



DYNAMIC Steward

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Volume 11 | Number 3



Prayer...
where
heaven and earth
touch

DYNAMIC Steward

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Exploring partnership with God

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inside ds

As a young child my attention was captivated observing our church pianist bring forth the musical sounds of melodies and hymns that accompanied the robust and spirited singing of our Spanish speaking church congregation. I began to ask for a piano and lessons at about the age of seven. My mother did not take this request seriously. However, when I was nine, my father with the help of our church school's music teacher, and with much material sacrifice, presented me with a piano and I was enrolled in piano lessons at school.



Three months after my lessons began, our church pianist left. The pastor approached me one Sabbath, "I heard that you are taking piano lessons, do you have a hymn you might help us with?" The only hymn I had acquired was "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." So we sang that for two weeks until I was able to add to my list "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus." Thus, began a journey of service for the church there that lasted until I married and moved away from my church community.

The gift that my father presented me had an unexpected spiritual blessing. When I accompanied the congregation in their singing, I not only read and played musical notes, I also perused words, many times meditating upon their significance. Thus, when I reflect on prayer the words of the first hymn that I learned to play always come to mind:

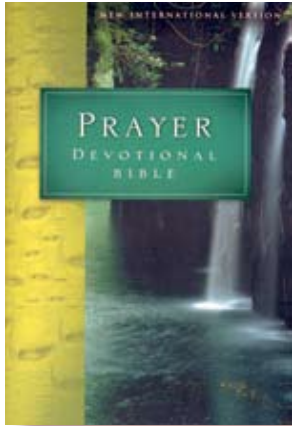
What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
.....
Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In his arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

The focus of this issue of *Dynamic Steward* is prayer. We begin with a young adult point of view and the influence of praying parents. In *Perspectives*, we consider a pastor and leader's thoughts on prayer as well as 'hear' from the heart of a doctor. Finally, *Reflections* probe us to look deeper into the Lord's Prayer, and also to meditate upon the words of a twentieth century martyr.

May your soul be blessed and your thoughts be lifted to where heaven and earth touch.

Alongside you in His service,

resources



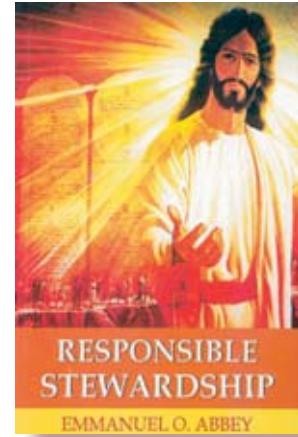
foreword by Jim Cymbala
Zondervan
Grand Rapids, Michigan
2006 US \$27.99

The *Prayer Devotional Bible* (NIV) provides 260 daily devotions and 52 weekend devotions. Each book introduction connects it with its relevance to prayer. It also includes in-text boxes with inspirational quotes and selections on prayer. Focused on guiding, inspiring and equipping towards a deeper prayer life in conjunction with scripture.



by Kent A. Hansen
Pacific Press Publishing
Nampa, Idaho
2006 US \$16.99

In his introduction author and writer Kent Hansen poses, "What I have written for you are field reports and observations of God's love experienced through prayer." Devotional, challenging, deepening and honest is this excellent book on prayer. Included with each chapter are questions for reflection, thus making it applicable for small group use and or journaling.



by Emmanuel O. Abbey
Creative Concept
Accra, Ghana
2006 US \$15.00

The book, *Responsible Stewardship*, is a training manual with a strong biblical approach and reveals the foundations and basis of stewardship such as God's strategic plans for the creation of the world, the creation of man and man's salvation. Author, Emmanuel O. Abbey, is the director for Stewardship and Strategic Planning in the Ghana Union Conference in the West-Central Africa Division.



This attractive colored brochure unfolds to display a list of 50 gifts we receive from God when we accept Jesus Christ as Savior! The reader is encouraged to "read and rejoice in what is yours because you have accepted Him!"

