my twelve with the prayer, 'Let Your kingdom come in their lives, and Your will be done.'"

God works through ordinary believers

Linda and Skip Evans are prayer partners at home, and then at church on Sundays they pray for those who come to the altar with needs. On two occasions over the past few years their faith and prayers of agreement have helped a family whose baby needed God's healing touch.

Nate Simmons was born with above-normal birth weight and appeared to be a perfectly healthy baby. But doctors soon gave his parents devastating news: Nate was not only deaf, but he also had a congenital heart disease. "We're sorry, but nothing can be done to cure his deafness," they said.

Prayers of the Righteous

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

—JOHN 15:5

Avail Much

In the meantime, Nate's parents, Loren and Matthew, prayed for his healing, as did family members. Loren admits her faith was small because the doctors had given them no hope. "Once I prayed, 'Lord, this is my baby. My other two children can hear—please let this precious one hear, too,'" she recalls.

One Sunday the pastor invited those needing prayer to come to the altar, where intercessors would pray for them. Loren knew God could heal when she and her husband took Nate up for prayer. "But would He heal my child?" she questioned. For so long she had believed the doctors' negative reports.

That morning Linda and Skip prayed for Nate's hearing to become normal. Imagine Loren's surprise some days later when the family dog barked and it scared her baby. He could hear! And his hearing remained normal over the following weeks and months.

However, he developed other problems—fevers so high they had to rush him to the emergency room many times. At age nine months, when he started turning blue, doctors diagnosed his condition as "pulmonary vein stenosis," a blockage in blood vessels carrying oxygen-rich blood from the lungs back to the heart.

"Doctors told us they could do one of three procedures to increase the oxygen level in his blood, but none of these risky options reassured us," Loren said. "We decided to wait. As Nate grew, he just couldn't crawl around or run fast like other children his age."

One Sunday the pastor said he felt there was great faith for healing present in the service, and he encouraged those who needed healing to come for prayer. Loren and Matthew rushed to the nursery to get Nate, now almost three. Once again, Linda and Skip were the intercessors waiting to pray with them. This time they prayed for Nate's heart and lungs to become whole, completely healed.

The following month his parents took him back to the cardiologist. After reminding them of the three possible procedures that could improve Nate's heart function, they ran a sonogram of his heart.

The doctor was astonished at what he saw. "This is not the same heart...it's just not the same heart," he kept saying. As he looked at the image of Nate's beating heart on the screen, he could see that the veins were no longer constricted.

“I am amazed. It’s a miracle!” Loren said.

“Yes, it is—it’s a miracle,” the doctor agreed.

“I think he was healed that morning when Linda and Skip prayed for him at church,” Loren told Quin. “This time we had a much higher level of faith, and we both felt our son’s heart was healed. We just had to wait for the doctor to confirm it through the sonogram.”

Today, at age five, Nate enjoys all the things other kids his age can do—jumping on the trampoline, swimming, running, and playing hard. He can hear, and his heart is functioning normally.

“Always remember God can work through ordinary believers who are willing to be used by Him,” says Linda. “For that moment in time, God put us in the path of those who needed healing, then gave us the faith to believe Him for it. The important thing is to be willing and to pray with faith.”

Praying night and day

When people gather to pray in one accord, can it impact a whole city?

Yes! It happened during World War II in the small community of Seadrift, Texas, located on the Gulf Coast.

At the suggestion of a local pastor, a group of wives, mothers, and men met at the First Assembly of God Church every morning at 10:00 a.m. to pray for the safety of the servicemen from their community. Members brought photos of each soldier and made a huge framed collage of the men—fifty-two in all.

Prayers of the Righteous

Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

—LEVITICUS 26:8, NIV

Avail Much

This picture provided a prayer focus point. One mother had five sons in the war. Imagine how she felt when she looked at the large

picture of men in uniform and prayed for her precious boys among them. After the war was over in 1945, every single serviceman came home alive from whatever theater of war he had served in.

Fifty years later, in 1995, I (Quin) watched a television program on *The 700 Club* where some of these intercessors and several of the servicemen—all quite elderly now—were interviewed. Naturally, it touched my heart. One woman said, “We didn’t just pray at ten in the morning. We prayed night and day for those men.” Another intercessor commented, “We stood on the Ninety-first Psalm, reading it every time we met. We prayed at the church; we prayed at home. It seemed like we had that burden, and it just stayed with us.”

Several of the men who had served their country commented: “All the people in the city here prayed. If somebody had not prayed for us, I don’t think a lot of us would have made it back....We knew God was going to take care of us with our mothers and everybody here at the church praying....We knew that we were in the hands of God.”

Several other men gave testimonies of their narrow escapes in combat and how they knew they were spared because God answered the faithful prayers of those dedicated intercessors.

The united wall of support from folks in Seadrift demonstrates how prayer partners from various walks of life can gather to pray in unity with a mutual purpose and faith that God answers prayers. Yes, there must have been many prayer meetings during the war when the loved ones they prayed for did not come home. For their loss we grieve. But Seadrift stands out as an example of a community joined in prayer.

Common goal in prayer

Often friends join together into a prayer support team when they perceive a specific need. One of the most unique groups I (Quin) have been involved with over the years started in Lexington, Kentucky.

Five moms who had read my first book, *How to Pray for Your Children*,⁸ went on a weekend retreat to watch a video I had done on the topic. Between them they had thirty children and grandchildren. After acknowledging their need for united prayer on this matter of concern, they agreed to meet regularly to pray for one another’s

children. At first they met in local parks, churches, and finally in homes.

Not only did they begin seeing results in their children as God answered their pleas, but their husbands were noticing a difference, too. The men asked to join their wives to pray together one night a week. They met for a covered dish supper at one couple's home, and then lingered to pray in small circles for one another's children. Each took names of children home with them with the pledge to pray daily for them during the following week.

Over the years they have set up "Praying for Your Children" groups in schools, churches, and neighboring communities. I have met with them several times and keep up with them through phone calls. Today, the original five moms meet irregularly, but they touch base with one another every week to exchange prayer requests.

During the more than a dozen years that they met weekly, it was not unusual for some of their children or grandchildren to join their prayer meeting. At first the children wanted the adults to pray, but soon they were praying aloud, too. One child I especially remember was Kaley Stuart, who was born with many physical challenges yet today is a cheerleader. (See her miraculous story in our book *Lord, I Need Your Healing Power*.⁹)

Our author friend Cheri Fuller suggests that if children find praying aloud is awkward, a good starting place is to hold hands as a family, pray silently, and then end by having someone read a scripture. If a child is sports-oriented, he can thank God after a win and pray for a good attitude when he loses. Musical children can sing Scripture prayers set to music. Artistic kids can draw things they want to say to God. The ideas are unlimited. But the goal is to encourage children to be creative and comfortable when they talk to God and to learn the importance of praying for family members.¹⁰

Internet intercession

When the apostle Paul needed prayer for a missionary journey, he wrote letters to his church friends saying, "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess. 5:24). Today we have e-mail and audio-video computer

connections, allowing us to communicate instantly with anyone in the world who has Internet access.

For several years now both of us have used e-mail to communicate with each other and alert our prayer partners about how to pray more specifically for us. We also receive regular e-mail prayer requests from missionaries, churches, and friends in fulltime ministry.

Prayers of the Righteous

Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.

—MALACHI 3:16, NIV

Avail Much

Ginny Marks has started a ministry called Internet Intercession, which is used by many churches to provide prayer support for those going on missions trips. “Prayer is now on-line, instant, and interactive,” says Ginny, who has trained more than 450 teams.

How does it work? An intercession team within the church is composed of six to twelve persons with an e-mail support team leader. They pray for and communicate with the person or team who is on the overseas mission.

These “support intercessors” are committed to pray for the person or group starting two days prior to departure, during the entire trip, and for three weeks after their return. The intercessors must be e-mail savvy and have a computer with an antivirus program. Each one prays and listens to God, then sends any insight, warning, or encouragement to their team leader, who forwards it to the “point person” overseas. Of course, all messages are kept completely confidential within the prayer team and the missions team.

“We have discovered that without major intercession for our missionaries, they are in a vulnerable position, so we choose to

‘stand in the gap’ in prayer for those going to the nations,” Ginny says. “This has unlimited possibilities. You can participate any time, day or night, and you never wake anyone up, like we used to do with a phone prayer chain. This same kind of team is just as useful in praying for other issues.”¹¹

Many of the examples we have shared attest to God’s faithfulness and illustrate that when people begin to pray together, it becomes contagious. As answers come, we are encouraged to keep on praying and to get other believers involved. We discover that prayer, far from being dull or boring, is an exciting adventure.

Praying with prayer partners also encourages us to persevere, which we’ll discuss in the next chapter.

PRAYER

Father, link me with the right prayer partners who will stand in agreement, calling forth Your plans and purposes on this earth. Thank You for this sacred trust to be able to pray with others. Help me to be a trustworthy prayer partner, faithful to pray and listen to the Holy Spirit, and always careful to keep confidences. Thank You for leading and teaching me. Amen.

Consider this word *persevere*.... It implies that there are times when we will not reach our spiritual goals unless we are stretched in ways others call severe or extreme. We don't go one mile; we go two. We contend for the faith; we wrestle against principalities and powers. We are not wimps; we don't give up. We are soldiers who endure hardship. Even if we are knocked down, defeat is not final. We rise to fight another day. Surrender is not an option....There needs to exist in us an inherent perseverance of spirit.¹

—Francis Frangipane

Lord,
I NEED TO PERSEVERE

Instead of being “crisis prayers,” God can help us to institute habits of prayer that toughen us to persevere when we encounter opposition.

And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

—LUKE 11:5–9

PRAYING WITH PERSISTENCE may mean a lengthy campaign of intercession, but Paul instructs us to “always keep on praying” (Eph. 6:18, NIV). What does it mean to be persistent?