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concept

Prayer Works

Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship



Hannah, in her need for a child, called on God and He rewarded her faith with the birth of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:10, 17, 19-20, 27). Elijah in a test of allegiance and worship, called on the Lord and He brought fire from above that consumed the sacrifice and everything on and around the altar (1 Ki. 1: 36-39). Daniel and his companions faced with the reality of death sought wisdom and deliverance from God, and He answered their prayers even in a foreign land (Dan. 2: 17-19). These few examples from the *Old Testament* are evidence to the power and provisions of God through prayer. Prayer works. It takes us away from the mundane and the ordinary into the presence of the Almighty. But what is the role of prayer in the life of the Christian church today?

Prayer and discipleship

Prayer was a spiritual fundamental in the life of Israel in the *Old Testament*, and it was certainly a key component in the lifestyle of the early church starting with Jesus Christ and the twelve disciples. Prayer was Jesus' communication link to His father during His earthly ministry, and the disciples' knew of this spiritual dimension to His life. Not wanting to miss out on the power and peace that comes only in connecting with God, one of the twelve came to him one day and said "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1-13). Significant in Luke's account of this request and the "Lord's Prayer" in Matt. 6:9-13 is the similarity in the context where Jesus was specifically addressing His disciples. Whereas the model prayer in Luke 11 was a direct response to a need from one of the twelve, the same prayer in Matt. 6 is included as an illustration on how to pray in contrast to the way the "hypocrites" and "pagans" prayed. Prayer is a matter of the heart!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents prayer as a heart to heart connection with God irrespective of life's situations. It not about rituals and habits, or about who was looking and listening; prayer is about who we are inside in relation to who God is as our Father. Prayer was not an additional thing to do in a long list of behavioral activities that His followers were to practice daily but the very heart of what it means to be His disciple in the world. In essence, prayer is presented in both of these chapters (Matt. 6 and Luke 11) as integral to the life and ministry of Christ's followers then and even now.

Prayer and healing

One other important aspect of prayer in the Bible and in the ministry of the Early Church was the emphasis on praying for the sick. When the son of Elijah's host who provided him with food and shelter fell ill, the prophet prayed to God for healing and He restored the child to life (1 Ki. 17:17-22). This example of Elijah as a man of prayer in the *Old Testament* was not lost in the eyes of the apostle James who writing to the scattered community of Christians reminded them of the ministry of praying for the sick. "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven" Jas. 5:14-5 (NIV). Prayer, for James, was not limited only to the realm of worship and witness; rather it includes the area of physical and spiritual healing. Prayer opens up opportunities for Christians to pray and intercede for others within the faith community and outside of the church. Prayer works!



Prayer and the church today

Given the prominent place of prayer in the life of God's people in Bible times, I'm led to believe that we, the church, God's people today would do well to study and apply these experiences of the past to our own ministry journey. I accept that we cannot simply replicate the practice of the past because our situations and contexts are different, but we can certainly capture the spirit and the passion for prayer based on Biblical principles contained in scriptures. So what are some of these principles that we can incorporate into a prayer strategy for the church in the 21st century?

1. Church leaders must model prayer in their own life and ministry as Jesus and the apostles did for their followers in their time.
2. Incorporate prayer into the fabric of church life as a key component of every ministry and activity of the local congregation.
3. Provide opportunity for individuals who see prayer as their spiritual gift, and organize them into a prayer ministry for the church.
4. Make prayer a natural outcome and experience for members who are modern-day disciples of Jesus Christ.
5. Teach prayer as a Christian value and lifestyle issue for believers focusing on the heart relationship with God and not simply on the forms of prayer.

My hope is that all of us who are involved in ministry for the church will make every effort to connect and stay connected to God as faithful stewards of Christ in our worship and witness for Him daily.

stewardship window

news from the
director's desk ...

Meetings in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In his own words, Associate Director Jean-Luc Lézeau reports:

I was delighted to receive an invitation from the Central Africa Division to hold meetings in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I was eager to again visit that huge country (third largest in Africa), and also to work with Pastor Kigundu Ndwi-ga, stewardship director of the division who is always inspiring and forward looking.

We first had to charter a plane to fly to the North Katanga Field in Kamina. A good steward, Kigundu had two other departmental leaders from the division—Joy Gashaija from Women's Ministry and Dr. Tsegaye from the Health Department share the cost. We spent 5 days in Kamina with an attendance of 450-500 people everyday and 1200 on Sabbath. It was the first visit from the General Conference in 20 years.



The East Congo Union Mission arranged meetings in Kipushi where although it was not planned in advance, 120 attended during two days.

We finally arrived in Kinshasa where more than 400 members were expecting us. The people were very receptive and excited about the approach we are taking in first focusing on the lordship of Jesus with financial stewardship as a consequence and an expression of having a relationship with Christ. We commend the division for having incorporated stewardship into their strategic plans.”

Growing Up as Bill McCartney's Son

Marc McCartney
Director of Events
The Rightnow Campaign



Marc has a passion to connect his generation to God's heart for the nations. Through his ministry at The Rightnow Campaign (website at www.rightnow.org), Marc has launched two unique events that help his generation put their faith in action. Leadnow is designed specifically to reach young pastors and leaders teaching them to mobilize their generation. The Fusion Experience encourages thousands of young adults to take their passions, skills, and desires and connect them to actual opportunities of service. In May of 2002 he began working at the Rightnow Campaign where he is the Director of Events. Marc and his wife, Robin, have two beautiful girls: Macy Elizabeth and Mallory Grace.

Some call him Coach Mac. Others know him as the spark of the modern Christian men's movement. My daughters call him Grandpa Mac and his mother called him Billy. I call him Dad. Yes, Bill McCartney, the coach of the NCAA national champion Colorado Buffaloes and founder of Promise Keepers is my Dad. All my life people have asked me the question, "What is it like for you to be Bill McCartney's son?"

I've always thought that was kind of a strange question. I mean, he's always been my Dad—so how can I really distinguish my life from what others would perceive as normal. He's just Dad to me. To me, our lives were normal. Well, normal except for one thing...

Most people think that it would be strange to grow up in the public eye. I remember one time when I was a junior at Baylor University and my parents came to visit me during an off week in the football season. We were in my living room watching ESPN with a dozen or so of my fraternity brothers. They cut to an interview of my Dad and my frat brothers couldn't believe that the guy they were watching on TV was sitting five feet from them. That was normal to me though. As normal as sideline passes, free Gatorade, meeting famous athletes and standing on stage in front of 55,000 men. So in that tiny apartment with my folks and my friends it kind of struck me that maybe I did grow up a little different than some people. But maybe that difference isn't what you would expect.

Prayer, parents, and son

I can't remember a day in my life that my Mom and Dad didn't pray for me. My Dad really modeled prayer for my whole family while my Mom was faithfully on her knees before the Lord. As I talk about my Dad here, please don't misunderstand. He is an ordinary man with an extraordinary God. He has plenty of flaws just like anyone else. And if you want to know the truth, my Mom is actually the hero of our family. She is the one that always held everything together for us. But for some reason, perhaps by God's design, there is an amazing power that a father has on his children. And God used my Dad in profound ways in my life.

The scene was the same every day in the McCartney household. I would wake up and go down our stairs and see my Dad in our living room on his hands and knees, where he had been for an hour or two. He was pouring through the scriptures, crying out to the Lord, and journaling about his relationship with Jesus. Every time I entered or left my home my Dad would pray for me. Often getting on his hands and knees, bowing before our Holy God asking for God's protection and my devotion to Jesus. I couldn't help but be shaped by growing up in the home that I did. I never had to earn any love or approval from my parents. I had total security in knowing that loving Jesus was more than enough for them. I truly believe that.

Even though my Dad was a football coach—he was way more concerned with my spiritual hunger than my athletic ability. He wanted me to be a man of God way more than a man acclaimed for my prowess on the ball field. I love my Mom and Dad for that because they chose to lead our family from their knees. Growing up as Bill McCartney's son was different. Not for the reasons one might think; it was different because my Dad was sold out to Christ.

This generation and prayer

I can't help but think about my generation in regards to prayer and wonder how many people have missed out on the abundance that prayer gives because they

SCRIPTURE:
Isaiah 38:19

were simply never taught. I have countless friends who have little to no relationship with their father. The wound haunts them to this day. It shapes them. In fact, I can't think of very many friends who actually had both parents together while they were growing up.