The verses from Luke quoted at the beginning of this chapter are about persistence—also translated “importunity,” “overboldness,” or “shamelessness.” Jesus teaches persistence in prayer, along with a sense of urgency and boldness. The three imperatives are in the

Greek present tense, denoting a continuous asking, seeking, and knocking. This encourages us to keep on asking boldly for God's intervention in a situation.²

The Bible is replete with examples of people who were persistent to press through in prayer despite all kinds of opposition. Consider:

- The woman with the issue of blood pushing through a crowd to touch Jesus's garment and receive her healing (Mark 5:25–34).
- Blind Bartimaeus shouting over the noise of the crowd, Jesus, Son of David, Have Mercy on me!"—then said, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight" (Mark 10:48, 51).
- The centurion asking Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant, declaring, "Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt. 8:8), and the man was healed that same hour.
- Paul and Silas praising God in prison despite being beaten for casting a demon out of a slave girl (Acts 16:16–33).

COULD THE VILEST MAN IN TOWN BE CHANGED?

Linda will tell you she's been married for thirty-six years, but that's not quite a true picture. The real story is that she spent more than twenty years in persevering prayer for her husband Eddie's salvation.

Seven years into their marriage, Linda accepted Christ while watching a Christian television program and took as her prayer promise: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

Because his father was a member of the Ku Klux Klan, Eddie had joined the movement at an early age. Both men pressured Linda to get involved, but she refused because she was turned off by their hate and prejudice. By the time they had been married for twelve

years, Linda and Eddie had four youngsters, but their marriage was a disaster.

She worked in a factory to support the family and described Eddie as a womanizer, a racist, a non-provider, and an abuser. Once she went to the police station with bruises and two black eyes to file a complaint. Another time when she went to pull him out of a bar, he threw his wedding ring at her and never wore it again for years. Even the city judge said he had never had anyone in his court more times for fighting and abuse than Eddie. Finally she divorced him.

Four years later, after he promised to change and began going to church, Linda remarried him. "This time the Lord said my husband was my ministry and my assignment and that I was to be the best wife I could be," she told me (Quin). "Eddie only physically abused me once after we remarried, but God protected me. I don't tell people to stay in an abusive relationship, but this was what I was to do."

When she learned he'd had another affair she considered divorce, but God gave her the gift of faith to believe that God could transform her husband and their marriage. Could the meanest, vilest man in town be changed by the Lord? "Yes, a resounding yes!" says Linda.

In March 1996 she went to the revival in Pensacola, Florida, that was drawing thousands of people from around the world. It was the beginning of revival in her, and she went seven times over the next few months, growing closer to the Lord and building her faith.

One day in prayer, the Lord showed Linda that racism, hatred, anger, and prejudice were holding her husband in bondage. She had thought his greatest faults were having affairs, hanging out in bars, and abusing her. The following summer, Linda returned to Pensacola to attend more meetings. She had been praying the Seven Promises of Promise Keepers for her husband and asking God to take away his prejudices. (See the appendix for keys to praying for the lost and the list of Seven Promises of Promise Keepers.)

Early one morning while walking along the beach, she saw an African American couple strolling near her and felt led to approach them and ask their forgiveness on behalf of Eddie for his racial prejudice. When the woman gladly accepted her apology and offered

forgiveness, Linda returned to her room feeling she had obeyed God.

Prayers of the Righteous

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

—HEBREWS 10:35–36, NIV

Avail Much

Back home, she had what she calls a “supernatural visitation” from God late one night. She awoke several times praying in tongues while bright streaks of light flashed on and off above her head. This went on for some time. She believes the streaks of light were warring angels come to defeat racism, prejudice, and hatred in her home.

A short time later, when the men of her church were taking a busload to the Pensacola revival, she secretly put her husband’s name on the list with the words “by faith” added. He got on the bus and went, while Linda and women of the church gathered for an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to touch their husbands.

“The presence of the Lord was so strong that even the vilest of the vile had to repent,” said one who was there that night. Eddie accepted Christ and was dramatically changed. A month later, back in their own church, he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

With tears in his eyes, he asked Linda and their children to forgive him. He bought another wedding ring and has worn it for the past ten years without taking it off. Besides having his own successful business, he has a prison ministry and has traveled to New Zealand with evangelist Steve Hill, who was preaching the night he accepted Christ.

Gone are his abusive behavior and the marks of prejudice from his KKK days. All he wants to do is serve the Lord. The secret: unrelenting prayer by his wife and friends who laid claim to God’s

promises and wouldn't give up. Linda says she is living with a "new and changed man" who truly loves her and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never give up praying for the lost.

Why is it that some don't accept the Lord? A few reasons include:

- Satan has held them captive to do his will (2 Tim. 2:25–26, NASU).
- Satan has blinded their minds that they might not see the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4, NASU).
- Worries of this world, deceitfulness of riches, and desire for other things choke out the Word of God (Mark 4:19, NASU).
- Unforgiveness. Paul said, "I forgive...so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:10–11, NASU).
- Not enough harvesters in the field. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38, NASU).

Yes, God gave man a free will to choose his own course in life. Each of us is free to accept or reject the salvation and freedom Christ's sacrificial death purchased for us. But because we know it is not God's will "that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9), we should persevere in prayer for our lost loved ones.

Persistence pays off.

Understanding this truth caused Eva to persist in prayer for her mom, who claimed to have absolutely no interest in God. She shares her story:

For more than thirty years I had prayed for my mother to accept the Lord, but she remained resistant. My prayer assignment was not easy, as in the natural I had no love for her. As a child I had endured her blows to the head, slaps in public, and whippings with a narrow belt so painful that my underwear would sometimes stick to the wounds. Throughout my life she hurled vile verbal abuse at me.

In 1977, shortly after I was filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord assured me that Mother would get saved and then die shortly thereafter. I hid these words in my heart and continued to pray.

Over the years I continually witnessed to her both through word and deed. My husband and I often made the nine-hour round-trip to New Orleans to be sure her needs were met. During every visit I would ask the Lord to shed His love into my heart, because humanly speaking there was no love there. Each time He gave me a supernatural ability to love her. On some visits she would be content; at other times we left with her cruel words mocking my relationship with God ringing in our ears.

Once, when she was critically ill, I tried to talk about Jesus again. "Shut up!" she yelled. "I'm tired of hearing that garbage."

Shortly before she turned eighty-five, we moved Mother to a nursing facility near us. The Lord reaffirmed His promise through this verse: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14).

I held on to His promise for three more years. The Lord led me to copy a pamphlet called Bridge to Life in an enlarged format so her feeble eyes could read it. Two days later Mary Lou, a lady from our church who regularly visited her, was reading the pamphlet aloud when Mother burst into tears.

“I want to ask Jesus into my heart,” she said, sobbing. Mary Lou led her in the sinner’s prayer by reading one line at a time from the pamphlet, with Mother repeating after her. About a week later she quit eating and drinking almost completely. God reminded me of His promise years earlier, and I knew she would die soon. Now she wanted to talk about Jesus and heaven and listen to hymns, which she had never before tolerated.

Thirteen weeks after she’d asked Christ into her heart, I spent my last day with her at the nursing home. She could no longer talk, but as I played hymns like “The Old Rugged Cross” on my CD player, she’d moan as if trying to hum along. While I was reading her a devotional about the glory we will experience when we behold Jesus face-to-face, she fell asleep. Four hours later she was finally home with her Savior.

Through all those years God gave me strength to keep praying; then He fulfilled His promise by allowing me to see Mother come to the Lord just weeks before her death. I had long ago forgiven her for abusing me and had asked the Lord to forgive her. Now I have sweet memories of her loving Jesus that I will always treasure.

THE DESIRE OF HER HEART

Ethel* is a praying East Coast mom whose twenty-three-yearold son Lee* broke her heart when he and his companion, both strung out on drugs, robbed a convenience store. The friend killed a store clerk and was sentenced to life imprisonment, and Lee got twenty years.

When she learned of his sentence, Ethel screamed in anguish, not knowing how she could stand his being locked up more than a thousand miles away from her. However, Lee did become a Christian

after going to prison, and Ethel sent him a Bible and some study books.

She would fly down to see him twice a year—for his June birthday and at Christmas—until it got so expensive she could only go once a year. The trip involved buying a plane ticket, renting a car for the two-hour drive, and paying the two-day motel bill. After getting an approved pass, she was allowed three hours with Lee each of those days.

One year as it neared time for her to go, she prayed, “Lord, I’d really like to hug my son this time. If it be Your will, please grant it.” But just before her departure, she learned that because of a clash with another inmate, Lee had been placed in temporary lockdown. How could she hug him if she was forbidden close contact with him?

She continued with her plans, all the while telling the Lord, “He needs a hug, and I need a hug from him, too.” At the motel, while reading her Bible before going to the prison, one verse popped out: “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4, KJV). She said it over and over and had peace.

At the prison it was hard to visit with a glass wall between them. It was even more painful for a mother to see her son in shackles and handcuffs. There was no way for a hug like this. They visited for a while, and she prayed with him. Then she excused herself to go to the restroom. She planned to try to find someone in authority who would let her hug her son, but each guard she asked said, “No, it’s against the rules for someone in lockdown.”

One captain dialed the colonel and let Ethel ask him herself. He said, “I’m sorry, but I just can’t let you.”

“Well, that’s OK. If God wanted me to, it would have worked out,” she replied. They did extend her visiting time, and she got to stay seven hours instead of three.

On the way back to her motel she stopped at the nearby post office and mentioned to the postmistress that her son was in the prison and she had so wanted to hug him, but they wouldn’t allow it. It turned out this woman’s husband was the colonel whom Ethel had talked to earlier. They visited some more, and the woman assured Ethel, “My husband is a Christian.”

Back at the motel Ethel prayed, then looked up the colonel's phone number and called him at home. When she told him who she was, he said, "I have felt so bad about telling you no. I told my wife how hard it was to deny you that privilege. I couldn't call you, but I was hoping you'd call me. Stand by, and let me see what I can work out."

Hope sprang up in Ethel so quickly that she put on her coat and grabbed her keys, ready to jump in the car and go. Somehow she just knew God was going to give her the desire of her heart. Sure enough, within fifteen minutes the call came. She was to meet the colonel at the prison gate to be escorted to the right building.

Prayers of the Righteous

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church....Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.

—ACTS 12:5, 7

Avail Much

There, in a room with no barriers, Ethel and her son got to visit and hug for one blessed hour. Lee wore no shackles. Then the colonel came in and prayed aloud with Ethel, Lee, and the guards standing with bowed heads. Afterward he told them how mean he used to be and that he had almost lost everything before he accepted Jesus. When he came back to work at the prison they told him to leave Jesus outside, but he said, "No, I bring Jesus in here with me." Lee hadn't had time to grab his Bible when he went into lockdown, but the colonel promised to get him another one.

"Accept the Lord's will, not your own!" is Ethel's simple message. "I have seen God work out my situations better than I could have dreamed possible. Now my forty-three-year-old son is coming out of

prison and has an opportunity for job training when he gets here. God taught me to trust Him and be persistent in faith, trust, and prayer. For 'greater is He who is in me...'”

NO DISTANCE IN PRAYER

In our next story, Ronald* almost destroyed himself through substance abuse, but his sister, Angel,* persistently prayed for him for twenty-five years. The good news is that God's mercy is available to all, despite the circumstances and no matter who is at fault. One or more faithful intercessors standing in the gap can make the difference.

Ronald went from job to job and once owned a repair business, but alcoholism was gradually ruining his life. Then one of his co-workers at a restaurant introduced him to the world of crystal methamphetamine. Before long he was manufacturing his own meth at home.

But his praying sister, who lived hundreds of miles away, never gave up on him. “I wouldn't even answer the phone when she called,” he told Quin. “I didn't want her telling me how much I needed God.”

Prayers of the Righteous

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

—MATTHEW 7:7–8

Avail Much

After two years of taking meth, his body could barely endure any more abuse or lack of sleep. Sometimes he smoked the drug so it would get to his brain quicker; he often went up to three weeks

without sleep. Finally he lost all desire to live. He wanted to get off meth, but the addiction controlled him. One night after an overdose, he regained consciousness lying face down on his bedroom carpet. He was sure he had died.

“I woke up with the sound of God’s voice in my mind saying, ‘It’s OK, it’s OK.’” he remembers. “It was awesome—but I was upset that I was still alive. What did God mean, things were OK? I sat up on the edge of the bed, totally confused, clicked on the TV I hadn’t watched in two years, and turned to a Christian channel. A preacher was asking the audience to repeat the sinner’s prayer. I got on my knees and said it, and all of a sudden I knew Jesus had saved me.

“As I lay in bed for the next forty-five minutes, it was as if a spiritual vacuum cleaner sucked stuff out of me while I just stared at the ceiling. The last thing to go was what I can only describe as the glimpse of an evil face—probably a demon leaving. Something divine had happened.”

Instantly, Ronald was set free of a desire for drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes, which he had smoked for thirty years. The craving for all three left him, and at last he could breathe freely. He went to bed and slept for the next two weeks, getting up only to eat and go to the bathroom.

“One night at 2:00 a.m. Jesus baptized me in the Holy Spirit as I moaned in His overwhelming presence,” Ronald recalls. “Once I stepped outside and yelled at the top of my lungs, ‘I love You, God!’ Everything became brighter—bugs and weeds and even the bark on the trees looked good to me. But the biggest change came in my mind and heart—my wrong attitudes and manipulative ways were gone.”

The next time Angel called, he shared the good news with her and they rejoiced together. Now Ronald saturates his home with worship music and has bought two Bibles to study. He is established in a Spirit-filled church and home cell group, and the new business he opened is doing well.

“Never stop praying for those in your family who don’t know Christ,” he said. “There’s no distance in prayer, and God answers.”

SHE REFUSED TO GIVE UP

Persistence in prayer is beautifully illustrated in this story about Maria,* who prayed for twenty years for a dear friend we'll call Sharon* who once served in Christian ministry with her. Sharon had become embittered with Christians and the church, and as she ran from God, she entered into a lesbian relationship. When her abusive husband divorced her, she lost custody of her children. Soon she was suicidal, addicted to cocaine and alcohol, and eventually became homeless.

"Through the years I tried to reach her with phone calls, notes of encouragement, and much prayer," Maria said. "She never responded to my efforts, but I knew she valued our friendship. In the natural I could see no hope for her, but knowing the call of God was on her life, I refused to give up praying for her."

Maria probably never imagined that it would be a twentyyear prayer battle, but finally, Sharon has recommitted her life to the Lord and reconnected with her faithful friend.

"She has rejected her former lifestyle, is active in a very supportive church, and now volunteers at a food bank and ministers to homeless people," Maria reported. "She has given her testimony in several churches, telling them that, even though her church and entire family turned their backs on her, and even though for a period of time she no longer believed in God, she had two friends who would not give up on her. Her ministry always touches hearts deeply."

This is a case where the enemy's attack against Sharon was turned around because of persistent prayer. And her ministry has the potential to be more powerful now than it was before she turned away from God.

Keys to perseverance

If you are becoming battle-weary from praying for a hard case and seeing no results, take courage from Maria's story and from the following "keys" sent to us by a praying mom:

-
- I must know what the covenant of the blood of Jesus has provided.

- My prayer must be based on the Word of God, either from the Scripture itself or from a valid prophetic word that is in agreement with Scripture.
- I must know that the enemy will counter everything that could potentially lead to his loss of dominion in my life or the lives of those I'm praying for.
- I must remember that what is real in the natural realm is subject to change by what God is doing in the spiritual realm.
- I must be vigilant to instantly recognize seed thoughts from the enemy, reject them immediately, and keep my mind and heart focused on God and His Word.
- The joy of the Lord is my strength. The enemy can do very little to defeat me when the spirit of joy is flowing unhindered through me.

Since I gave up my career to raise my five children, my husband and I had some major struggles in the area of finances over the years. As the children grew into teenagers and then to college age, I sought the Lord often concerning our needs. He would enlighten scriptures to me and speak promises into my heart, which I wrote in my journals.

When pressures came in any situation, I would keep those words before my eyes and replace any anxious thoughts with His Word. I would speak His promises over and over again until peace came. His Word was a lifeline to me through many storms.

When things weren't working out well, I learned to continue praising Him, keeping my eyes on His promises. I knew if I would sow God's Word and keep on sowing it, eventually I'd see a harvest.

Prayers of the Righteous

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

—EPHESIANS 3:20–21

Avail Much

We are now living in the harvest of all of those seeds sown. God has brought us into a church and a home that are beyond all I could have asked for and into a season of plenty. His provision allows us to support our children on the mission field and give freely wherever He leads. God is faithful to His Word, except He does abundantly more than I could have dreamed.

TRUSTING GOD'S WORD

Keeping God's promises as her constant focus made all the difference for Carolyn Tallman, a beautiful thirty-something mom of two. Her life was happy and normal until she slowly began losing weight, couldn't keep food down, and grew weaker day by day. Because her equilibrium was out of balance, she was dizzy and had trouble walking. When she saw a doctor in the spring of 2005, he knew within a couple of hours that she had cancer, but he wasn't sure what type. The next day she was to begin extensive tests.

But at 2:00 a.m. that night she and the Lord had a two-hour "talk" in which He gave her promises and assurances that she would come out healed. One scripture she clung to was, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5–6).

Several days later she got her diagnosis: stage five non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. "That is the fastest-growing type of cancer, and it usually

spreads throughout your body as the cells mass produce,” she explained to me (Quin).

“I needed blood transfusions, but my blood was so sick it wouldn’t mix with the new blood, so it took about a day and a half to get four and a half units into my body. White blood cells fight off disease, and mine were five to six times higher than normal. I hardly had any red blood cells. I began chemotherapy, but doctors thought I had leukemia and lymphoma and predicted I’d eventually need bone marrow replacement.”

Carolyn, her family, church, and friends prayed relentlessly. Before her fifth chemo session, a group of Christians in the town where she had been hospitalized gathered around her for prayer. One of the men made a simple but powerful spiritual warfare statement: “Spirit of cancer, we command you to go. Come out of her, in the name of Jesus Christ.” They then prayed in tongues and in English for God to complete the work. Prayer warriors across the country were standing in agreement for her total healing.

“By the sixth treatment the Lord had totally healed me—which is what we were believing for,” Carolyn said. “The scans proved it, as ‘Lymphoma 100% clear’ was highlighted across the doctor’s report. Just in case some cancer cells hadn’t been reached, they completed the treatments, even though I knew that I was healed.”

Prayers of the Righteous

The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry....The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.

—PSALM 34:15, 17

Avail Much

Six weeks after her last chemo treatment, her blood report confirmed the improvement. “You look good, Carolyn—your blood work is perfect,” the doctor told her. The word *perfect* rang in her

ears as she returned home to rejoice! She knew she truly was getting better when she was able to eat two meals a day.

Carolyn's healing was linked to prayer and her trust in God's Word, as well as the medical care she received. But she is quick to tell you, "God did it. I knew He would. He had told me to be a woman of faith and walk it out, and I did that to the best of my ability. I have no side effects from the chemotherapy, and best of all, on my medical records is written the word *miracle*." When a crisis hits, most of us are motivated to cry out to God and to call on as many others as possible to stand with us in prayer. Then when conditions improve, it's easy to fall back into daily routines and "life as usual."

But we become persevering warriors when we establish habits of prayer that permeate our entire lives, instead of being "crisis prayers." This is especially important when it comes to matters of protection, which we discuss in the next chapter.

PRAYER

Lord, help me realize it is always too soon to stop praying, for with You nothing is impossible. Thank You for Your almighty power that is greater than all the power of the evil one. You already know the outcome of my situation and will release the answer to me in Your appointed time. I thank You in advance. Help me to be faithful to persevere in prayer and worship. Amen.

Frightening events may fill your minds. You may be in danger of dwelling upon them. Remember then what Peter had to do at a moment of great danger: not to look at the storm and waves, but at Jesus. Whatever you look at will captivate you....Everyone can practice looking at Jesus by reading His Word, praying, or singing songs of praise and trust. Then fear will have to yield....So keep looking at Jesus who is the source of life and peace.¹

—Basilea Schlink

Lord,
WE NEED YOUR PROTECTION

God wants to protect our territory and keep us safe. But we have a responsibility to allow Him to use us in the battle to overcome enemy attacks.