The Bible says that a father shall make known the truth to his children (Is. 38:19). If most of my friends didn't have an actual father in the home, how many more didn't have a spiritual father? I think it is unfair to underestimate the affect a father has on his children. This fuels me today as a Dad and ought to fuel Christendom as a whole. There is literally a generation of 20 and 30 something's that have missed out on being fathered. I plead that every man of God in their 40's and beyond should consider reaching out to my generation and teaching us how to pray.

Not having a father

I think about my generation and the pain that not having a father has played, and I see so many of my peers turning to culture to fill their void. I'm reminded of a song by The Killers called, *Why Do I Keep Counting*. I was talking to a 24 year old girl recently who said that she thought this song was an anthem of sorts for our generation. This girl is a sold out follower of Christ who resonates with the lyrics of this song. The song is basically about a guy who is trying to figure out his life. He has had some ups and downs, but can't quite understand what to do. He knows there has to be something out there, but he needs some help. Read the chorus:

*Help me get down,
I can make it,
Help me get down
If I only knew the answer
I wouldn't be bothering you.
Father, help me get down,
I can make it,
Help me get down.*

The singer is crying for help and where does he turn? To his father. He knows that he needs help getting to where he belongs, but he doesn't know how to do it. Will someone help him please? Where is his father? I can see why my friend called this an anthem for my generation because we have missed out on something dear, and it is affecting us greatly.

Teach us

My hope and prayer is that the men of God would turn and answer the cry of my generation. Please help us. Teach us to pray. Teach us faith. Teach us perseverance. And for my generation, I thank God that He is bigger than our situations. I thank God for the countless friends that I know who didn't have a father, but God provided anyway. It's time for us to step up as well. It's time for us to be the type of men and women of God who would die to ourselves by fully submitting to Christ through a lifestyle of prayer.

I plead that every man of God in their 40's and beyond should consider reaching out to my generation and teaching us how to pray.



WHY DO I HAVE TO PRAY?

Mario Niño

*Assistant to the President and
Stewardship Director
Inter-America Division*



As assistant to the division president, Mario serves as advisor for division meetings and retreats. He coordinates the collection and preparation of reports for the president, and assists in the development of special projects. As the stewardship director, Mario serves as consultant to the unions and local fields. He participates in the training of pastors and stewardship directors of the local conferences/missions. He advises the local fields and the unions concerning the Conference Development Plan.

Ricardo came towards me and looking intently at me, he asked “Pastor, why do I have to pray?” For some time Ricardo had been praying to God and apparently he had not received a positive answer. Scripture texts such as Matt 7:7-8, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened,” had encouraged him to wait upon an affirming answer on God’s part. It was at this point that the question arose in his mind: “Why, do I have to pray, if God does not respond to my prayers?”

Purpose of prayer

As preachers we ought to have and expound the correct concept in regard to prayer, or contrarily the wrong expectations will be generated in regard to the purpose of prayer. It is not the purpose of prayer to ‘remind’ God of his busy pending agenda of duties, nor should there be the intent to inform God of the details and minutia of our lives or of those that surround us, and much less tell God what he ought to do in relation to the problems and injustices that occur within humanity.

Prayer is a channel of communication that humankind needs to express his or her longings and hopes as well as his or her needs and desires. It is the human being that needs to pray, the one who needs to communicate with Divinity and of course, it pleases God that the human being expresses to him the desires of his heart and especially recognizes God as the God of his life.

Misuse of prayer

The difficulty begins when we lose sight of the theological concept of prayer and when we utilize this channel of communication from the human perspective and not from the divine point of view.

Radical reason acknowledges that man is submerged in an atmosphere regulated by the present and the material, while God discloses himself in an atmosphere guided by the future and the spiritual. Said another way, while we are thinking on the here and now, God continues to prod his kingdom and people towards the beyond that is eternity.

The Apostle James clarified this point when he said: “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” Jas. 4:3 NIV.