But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field.
He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the
LORD brought about a great victory.

—2 SAMUEL 23:12, NIV

WE NEED TO take a stand and defend our own “turf” from enemy invaders, just as one of David’s mighty men took his stand in a field of lentils and defended it against the Philistines. Maybe it was only a “bean patch,” but with God’s help, Shammah fought gallantly and the enemy was defeated. God brought about the victory!

In like manner, God wants to protect our territory and keep us safe. But we have a responsibility to allow Him to use us in the battle to overcome enemy attacks.

SECURING BOUNDARIES

Christina and her husband, Bob, took decisive action in prayer when the 2003 “Grand Prix Fire” threatened their California home.

“Our children’s schools had been evacuated—the fire had raced across the brush and mountains to within five miles of our house,

and we could see the smoke creeping closer,” she said.

“The danger to our property was very real, but I know God gives us authority in the Spirit to secure boundaries. I sensed He was telling us to speak to the situation. Bob and I stood at our bedroom window where we had a clear view of the encroaching fire. Extending our hands toward it we declared aloud, ‘Fire, you will not burn a single house in Rancho Cucamonga! Jesus stilled the storm, and in His name and authority we forbid this fire to burn homes here.’”

They continued praying as the flames swept closer. When the fire was finally under control, they learned that not a single home in their community had burned. Nearby brush and trees on the hills had been consumed, but no houses.

“One friend whose yard got scorched said a fireman told her he couldn’t understand how no homes were lost here,” Christina said. “Yet in a town not far away, 183 homes had burned. But I believe the boundaries of our community were protected because we followed God’s instruction in taking authority. Of course, I believe many other Christians were praying for our city’s safety that day, too.”

We battle through prayer and spiritual warfare because our enemy is not flesh and blood, but invisible, demonic forces at work.

Prayers of the Righteous

No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD.

—ISAIAH 54:17

Avail Much

Joyce, one of our prayer partners who is a school counselor, regularly prays over the schools with which she is associated. When she had children in middle school, she would pray protection over their school building and grounds and over all the students, teachers,

and administrators. One morning after dropping her kids off, she felt impressed to take extra time to drive slowly around the parking lot, asking God to safeguard everyone at that school.

A few days later an angry student brought a gun to school and shot the assistant principal on that same parking lot. The man was rushed to the hospital, but the bullet had missed his vital organs by a couple of centimeters. He had a rapid recovery and was back in school in less than two weeks. “I believe the consistent prayer coverage prevented any loss of life that day,” Joyce reported afterward.

As Bible teacher Dean Sherman explains, “It seems that God has chosen to include man in the responsibility and authority of this planet. God has chosen to move in the affairs of man to the degree that we pray. God will not eliminate the middleman. There are certain areas in which God will not move unless we pray. And He is rightfully astonished when we don’t.”²

If you are seeking God’s protection for yourself, a loved one, a community, or a city, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to pray over any areas that are vulnerable to the enemy and to lead you to Scripture promises to use as “ammunition” for your spiritual warfare. (See the appendix.)

Praying God’s Word aloud helps to build our own confidence in His faithfulness, no matter how dark the situation seems to be. It also reminds the Lord that we are claiming His promises in the Word, and it makes a statement to Satan’s demonic hosts that their power is defeated. We are invoking God’s protection to shield us from enemy assaults, and we know His Word will not return void. (See Isaiah 55:11.)

REMOVING IDOLS

Another condition for having God’s protection is to remove any “detestable thing” (idols or objects associated with the occult) from our hearts, homes, offices, or vehicles. We worship and exalt the only true God—our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Scripture tells us:

You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

—DEUTERONOMY 7:25–26

When Paul preached in Ephesus, fear came upon the new Christians, and they quickly got rid of their occultic items by publicly burning them (Acts 19:18–19).

Once while teaching on spiritual warfare in Mexico, I (Ruthanne) mentioned the above scriptures and the danger of having any occultic items in our homes. Following the morning session, Rosa* asked for prayer for her troubled marriage. After Jean, my ministry partner, and I prayed with her, she asked us to come and pray over her home.

Prayers of the Righteous

But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

—2 THESSALONIANS 3:3

Avail Much

That afternoon when we entered her house, we were shocked to see a large painting of a demonic-looking figure hanging in the foyer—a wedding gift, she said. We walked through each room, praying for discernment and stopping to ask Rosa questions about various objects as the Holy Spirit led us. Some objects were blatantly demonic, like the painting. Others, like a candle or a vase, looked quite innocent. But we learned that almost every article we felt prompted to ask about had some occultic connection.

When we were finished, Rosa took all the questionable items to the garage, and Jean and I prayed for God's protection and peace over Rosa's family and home. Then we counseled her to pray with her husband for God's guidance about how to destroy or dispose of the occultic material. We also suggested that the two of them, with their children, close Christian friends, and relatives, dedicate their home to the Lord by anointing the entry points with oil and declaring that no evil presence could enter.

When I went back to that church a year later, Rosa came running to greet me, looking like a new woman. She reported they had destroyed all those "detestable things" found in her home and their marriage had been healed. They were selling their family business and moving to Spain to serve as missionaries. It was a graphic picture of how such occultic items can hold a family in bondage, even if they're Christians and trying to serve God as best they know how.

The stories that follow dramatically illustrate how prayer makes a vital difference when a crisis occurs without warning.

A LIFE-AND-DEATH EMERGENCY

Andrea* and her brother Bill* grew up knowing the power of praying in the Holy Spirit. And as an airline flight attendant, Andrea usually is very alert to her surroundings.

But that day when facing the possibility of death, she suddenly realized she hadn't stopped to pray that morning. Nor had she paid much attention to other drivers on the busy twolane highway. She and her brother were on vacation with their cousins, Donald* and Sonya* and their children, driving from Mexico to Guatemala City in an SUV.

Suddenly, a white pickup loaded with men dashed around their vehicle and hit their front fender, causing both vehicles to jolt to a stop. Three men wielding guns jumped into their SUV, yelling loudly while pointing pistols at their victims' heads and demanding that they keep their eyes shut.

Prayers of the Righteous

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;
Let those also who love Your name
Be joyful in You.
For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;
With favor You will surround him as with a shield.

—PSALM 5:11–12

Avail Much

One man threw Donald to the floorboard, got in the driver's seat, and started driving them away. "I thought we were being kidnapped for ransom—but with all the yelling and commotion and waving of guns in the air, I realized one of them could go off and even accidentally shoot one of us," Andrea remembers.

"I slumped down in the back seat and prayed for God to surround us with angels and then continued praying in tongues under my breath. The bandits took us to a sugarcane field and made my brother get out of the car, then ordered our cousins and me to get out and kneel beside him. They tied our hands behind us with shoelaces and told us to stay kneeling with our eyes closed. Tying up the eight-year-old girl, they left the two-year-old to roam around. He crawled back into the vehicle where his car seat and toys were."

As Andrea remained kneeling, horrible thoughts whirled through her mind about her impending death. "I thought to myself, *This is it—this is how it ends. This is how my parents back in Florida are going to find out they've lost two children,*" she reported. "*They are never going to get over it.* Feeling their pain, I prayed with even more resolve."

"I was praying silently, too," Bill said. "I knew the situation was in the Lord's hands—that's all I needed to know. Since they wore no masks and could easily be identified, I did wonder what was the worst thing they planned to do to us. But I kept on praying." After ransacking the car and taking credit cards, money, and valuables

from the suitcases, they threw them out on the ground. Finally the robbers said they were leaving in their truck but would return.

After they drove off, Donald untied himself, then the rest of the family. Not knowing if the robbers were nearby watching or not, he yelled, “Hello—anybody out there?” No answer. So the victims grabbed their belongings scattered across the ground and jumped into the SUV. Donald found a set of keys and took off for Guatemala City, where he reported the incident to the U.S. Embassy.

Later, after getting safely back to the United States, Andrea learned such roadside robberies are not that unusual in some Latin countries. “Many times people get robbed, raped, or killed,” she said. “As horrible as it was, I learned how important it is to pray for God’s protection and blessing each day. In my fourteen years of flying with the airlines, I’ve never experienced anything as frightening as this. Bottom line: you can be in harm’s way anywhere, and you need to ask the Lord to keep you safe.”

Bill marveled at God’s provision, saying, “We were so covered by the blood of Jesus that we didn’t even get a mosquito bite while kneeling in the middle of a sugarcane field—that’s protection!”

Pastor David Wilkerson writes:

All you need is to know that our blessed Lord hears every sincere cry, loud or unspoken, and He responds. He will send an angel if He chooses, or even a host of them, to surround you and keep you from danger. Even if you have acted foolishly or had a terrible failure of faith, you only need to get back to calling on your Deliverer. He is faithful to hear your cry and to act.^{[3](#)}

INTERCESSION SAVED HIS LIFE

Mark Miles grew up as a Christian and was blessed to have “Miss Ruby” for his spiritual mom. She mentored him and prayed faithfully for him, especially while he was on drugs during a four-year period of rebellion. He got off drugs and earned his degree in sociology as Ruby’s prayers followed him.

One night, just after he'd returned home from serving as a counselor at a summer institute for teens, Mark was shot in the head. He had been drug-free for seven years and had no idea what the terrific force was that sent his body reeling to the floor. One minute he was opening the front door to his apartment. The next moment he was collapsed in the foyer—his wallet with \$50 in it missing. Was someone just waiting for him to return to rob him? He may never know.

Lying there, he heard a voice in his head, saying, "Get in bed." So he stumbled over to his bed and crawled in. He lay there for seven days, never even getting up to eat or go to the bathroom. During his moments of consciousness he'd silently repeat Scripture, especially Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me: Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

He had blurred vision, was unable to speak, and was paralyzed on his left side. But he had no pain. On the third day, as he lay wounded, three teens climbed from the outside into his second-floor apartment and stole some of his clothes and other possessions. One tried to smother him with a pillow, but his companion yelled, "Hey, man, leave him alone. Don't kill him."

Prayers of the Righteous

The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes.