Reasons for prayer

After a brief dialog, I presented Ricardo two of the reasons for which we ought to pray:

1 Because we need a daily portion of the grace of God in order to face the duties and trials in daily living. God cannot force an individual to follow the correct path. The fact that someone solicited help from God yesterday does not signify that today he will want this same help. This is why we need to express on a daily basis our longing and interest for God’s intervention in our lives, as God has an agreement with the universe and with himself to carry out correctly all things, all the time. At the final conflict between good and evil it will be confirmed that he had the right reasons, as one compares between God and Lucifer.

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 7:7-8

2 Because the greatest change that we ought to attain is the change of the ‘heart’ (the mind, life, habits, and practices) and this change is obtained by seeking God individually. E.G. White expressed it in this manner:

“The change we need is a change of heart, and can only be obtained by seeking God individually for His blessing, by pleading with Him for His power, by fervently praying that His grace may come upon us, and that our characters may be transformed” *Prayer*, p. 94.

This transformation of the total thoughts and affections in the entire individual’s life is so important that our Lord declared to Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” John 3:3. This signifies that if we fail in the life transformation, we will be outside the kingdom of God and consequently outside of eternity. This spiritual objective is in reality what is of importance to God. Material goods such as house, car, degree, and/or bank account have their place and will be appropriated properly if we are in synch with the mind of God. He is interested in obtaining our eternal comfort yet he does not deny that in this temporal world certain material provisions are required.

Conclusion

We need to pray daily that God will shed the grace necessary for each day, and for the power that is necessary to obtain the transformation of character while seeking after the divine model.

“Prayer is the sum of our relationship with God.

We are what we pray.

The degree of our faith is the degree of our prayer.

Our ability to love is our ability to pray.”

—Carolo Carretto

*In reply Jesus declared,
“I tell you the truth, no
one can see the king-
dom of God unless he is
born again.*

John 3:3



Pray: For a Relationship; Not Answers

Elliot Pinero, MD
Chief of Radiology
10th Medical Group
United States Air Force Academy
Colorado Springs, Colorado



Lieutenant Colonel Pinero is a musculoskeletal radiologist at the United States Air Force Academy, as well as the chief of the radiology department. Although being an active duty officer for 12 years, and deployed once to Bosnia, and twice to Iraq, his first love is to serve the Lord and be actively involved in the church, in whatever capacity the Lord grants. A life-long dream of doing missionary work has led him and his family to seek short mission related opportunities, the first being with the Ohio Pathfinder club in 2005. His wife Daisy, and their two boys, Nicholas and Zachary, share the same passion.

His nightmares began each day when he awoke. James Stegalls was nineteen. He was in Vietnam. Though he carried a small *Gideon New Testament* in his shirt pocket, he couldn't bring himself to read it. His buddies were cut down around him, terror was building within him, and God seemed far away. His twentieth birthday passed, then his twenty-first. At last, he felt he couldn't go on.

On February 26, 1968, he prayed for it all to end, and his heart told him he would die before dusk. Sure enough, his base came under attack that day and Jim heard a rocket coming straight toward him. Three seconds to live, he told himself, then two, then...

A friend shoved him into a grease pit, and he waited for the rocket to explode, but there was only surreal silence. The fuse had malfunctioned.

For five hours James knelt in that pit, and finally his quivering hand reached into his shirt pocket and took out his *Testament*. Beginning with Matthew, he continued through the first 18 chapters.

"When I read Matt. 18:19-20," he said, "I somehow knew things would be all right."

Long after Jim returned home, he visited his wife's grandmother, Mrs. Harris, who told him about a night years before when she was awakened in terror. Knowing Jim was in Vietnam, she had sensed he was in trouble. She began praying for God to spare his life. Unable to kneel because of arthritis, she lay prone on the floor, praying and reading her Bible all night.

Just before dawn she read Matt. 18:19-20: "If two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them."

She immediately called her Sunday school teacher, who got out of bed and went to Mrs. Harris' house where together they claimed the Lord's promise as they prayed for Jim until reassured by God's peace.

Having told Jim the story, Mrs. Harris opened her Bible to show him where she had marked the passage.

In the margin were the words: *Jim, February 26, 1968.*

(Robert J. Morgan, "Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes", *Awakened to Pray*, p. 627).

Considering the significance of prayer

At first glance, this looks like your everyday, ordinary story of a faithful Christian's answered prayer. You have a problem or a petition, you pray, and God answers. However, if you look a little deeper, you will soon realize the true meaning of prayer. You see, there were two different scenarios of prayer in this story.

In the first scene, Jim initially prayed for it all to end. And of course, it did not. Why did God not answer his prayer? The second scene places us at Mrs. Harris' home, where it says "she was awakened in terror." I would like you to note, that she was awakened, and sensing Jim was in trouble, she began to pray. I would like to suggest that the person who awoke Mrs. Harris was God himself. Why do you ask? Because in reality, prayer is not for seeking answers, but for seeking God himself.

SCRIPTURE:
Matt. 18:19-20

If we only use prayer to get a specific answer, I am sure we would eventually stop praying. As Jim found out, and I am sure all of us have at one time or another, sometimes our prayers don't bring any answers at all, or at least, not the ones we want. But the beauty of prayer is that it doesn't have to. Prayer is the means to a personal relationship with God, and that is the essence of our salvation. It seems to me that Mrs. Harris had a relationship with God and it was "He" who wanted to let her know what was happening to Jim and wanted to share His plan with her. He wanted to talk to her. That is a true relationship with God.

Growing in prayer, growing in Christ

When I was deployed to Iraq the first time, I often found myself on my knees pleading with God to send me home. I found myself crying because I could not do what He had asked me to. After five long and terrible months, I finally made it home safely. Why didn't God answer my prayer? After a very short 15 months, the answer to my prayers came to me loud and clear, and I was off to Iraq a second time. This time my prayer was not "Please, send me home", but "Father, please be with me while I am here!" After another four months, I returned home safely once again. But with my deployment, my relationship with my God had grown and I am thankful for the experience.

Prayer is the opportunity to meet with the one Being in the universe that really loves and cares for each one of us. And He is so desperate to share this time with us. He wants to listen, talk, and share Himself with all who seek His presence. It has long been said that "Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 95).

We have long used prayer only in times of need, with a special request in mind. I know, I have been guilty of that many times. But you wouldn't call a good friend just to ask him or her for something all the time, would you? Yet that is exactly what we do with God. I would like to suggest that if we seek God for just "HIM", all of our prayers will be answered, whether it is what we wanted or not. But in the long run, having Christ is really all we will ever need. I think John knew this from a personal experience when he said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3 NRSV).

Do you know who you are praying to? Well, He knows you. Isn't it about time, you got to know Him?

Prayer is the means to a personal relationship with God, and that is the essence of our salvation.



Prayer: A Journey to Know God

Janet Lui

*Prayer Ministry Coordinator
Southern California Conference*



Janet Lui has served as the prayer ministry coordinator in the Southern California Conference for the past 16 years. She has found her joy in ministry, as a lay person including time spent as a Hospice Spiritual Advisor. Her ministry travels have taken her to Australia, Norway, Canada, Brazil, as well as, many North American appointments at Prayer and/or Women's Ministry events. She has used her woman's home Bible study group as a discipling opportunity for the past 27 years. Introducing on site prayer teams at constituency sessions, organizing prayer summits, and ministering with prayer are some ways that Janet has contributed to the "work of prayer."

Prayer is a vital part in the life of a disciple or Christ follower. We can get past the duty of prayer and discover that prayer is one way we come to know God and be known by Him. Jesus demonstrated that the stewardship of time spent with the Father paid high dividends in his life and ministry. Jesus practiced, modeled, and taught the disciples to pray. It was on this subject that the disciples desiring the experience of Jesus were led to say, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Ellen White broadens our insight into this experience:

"The disciples had been for a short time absent from their Lord, when on their return they found Him absorbed in communion with God. Seeming unconscious of their presence, He continued praying aloud. The Saviour's face was irradiated with a celestial brightness. He seemed to be in the very presence of the Unseen, and there was a living power in His words as of one who spoke with God.