—PSALM 41:2, NIV

Avail Much

On the seventh day an acquaintance came by, took one look at Mark, and said, "Let's get you to the hospital." Mark insisted he wanted to clean up, as his clothes were filthy. So this man he barely knew helped him bathe and get clean clothes on, then called for emergency help. Later Mark realized they should have immediately

called 911. Because blood and other evidence were washed away, the police were less sympathetic.

At the hospital he learned he had been shot in the head, and the small caliber bullet was lodged on the right side of his brain, leaving the left side of his body paralyzed. But because he had remained lying on his back those seven days, his blood loss was not critical.

Doctors determined it was too dangerous to remove the bullet, as it could cause brain damage. For the next month and a half Mark was in the hospital undergoing physical, occupational, and speech therapy. Amazingly, he still had no pain.

Once home again, he continued intensive physical therapy to regain use of his left arm, leg, and foot. He has since moved to a new city, and his paralysis is gradually lessening as he maintains a strenuous exercise regimen. Having regained his baritone voice, he now sings solos with his church choir, has finished his masters degree, and serves as a hospital chaplain.

Mark still doesn't know who attacked him—only that the devil would like him dead, but God's will is for him to live and declare His glory. No wonder his favorite verse is, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living" (Ps. 27:13, KJV).

Miss Ruby died recently at age ninety-four, but Mark credits her intercession with helping save his life. Though she didn't know the extent of his danger while he was lying near death, the Holy Spirit was directing her prayers.

ANGELS WATCHING OVER US

Psalm 91 offers dramatic assurance that God will protect His children when we make Him our dwelling place:

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my
fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

—PSALM 91:1–2

According to verses 11 and 12 of this psalm, God has given orders to His angels to watch over and protect us. Angels are supernatural beings, serving both as messengers from God and protectors of His children. We mothers know well the importance of praying protection prayers for our children and grandchildren.

When my (Ruthanne's) son transferred to a university in New York City, I stepped up those prayers—especially praying Psalm 91 over him. One day Bradley called to say he had been walking across campus to class that morning when all of a sudden he heard a loud crash and screams.

He turned around to find that an entire window—a huge steel frame with its glass panes—had fallen from an upper floor of a building that was being renovated. A group of students several paces behind him saw it fall and barely miss hitting him, and they rushed up to see if he was hurt. Bits of shattered glass were stuck in his hair and on the back of his coat, but he was unharmed. I believe beyond any doubt that God had appointed an angel to protect him.

Prayers of the Righteous

For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.

—PSALM 27:5

Avail Much

Our friend Judy shared with us about one aspect of her intercession that includes asking God to send angels for protection. Daily she and her husband pray Psalm 91 aloud for their family.

“We pray specifically for God’s angels to take charge over each family member,” she said. “At night, as we ask Him to station angels around the beds of our children and grandchildren, I picture the beds

they will be sleeping in. Though they are miles away, I can ‘tuck them in’ with prayer, as I know distance cannot limit our prayers.

“Several years ago our two oldest granddaughters, Megan and Sarah, were sitting in front of our picture window talking when

I snapped their picture. After it was printed, I noticed something unusual on the other side of the window—shapes of huge figures of light. My husband declares they were guardian angels.

“As we fly back and forth across America, and across other nations, we pray for God to station angels around our plane to form a holy highway to our destination. Several times when the pilot has announced weather conditions were impossible for landing, we increased our prayers, asking for God’s intervention. Each time we’ve been able to land as scheduled.”

ASSIGNMENT OF DEATH BROKEN

We share this mom’s testimony as an example of how intercession and spiritual warfare can overcome the enemy’s plan to harm our family members. She wrote:

My daughter Robbie,* while majoring in international studies, spent a semester abroad studying in the Middle East. During that time my prayer partner Polly* and I prayed together twice a week for her. Polly often would have visions indicating that witchcraft might be endangering her. We would plead the blood of Jesus over her, bind witchcraft in all forms, and continue to intercede for her protection.

When Robbie returned, she complained of unusual fatigue, which we first thought was due to jet lag. But several days later when she continued to complain, Polly and I engaged in a powerful time of spiritual warfare. We interceded in tongues, then prayed in English, targeting each specific thing as the Lord showed it to us. Polly saw more visions concerning

witchcraft, so we broke those demonic assignments. Finally we spent time praising and worshiping the Lord.

That evening when I reported to Robbie about our prayer time, she said, “Maybe the problem came from me walking through the ‘City of the Dead’ in Cairo where people live among the tombs.” We could only assume a curse of death had been sent against her as she walked to and from classes. But after our prayer session that day, Robbie’s health and strength were fully restored.

PROTECTING THE HOMELAND

As intercessors we should get involved in spiritual battles beyond our own personal ones, praying for leaders in places of authority and for the peace and prosperity of the city and region where we live.

When praying for our country, I (Quin) use a blue bookmark called “Prayer Guide for Top 120 U.S. Officials” published by Intercessors for America. It includes names of those in key positions in the White House, Senate, Congress, and the Supreme Court. I divide up the list so that by praying for a portion of the names daily, they will all be mentioned before the Lord within the week.⁴

Because I’m a visual person, I have made a loose-leaf prayer book in which I’ve written supplications for family and friends (along with their photos). I also include worship scriptures and other prayers and Bible verses for specific prayer assignments I cover for my community, state, nation, and other countries.

But I also have some maps in my book—of my city, county, the United States, and the world so I can lay my hands on those areas as I pray for particular issues. Another one of my prayer targets is praying for protection of the five nearby military bases, their personnel and families, and for our citizens’ safety as foreign oil barges make weekly trips to our city docks.

While sitting in on a recent court case, I realized our branch courthouse is highly vulnerable to attack simply because of the way it was built. Here, I decided, was another local prayer need. So I pray!

Soon after the 2001 terrorist attacks against our nation, numerous prayer leaders sent out prayer directives, linking up intercessors across the country. They included specific guidelines for praying protection for our nation, state, and community. From these, I compiled a list of items to incorporate into my daily intercession:

- Washington DC, our nation's capital
- The president of the United States, his cabinet, Congress, advisors, judges, and all authorities over us
- That any plots or terrorist attacks against us, or threats against churches and synagogues, would be uncovered and dismantled
- Our military men and women and their families, and for all military leaders to have wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Here, I also ask the Lord to send His angelic hosts to protect and fight for those upholding righteousness.
- Our airports and traffic control systems
- The major water conduits, electrical plant complexes, and nuclear plants, oil refineries, or gas/oil distribution centers
- The postal system
- The banking system, especially the largest bank in my area
- Important bridges, especially in California, Florida (where I live), and New York
- The four largest populated areas of each one of our states

- Ship channels (especially in my region). The United States has 95,000 miles of open shoreline with over 360 ports.
- Schools, colleges, places where youth gather, and any key stadium events in my region
- Medical facilities—hospitals, clinics, research centers
- Major U.S. cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Miami, Houston, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle
- Protection of our nation at border crossings from Mexico and Canada and the ports leading from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf of Mexico

SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION

Rees Howells, a remarkable minister and missionary, became known as Mr. Intercessor. In 1906, when the Holy Spirit took possession of this Welsh miner, he began a ministry of intercession to pray for every situation imaginable.

After serving a missions term in Africa, Mr. Howells returned to Great Britain and established a Bible college to train young people.

His goal: “Every creature hears the Gospel.”⁵ But in 1940 he entered into yet another battle of intercession for his college properties, students and staff, and country.

Prayers of the Righteous

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow that flies by day,
Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you....
No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling.

—PSALM 91:5–6, 10

Avail Much

World War II was now under way, with German air raids inflicting heavy casualties upon England's civilians. Mr. Howells prayed and believed that no bomb would fall on his college buildings because they were marked for the work of God's kingdom. These were some of his comments during those perilous days:⁶

- "I could put it in print that no devil can touch anyone here."
- "Our prayer for London is that God will turn the tide now and save lives."
- "We prayed last night that London would be defended and that the enemy would fail to break through, and God answered prayer. If we have protection for our properties, why not get protection for the country?"

God was faithful, and no bomb fell upon the college property throughout the war. All the students and staff remained safe. As Rees Howells and his colleagues prayed, the tide of the war shifted, and Hitler's attempts to invade England failed. Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, commander in chief of Fighter Command in the Battle of Britain, made this significant comment: "At the end of the battle one had the sort of feeling that there had been some special Divine intervention to alter some sequence of events which would have otherwise occurred."⁷

Our Father is just one prayer away. “Help, Lord...” can be a very effective prayer! When we’re facing adversity, we can declare aloud hope-filled verses from God’s Word for His protection of people and lands. Roger Palms wrote:

When you have salvation, not as a wispy kerchief but as a firm, hard reality, and you have it on when you face life, then no unexpected explosions, no sudden blows, can topple you....Think of life as a hard-hat area. Think of the hope of salvation as a helmet. It will change your perspective on how you face each day and the events in it.[8](#)

Do we really believe that prayer makes a difference? We’ll look at that question in the next chapter.

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, that You never leave or forsake us. Thank You for overshadowing us with Your presence and protection, and for sending angels to watch over us. Thank You for all the promises in Scripture about Your steadfast love. Help us always to acknowledge and trust You in every situation and to abide under the shadow of Your wings. Amen.

Part of my faith journey included overcoming the struggle to believe that prayer does make a difference. As my relationship with the Holy Spirit developed, prayer sprang to life within me, and I was drawn to pray at every opportunity—when I needed victory, when I was thankful, when I needed wisdom and guidance, and when I needed the intimate and dynamic communication that only exists through prayer.^{[1](#)}

—Mary Forsythe

Lord,
I BELIEVE PRAYER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Prayer can change circumstances in remarkable ways—such as reversing financial hardship, giving favor in court cases, overruling doctors’ reports, and rescuing us from disaster.

For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment.

—LUKE 1:37, AMP

MANY BELIEVERS STRUGGLE to accept as true that prayer actually brings change to people’s hearts and lives—especially their own. Those who share their stories in this chapter show us that, for them, prayer changed their circumstances in remarkable ways.

When Jesus taught His disciples the principles of prayer, He reminded them, “Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him” (Matt. 6:8). Jerry Smith discovered this truth during a time of crisis and grief.

“Lord, I need money to pay for Mom’s funeral,” he cried out as he knelt in front of the sofa. He kept pouring out his heart to the Lord, despite the ringing of the phone. He refused to cut short his prayer to answer it, though the caller just wouldn’t hang up. On and on it rang. He was getting upset by the interruption. Finally he picked up the receiver, not knowing the answer to his prayer was on the other end of the line.

Prayers of the Righteous

Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

—JOHN 16:24

Avail Much

“We feel led to pay for all of your mom’s funeral expenses if you will let us,” the woman told him. She was a close friend and former neighbor of Jerry’s mom.

“Mom was an unusual Christian woman, taking in sick aunts to live with us and giving to handicapped people all her life,” Jerry said. “Over the years she had helped the couple who moved in next door. She stood by them through miscarriages, the birth of their children, and all the problems young couples go through. For more than twenty-five years, Mom had been the one they called for prayer when things went wrong.”

God was answering Jerry’s prayer—even before he finished it—through someone his mom had befriended. God does know our needs. And His provision may come through unexpected means, as the believers who prayed for the apostle Peter discovered.

SURPRISED BY THE ANSWER

Alarm spread through the church in Jerusalem when they learned that Peter was in prison and would soon stand trial (Acts 12). King Herod had already killed the apostle James, and he apparently intended to do the same to Peter. So believers gathered at Mary’s house to pray earnestly for his release.

Late that night, while they were still praying, an angel visited Peter in the prison and awakened him. While the guards slept, the angel severed Peter’s chains, opened the gates of the prison, led him out to the street, and then disappeared. Suddenly Peter realized he wasn’t dreaming—he was free! So he went to the house where the prayer meeting was in progress and knocked at the gate.

When the young servant girl recognized his voice, she ran back into the house to tell everyone Peter was standing outside. God had answered their prayers with a miracle, yet they refused to believe it.

Surely the servant girl must be out of her mind, they said. Peter kept knocking and finally got inside to share his testimony.

Have you ever been amazed when your prayers were answered, then felt embarrassed to admit how weak your faith was?

Prayers of the Righteous

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

—1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

Avail Much

Several times, while teaching sessions on prayer in various parts of the world, I (Ruthanne) have had my students do a role-play of this story. It always turns into an amusing drama as the characters portray their surprise at God's intervention and those playing the role of the guards try to explain to Herod their prisoner's disappearance. Afterward I ask the students to share what they learned about prayer from the exercise. These are their most frequent responses:

- Christians are not immune from persecution and suffering.
- Even when faith may be weak, God responds to prayer.
- We pray in the natural realm, but God answers in the supernatural realm.
- Prayer causes confusion in the enemy's camp.
- Answered prayer encourages and strengthens believers.

Yes, prayer does make a difference, even in a prison or a judge's chambers, as we see in the next story.

GOD INTERVENED THROUGH A JUDGE

Shelley* is a young mother who survived the pain of divorce and then prayed for God's solution to the dilemma of her custody battle. Here is her story:

A hush fell over the courtroom. I turned in the witness chair to face the judge who was about to decide the future of my children and me. I had just been questioned for more than an hour by a team of powerful lawyers. Several friends and family members had come to pray and support me with their presence; I knew the peace that held me steady was God's answer to their intercession. During the preceding weeks, fear had been my constant companion. My ex-husband, a powerful and wealthy man, had succeeded in intimidating me. Enraged by my decision to move with my two sons from Tennessee to Colorado, he had filed suit to stop me. Now, we were at the mercy of the judge's ruling.

The words of my eight-year-old came back to me: "Momma, why do you let him push you around? For once in your life do something great."

Even though I knew I had heard the voice of God say, "Go forward," I still feared my ex-husband's influence and control. For three years following our divorce, the children had moved each week between two different homes, lifestyles, and sets of rules. Like young plants constantly being transplanted from one pot to another, I had watched them wither. All my attempts to negotiate a change in this arrangement had failed. The emotional and physical toll on the children was increasing week by week. When they hurt, I hurt. All of my prayers were liquid.

Now I had to trust that the judge's wisdom and his decision would be God's best for the children, me, and even for my exhusband. I had resolved to obey God's instructions to "Go."

"Tell me," the judge said, peering down from his bench high above where I sat. "Do I understand that you intend move to Colorado regardless of my decision?"

"Yes, sir," I answered. Tears filled my eyes for the first time during the hearing.

"Can you tell me why?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I can." I said, sobbing. "Do you know the story of Solomon, the wise judge?"

He leaned forward and removed his horn-rimmed glasses. "Young lady, I have sat in this courtroom today and thought of that very story," he said.

"Then you know he had to make a difficult decision concerning a baby being claimed by two women," I responded. "When he had to decide who the real mother of the baby was, he sent for his sword to divide the baby in half. The real mother cried out to Solomon to give her baby to the other woman so that the baby would live. I say to you, sir, I will let my children go rather than see them torn apart this way any longer."

Nodding thoughtfully he looked into my eyes and said, "I will adjourn to my chambers and return with my decision."

I left the witness stand with tears streaming down my face and could see that some of those who had come to pray were quietly weeping.

"All stand," said the bailiff a bit later when the judge returned to the bench. We stood, and then quickly sat down to hear the verdict. I held my breath when he referred once more to Solomon's story. The next words he spoke will remain with me always.

"I see no reason why this woman should not be permitted to leave for Colorado with her children," he

announced. “Case dismissed.”

As we were leaving the courtroom, I braced myself when I saw my ex-husband walking toward me, not sure what to expect. “I just want you to know that somehow this decision seems right to me,” he said. “I even told my attorney to shut up so I could hear what you were saying.”

I smiled weakly, standing in awe of the Lord who had answered my heart’s cry beyond anything I could have asked or imagined.

Pastor Bill Johnson says this about the power of a story like Shelley’s:

A testimony prophesies what is possible again. It declares another miracle is now available. It illustrates the nature of God and His covenant with mankind. All He looks for is someone who will add his or her faith to the testimony given. Because He is no respecter of persons, He will do for you what He did for another. Because He is the same today as yesterday, He is willing to do again what He did long ago.²

THE CREATOR MAKES THINGS NEW

How do you pray when you get a frightening medical diagnosis? Sometimes you are too overwhelmed to pray yourself—that’s when intercessors need to stand in the gap for you.

Jo Foster, a Florida mom with two grown children, was fiftyone in June 2004 when she got the horrible news that she had bacterial meningitis. Though a spinal tap had clearly indicated this diagnosis, doctors kept probing to be sure. If Jo did indeed have the highly contagious disease, all the children at the day care where she had

worked that summer would need to be observed or tested, too. The consequences were frightening.

After being transferred to a nearby city hospital with an infectious disease facility, she grew more lethargic, and her speech became slurred. Her family insisted on more testing. An MRI and CT scan indicated she had pressure on the brain. In fact, doctors said she had suffered such a massive stroke that it should have killed her. Also, a staph infection had spread throughout her system.

Doctors rushed her to surgery and performed a craniotomy, a procedure to remove part of her skull to get to the infected tissue around her brain. What happened next was almost disastrous. “As they lifted the pocket of infection up out of the area around my brain, in effect it exploded,” she explained to Quin. “Had they waited even moments longer, my brain would have been destroyed.”

After surgery, doctors said Jo had a 50 percent chance to live. Then, when she seemed to be on the road to recovery, she suddenly had two grand mal seizures. That lowered her chance to live to less than 5 percent. Her doctor put her on medication to try to prevent any more seizures; then they told her husband, Donald, to plan her funeral. “You do understand she is going to die, don’t you?” they asked.

“I hear what you’re saying, Doctor,” Donald replied. “But I don’t think you know the God I serve. He hasn’t told me yet that she’s going to die.” At that moment Jo had only a slim chance even to live through the night. For four days she lay motionless in a drug-induced coma. When doctors brought her out of it, they again told the family her case was severe.

Prayers of the Righteous

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.

—JAMES 5:16, NLT

Avail Much

Prayer groups throughout Florida and in several parts of the world had been alerted. Medical updates were passed from one prayer group to another via e-mail as believers prayed in unity for her complete healing. Relatives, friends, and pastors from her church hovered in the hospital waiting rooms and corridors praying.

While sitting in a waiting room, her brother-in-law received what he believed was a word of knowledge from the Lord: "I have come to give her life abundantly, and she will be like new." When he shared this with the other intercessors, they clung to that promise.

Jo remembers once while she was in a coma that her husband cradled her head and told her everyone was praying for her healing. Though she could not respond, she heard every word he said.

During the coma she had a dream that she recalled with clarity and shared with Donald when she woke up. They both wept. This was her dream:

A man asked me if I could repair a huge piece of crochet that contained beautiful stitches but was falling apart. If I couldn't fix it, would I try to find someone who could? I knew I couldn't repair it myself, and after searching, I couldn't find anyone from the historical society or the museum who could either. I went back and told the man. He told me he had found someone who knows all about those stitches. "It is the one who crocheted it in the first place—the creator of the piece. He is going to make this piece brand-new," the man said to her.

After the dream, Jo and Donald had full assurance that Jesus—her Creator—was putting her torn pieces back together. She'd be like new. That same day a friend brought her a beautifully crocheted antique handkerchief made by the woman's grandmother. "I felt impressed to bring this to you today," she told her, as tears sprang to Jo's eyes.

Indeed, Jo's recovery was a miracle. At first, her health-care providers told her she would need long-term care in a nursing home.

“I think they pictured me like a human vegetable,” she said. “My right side worked well enough, but my left side was paralyzed. As I needed to do things, I’d feel that power, that warm flow of the Holy Spirit saying, ‘Try again, try again,’ and I would. Little by little I got to where I could feed myself, get out of the wheelchair, and walk some.”

Sixteen days after her surgery, Jo entered a rehab center where they told her she would need long-term therapy. But they released her after only nine days. She could walk without assistance, not even needing a walker or a cane. Three specialists—her outpatient speech therapist, physical therapist, and occupational therapist—all said she didn’t need their help, so they discontinued treatment. Less than thirty days after the crisis began, she returned home to normal life.

Sometimes when she feels the four indentations in her skull where the screws had been, the seriousness of her illness strikes her as surreal. Truly she feels “new” again, as the word of the Lord had promised when she was near death.

Today Jo enjoys the blessing of two grandsons and is grateful to all those who prayed night and day to see her through one crisis after another. She tells anyone who will listen about God’s power to heal. And she’s back at the Christian school working with children once again.

MOUNTAIN-MOVING PRAYER

Jenny Lynn Boswell and her husband, Harvey, a judge in Jackson, Tennessee, learned through her long-term illness how to pray with mountain-moving faith for her recovery. After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 1983, she had to quit work as a third-grade teacher. With devastating effects, this inflammatory disease of the central nervous system damages the nerve fibers in the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves.

As she gradually deteriorated, Jenny Lynn soon had to use a wheelchair. Then her memory faded, she couldn’t get out of bed without help, and she required assistance with every bodily need. A year after the disease struck his wife, Judge Harvey says he gave

his life back to the Lord. “Then the Holy Spirit began to move in my life in power,” he said.

Then, as he studied the Bible, they agreed to believe God for her complete healing. Illness was not God’s plan, the judge determined as he read, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2).

Day after day he claimed his favorite scripture as they prayed together:

Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

—MARK 11:22–24

While standing on God’s Word, they also determined to seek the best medical care they could find. A doctor in Houston took her case, but after repeated tests could offer them no hope. Once the doctor showed the judge an MRI of his wife’s brain, and to him it appeared that cobwebs were attacking her nervous system.

Prayers of the Righteous

With God all things are possible.

—MATTHEW 19:26

Avail Much

Years passed, and she got worse. “I still knew God was going to heal her,” the judge said. “We believed God’s promises, and we had friends praying in agreement with us.”

Then, nine years after her diagnosis, she began showing improvement. First she could leave her wheelchair, then she could

walk and drive and remember things. Life was returning to normal. It was a progressive healing, but they are certain it was God who restored her.

“The doctor could only say it is a miracle,” the judge reported. “After all, she had spent almost seven years in a wheelchair. But we’ve not been back to see a doctor in ten years.”

Since being healed, Jenny Lynn has been on half a dozen mission trips to Guatemala with her husband, and their favorite hobby is babysitting their grandchildren. God did indeed move their mountain through prayer.

NEVER QUIT PRAYING

This story of a woman’s years-long prayer campaign for her husband confirms the value of praying persistently for God’s will to be fulfilled in your loved ones. She wrote us:

Prayer has totally changed my life and the life of my husband, Martin,* but only because I never quit praying. After we had been married a few years, he gradually stopped going to church. We had two children, and I tried to get him to come with us, but to no avail. I prayed and prayed for him to change. Once he rededicated his life to the Lord but only went to church for a year before he stopped again.

After I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Lord showed me that I had to quit being the Holy Spirit in Martin’s life. He also showed me Martin was called to preach and that He would use him mightily. I received confirmation from two different people I didn’t even know, so I continued praying with new determination and understanding.

Two years later my husband did return to the Lord. By that fall he was preaching and had a church

congregation of his own. He said he had known as a nineteen-year-old that God wanted him to preach, but for forty years he had run from his calling. True to His promise, the Lord has used Martin mightily in ministry as the Holy Spirit has trained him. God is amazing, and I praise Him for all He has done.

When facing life-threatening situations, we can avoid a sense of panic if we keep our thoughts focused on God's promises of protection. Such was the case for the family in our next story.

AN EVER-PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE

It looked like such fun for Cassie* and her family when they decided to spend a vacation day tubing on the Provo River in Utah. Though the water was melted snow, they thought if they stayed on the inner tubes they wouldn't get wet. But as soon as the group got underway, they realized this was a bad idea. Swiftly picking up pace as they headed toward a bridge, they needed to navigate between the columns.

As the water carried Cassie near the bridge supports, she attempted to kick herself away, but instead she flipped over and went under the freezing water. The current shoved her into the columns, trapping her under the water with such force she couldn't come up. She kept struggling to surface and finally came up gasping for air.

Prayers of the Righteous

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And
He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led
them forth by the right way....Oh, that men would give

thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His
wonderful works to the children of men!

—PSALM 107:6–8

Avail Much

By now her son was off his tube and hanging onto the wooden planks below the bridge. Moving toward her, he reached out to help her up, and they both clung to the side of the columns. Cassie didn't know the fate of the other family members except that her husband had swept past her in the current and couldn't stop.

"Everything was so out of our control," Cassie told Quin. "We realized we had made a big mistake and were in a very dangerous situation. I probably was unconscious for a time because I had bruises on many parts of my body and didn't know how I got them. I knew my son was praying, and our intercessors back home pray daily for our protection."

The scary part was knowing they had to get back into the icy water in order to make it to land. "I was in shock and very concerned about the rest of my family," Cassie said. "My niece got stuck in a tree over the water further downstream, but a man on a raft heard her screams and rescued her." Finally the entire family was reunited, each one with a tale of his or her own harrowing adventure.

"Prayer has become such a part of my life that I can't even tell you when the prayers begin and end," Cassie shared. "I feel my spirit is constantly dependent on God, relying on His help minute by minute. I was asking for His protection and trusting Him completely. My daughter said she had a calmness during it all and was confident that God was in control. In the end, no one was seriously hurt, and we're very thankful that the Lord brought us to safety."

OBEYING THE HOLY SPIRIT'S NUDGE

Yes, prayer makes a difference. Whether the prayer request seems "big" or "small," when God answers, even unbelievers can be touched.

Marilyn and her husband had an unusual opportunity to speak of the power of prayer when they took a vacation cruise to Mexico. They shared a dining table with a couple who were, in Marilyn's words, "very worldly unbelievers."

Later, when they ran into this couple in port, they were panicked about losing an expensive camera somewhere on the island.

"I felt the gentle nudge of the Holy Spirit to pray with them right then and there, even though we were in line with a lot of other people," Marilyn said. "I simply asked God to show them where the camera was and bring it back to them. Then I told them, 'If it happens, you will know that God answers prayer.'"

"That night at dinner on the ship, they came in all excited. A cab driver on the island had found the camera in the back seat of his cab, then looked for them all over the port to return it to them. It seemed unbelievable! We all rejoiced and praised God right there at the dinner table. Though I never saw them again, I continue to pray these two will recognize the hand of God in their lives."

Such experiences reinforce our determination to stay tuned to the Holy Spirit's direction and then quickly obey. We can impact people who may never go inside a church when we share God's love and power wherever we are, even while on vacation.

OUR PRAYERS ACCUMULATE

Planting prayers for those yet unborn is a way we can impact the spiritual destinies of our descendants. Alice* believes this is the explanation of what happened in her own life. After suffering abuse as a child, she became a promiscuous young woman and got pregnant in her senior year of college. She was not a Christian, but she loved the father of her unborn child. Abortion? Absolutely not.

"My grandmother, mother, sister, and cousin had all had abortions, and I wanted to break that cycle," she told me (Quin). "I wasn't religious, but something in me longed to do right. And I knew abortion was wrong."

Alice and Reid* married, and two days after her graduation she gave birth to their son. Eventually the young couple became Christians, and now, some twenty-five years later, they and their

three children are serving the Lord. In fact, Alice has a ministry for women who have been in bondage as she once was. She also has led her father and several other family members to the Lord.

What caused her to decide to keep her baby?

“My ancestors were all Christians,” she said. “I’ve been to Germany and have traced our family line back to those who had close ties with Martin Luther and the Reformation. But my mother’s grandfather embraced liberalism and had no time for God. The next few generations of my forebears did not acknowledge their Creator, which is why my mom thought nothing of urging me to have an abortion as she had done. However, I think the prayers of my ancestors from earlier times were stored up in heaven and released when I needed them.”

Prayers of the Righteous

For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

—2 TIMOTHY 1:12

Avail Much

We read in Revelation 5:8 and 8:3–5 about the prayers of the saints being stored in golden bowls of incense in heaven. Commenting on these verses, Pastor Dutch Sheets explains:

Scriptures indicate that our prayers accumulate. There are bowls in heaven in which our prayers are stored. Not one bowl for all of them but “bowls.” We don’t know how many but I think it very likely that each of us has our own bowl in heaven. I don’t know if it’s literal or symbolic. It doesn’t matter. The principle is still the same. God has something in which He stores our prayers for use at the right time....According to these verses, either when He knows it is the right time to do

something or when enough prayer has accumulated to get the job done, He releases power.³

Alice feels that when she faced a life-or-death choice, God had His angels release the prayers of her ancestors that were in those bowls. She's convinced she is serving God today because someone prayed for her many years ago.

Throughout this book we have shared testimonies to answered prayer—the kind of prayer that is specific, relentless, and standing on the promises of God. Prayers for ourselves and for others. Prayers of faith and battle. Prayers filled with worship, praise, and thanksgiving.

You may want to stop for a moment and thank God for times He intervened

...in your family

...in a physical crisis

...in your church

...in a financial situation

...in your neighborhood

...in your job

...in your country

...in an unexpected, surprising way.

We end where we began—recalling that the Lord's Prayer is the model for all of us. Every believer is privileged to pray, "Our Father..." and claim His promises. If you are in a waiting mode on some prayers, take heart from this verse:

Wait and hope for and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage, and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and hope for and expect the Lord.

—PSALM 27:14, AMP

PRAYER

Father God, we pray Your kingdom will come and Your will be done here in our lives and circumstances. We invite Your Spirit to move into difficult situations [name them] and transform them for Your glory. Thank You for all the answered prayers of the past and that You allow us to participate in the work of Your kingdom. Keep us ever alert to pray what is on Your heart. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Appendix

MORE THAN THIRTY years ago Pastor Peter Lord taught my (Quin's) congregation to pray at least thirty minutes a day through what he called the "2959 plan"—meaning twenty-nine minutes and fifty-nine seconds. He suggested we use the fingers on one hand as reminders of areas to cover. From thumb to little finger, we could pray in this order:

1. Adoration—"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15–16).
2. Thanksgiving—"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).
3. Confession—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:9–10).
4. Intercession—"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Tim. 2:1).
5. Petition—"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in

you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for
(John 15:7).¹

TYPES OF INTERCESSORS

You may wish to spend some time alone contemplating some of the prayer points we have mentioned in this book. For instance, in coordination with chapter 7 on prayer partners, this guide may be helpful in recognizing your own prayer style.

Bible teachers who teach on intercession have come up with descriptions that help us understand *why* we pray in different ways. Simply put, God made us unique, and we express our prayer burdens according to our individual anointing or personality. Here are characteristics of the more widely recognized types of intercessors:

- *Issues intercessors*. They take a stand against injustices, fight for those who can't fight for themselves, and are passionate for the cause.
- *List intercessors*. They pray by lists, persevering in prayer. They are dependable, loyal, and have unwavering love.
- *Soul intercessors*. They stand in the gap between two kingdoms—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness—with great persistence because they desire to see people receive the Lord. They intercede earnestly for souls to be saved.
- *Personal intercessors*. They pray for certain people on a level that requires confidential information they can • share with no one. They pray specifics for that person, such as for his/her protection, priorities, health, finances, job, etc.
- *Mercy intercessors*. They are so full of mercy they may weep whether praying for their enemies or their friends.

- *Crisis intercessors*. They handle urgent requests by going to prayer at any time, night or day; they often go into spiritual warfare mode.
- *Warfare intercessors*. They have spiritual perception to discern evil spirits that are operative in situations; they know strategies needed to establish God's authority and fight to establish truth.
- *Worship intercessors*. They may get lost in adoration of the Lord. They sometimes use banners, singing, clapping, bowing, raising hands, or dancing.
- *Prophetic intercessors*. They pray what they "hear" God saying by speaking out and proclaiming in boldness, but not in presumption.²

SCRIPTURE PRAYERS FOR THE LOST

God...grant [insert name(s)] repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, [that] they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

—2 TIMOTHY 2:25–26, NASU

Note: Remember, the prodigal son came to his senses, repented, and came home to find his father was waiting with open arms.

Open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [Christ Jesus].

—ACTS 26:18, NASU

SEVEN PROMISES OF A PROMISE KEEPER

Following are the prayer points Linda used in praying for her husband's salvation. (See her story in chapter 8, "Lord, I Need to Persevere.")

1. A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
3. A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.
4. A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.
5. A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor and by actively giving his time and resources.
6. A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
7. A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (see Mark 12:30–31) and the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19–20).^{[3](#)}

PRAYING PRACTICAL AND SCRIPTURE PRAYERS FOR CHILDREN

All children need prayer—the wayward and righteous, the young and adult. Ask the Holy Spirit how to pray in each situation or circumstance. Love them unconditionally. Here is a practical prayer:

Lord, guard my children from wrong influences, wrong friends, and wrong environment. Bring right friends into their lives at the right time. Keep them from error and from being deceived.

PERSONALIZE SCRIPTURE

One way to pray is to replace the pronouns with the names of those for whom you are interceding. Example:

- “Thank You, Lord that You guide my son [name] in the paths of righteousness for Your name’s sake” (Ps. 23:3, NASU).
- “May my child [name] walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10, NASU).
- “May my child [name], like Jesus, keep increasing in wisdom (mental) and stature (physical), and in favor with God (spiritual) and men (social)” (Luke 2:52, NASU).
- “May God fulfill His purpose for my children [names] (Ps. 138:8, NIV). I pray for those in authority over them (teachers, employers) that they will make wise and righteous decisions.”

PRAYER DIRECTIVES

Throughout this book we have suggested ways to pray the Scripture for ourselves and for our country. Rev. James Goll, together with more than two dozen ministries, sent out a prayer initiative including some of those. Since I (Quin) was one of the endorsees, I am sharing some of these in hopes that you will be inspired to come up with your own individual prayers. Following the paraphrased scriptures here you will find a list of other scriptures to mediate on.

Praise to God first and foremost

We enter Your gates with thanksgiving and into Your courts with praise. Lord, we praise You, for You are good and Your mercies endure forever. You are enthroned over America and Israel through the praises of Your people. Let us praise the Lord together! Honor, power, might, and dominion are Yours forever and ever. Praise the Lord! Amen! (Read Revelation 1:4–6; 7:12; Romans 12:1; Psalms 100:4–5; 22:3.)

For those in authority

We pray for the manifold wisdom of God to rest upon all who are in authority over America and Israel. May truth and discernment guide every decision they make in their public and private lives. Pull down the ungodly and raise up the righteous. We cry for justice and mercy, truth and righteousness to be established. (Read Proverbs 21:1–2, Ephesians 3:10; Romans 8:26–31; 1 Timothy 2:1–4).

Protection for our land

We cry out to the Lord, mighty in battle, to awaken the watchmen to their assignments for our nation, city, and family. Equip us with your weapons of warfare. We ask God to release the angelic hosts to join with Jesus, the captain of the hosts, to war on behalf of America and Israel—to protect our people and to bring forth God’s purposes for such a time as this. (Read Jeremiah 29:7; Ezekiel 22:30; 2 Chronicles 7:13–14; 2 Corinthians 10:4.)

Pronouncing judgment on the powers of darkness

We place our nation, cities, and families under the blood of Jesus Christ. As we seek God’s face and repent of our sins, we pronounce that no weapon

formed against the United States and Israel shall prosper. Every tongue that would rise up against us in judgment will be exposed and cast down. (Read Isaiah 54:17; Psalm 149:6–9; Ephesians 6:10–20; Romans 16:20.)

Prayer for harvest of souls

Father God, may all of Your enemies bow in submission to the authority of Your Word and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. May there be a great move of the Holy Spirit among those opposed to Christ and a great harvest of souls throughout the world. (Read Philippians 2:9–11; Revelation 12:11; 1 Peter 3:9.)

NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER EXAMPLES

For further study on prayer, we invite you to read some of these biblical examples of prayer during your daily devotional time:

Prayer in Matthew	
Jesus warns against hypocritical, show-off prayers	6:5
Pray in secret	6:6
Model prayer (Lord's Prayer)	6:9–13
Ask, seek, and knock	7:7
Prayer of a leper	8:2
Prayer of the centurion	8:5–13
Prayer in peril, "Lord, save us"	8:23–27
Prayer of Jairus	9:18–19, 23–26
Prayer of the diseased woman	9:20–22
Pray for laborers for the harvest	9:38

Prayer of Christ's gratitude to God	11:25–27
Jesus prays alone on the mountain	14:23
Prayer of Peter in distress	14:28–30
Prayer of the Syro-Phoenician woman	15:21–28
Prayer for a son with epilepsy	17:15
Prayer in unity with others	18:19–20
Jesus prays for little children	19:13–15
Prayer for healing of blindness	20:29–34
Prayer requires faith in God	21:21–22
Jesus speaks of prayer concerning tribulation	24:20–22
Jesus agonizes in prayer in Gethsemane	26:36–46
Jesus cries out to God on cross at Calvary	27:46, 50
Prayer in Mark	
Jesus prays alone in the morning	1:35
Prayer habits of Jesus	1:35; 6:41, 46
Prayer and fasting	2:18; 9:29
Jesus heals a deaf-mute	7:31–37
Evil spirits flee only after prayer and fasting	9:25–29
Prayer of young ruler	10:17–22
Jesus calls for a believing, forgiving heart	11:22–25
Watch and pray against falling into temptation	14:38
Cry from the cross	15:33–34
Prayer in Luke	
People pray outside the temple	1:10
Zacharias's prayer for a son is answered	1:13
Mary's prayer to magnify God	1:46–55
Anna fasts and prays in the temple	2:36–38

Jesus prays at His baptism	3:21–22
Jesus frequently withdraws alone to pray	5:15–16
Jesus prays all night on mountain	6:12
Pray for those who spitefully use us	6:28
Jesus was alone praying and disciples joined Him	9:18
Jesus prays before transfiguration	9:28–29
Jesus teaches disciples about prayer	11:1–13
Jesus teaches about persistence in prayer	18:1–8
Jesus teaches to pray with humility	18:9–14
Jesus touches and blesses children	18:15–17
Jesus prays for Peter's spiritual welfare	22:31–32
Prayer of agony	22:39–46
Prayer and the risen Lord	24:30, 50–53
Prayer in John	
Prayer of a nobleman	4:46–54
Prayer for confirmation, raising of Lazarus	11:41–42
Jesus prays that God would glorify Himself	12:27–28
Believing, ask in Jesus' name, He will do it	14:12–14
The Spirit of truth to abide with you	14:16–17
God answers requests of those who abide in Jesus	15:7, 16
Jesus prays for His followers—all believers	17:1–26
Prayer in Acts	
Jesus's followers meet to pray	1:12–14
The disciples pray about replacing Judas	1:23–26
Church believers devote themselves to prayer	2:42
Peter and John go to the temple to pray	3:1

Believers pray for courage to spread gospel	4:23–31
Apostles pray for church order and responsibility	6:1–6
Stephen prays as he dies a martyr	7:59–60
Prayer for the Holy Spirit to be given new converts	8:14–17
Simon the sorcerer asks for prayer for forgiveness	8:18–24
Ananias prays for Paul's sight to return	9:11–17
Peter prays for Tabitha's life	9:36–43
Peter and Cornelius have visions while praying	10:1–31
Believers pray for Peter's release from prison	12:5–17
Church leaders pray for Barnabas and Saul's mission	13:1–3
Paul and Barnabas pray over church leaders	14:21–23
Paul ministers to women at a place of prayer	16:13
Paul and Silas pray and sing in prison	16:25
Paul prays with believers he must leave behind	20:36–21:6
Paul has a vision while praying	22:17–18
Paul prays for those attending his trial	26:29
Paul prays when in trouble at sea	27:27–44
Paul prays for Publius's ill father	28:7–8
Prayer in Romans	
Prayer for a prosperous journey	1:8–10
Prayer inspired by the Spirit	8:15
The Holy Spirit helps us pray and prays for us	8:26–27
Paul prays that the Israelites will be saved	10:1
Paul prays for believers to be like-minded	15:5–6
Paul asks believers to pray for him	15:30–31
Paul ends his letter with blessing and praise	15:33; 16:20,

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