The hearts of the listening disciples were deeply moved. They had marked how often He spent long hours in solitude in communion with His Father. His days were passed in ministry to the crowds that pressed upon Him, and in unveiling the treacherous sophistry of the rabbis, and this incessant labor often left Him so utterly wearied that His mother and brothers, and even His disciples, had feared that His life would be sacrificed. But as He returned from the hours of prayer that closed the toilsome day, they marked the look of peace upon His face, the sense of refreshment that seemed to pervade His presence. It was from hours spent with God that He came forth, morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. The disciples had come to connect His hours of prayer with the power of His words and works. Now, as they listened to His supplication, their hearts were awed and humbled. As He ceased praying, it was with a conviction of their own deep need that they exclaimed, "Lord, teach us to pray" TMB 102-103.

Notice what the disciples observed:

- How often he spent long hours in solitude in communion with His Father.
- A look of peace on his face, the sense of refreshment that seemed to pervade his presence.
- A connection between his hours of prayer with the power of his words and work.

Finding God in the Lord's Prayer

Jesus would go on to teach a second time the prayer that has become known as the Lord's Prayer. This prayer was given as a model and not to say that we should use these words as a mantra. As we meditate on this prayer we discover much about the character and attributes of God (note: the prayer recorded in Luke 11:2-4 varies from the prayer of Matt. 6).

- Relationship is key, "When you pray say, Our Father."

Jesus wasn't looking for a politically correct way to pray. Seeing God as a loving Father may be difficult for us to comprehend but it is a fact. Stay on this one point and pray until you can believe and accept it. Our Father, is God. As creator, sustainer, and redeemer of life, He wants to be both Father and friend to us. He is the God whose lap is big enough for all his children.

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 11:1

- He is from another realm, “In heaven.”

We must learn to worship God both in spirit and in truth. His ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts higher than our thoughts (Is. 55:9).

- He is King “Your kingdom come.”

Every kingdom has a king. As we submit to the Sovereignty of God we en-throne him in our hearts. We speak of our desire that all the kingdom work be established.

- He is a Holy God to be revered, “Hallowed be your name.”

As we begin to pray, to know God, there will be times when we will simply bow in awe of God. As He opens our understanding to his perceptions and knowledge regarding circumstances in our lives we will know that we are standing on Holy ground.

- He is our provider, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

The God who says, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14) invites us to ask for what we need for every day. Note: Even as I am writing this, in Hawaii, with no internet connection I said, “God, if only I could get a wireless connection so I could look up the quote from TMB...I had not real faith just a comment.” In a few minutes I felt impressed to check the wireless networks I had checked for three days before. None were available. I was unable to even sign up for local skyway network. However, God chose to reveal himself to me and meet my need. You guessed it! There was a new network listed that I could use to download the article. God’s “broad band” is called prayer. It is available to all of us there are no sign up charges or outages.

- He is a forgiving God “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

The theology of sin is forever set in the cross. Jesus died once and for all for all sin (Rom. 6:10). The benefit of forgiveness is reciprocal. An unforgiving spirit makes mockery of the cross of Jesus Christ. As his followers we must learn to sit at his feet and ask Him to create in us a heart that forgives. Talk to God about the difficulty to forgive. It is no secret to Him. It has been said, “To err is human to forgive divine.” God will take our willingness to forgive and begin to work with us in the process of forgiving. We may have such a deep hurt, such that we can only begin by praying, “Lord, make me willing, to be made willing to be made willing to forgive.” Press on.

- He is our protector “Lead us not into temptation.”

We are not so different from the disciples of Jesus’ day. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Jesus taught the disciples in the garden on the night of his arrest, “pray that you will not fall into temptation” on returning only to find them sleeping, He again said, “get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Luke 22). Prayer is the Christian’s “weather” channel. We can prepare for storms and find shelter when necessary. “He will not let your foot slip...He who watches over you will not slumber” (Ps. 121:3-4).

If the truth be known, Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25) as he did for Peter. He prays that our faith “will not fail” when Satan chooses to sift us like wheat. That we might strengthen our brothers and sisters when are on the other side of our trials (Luke 22:31-32). The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to his

children, who ask. He is our strength in temptation. “In the same way, the Spirit helps in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, 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 intercedes for he saints in accordance with God’s will” (Rom. 8:26-27).

When we begin to talk with our Father as a trusted friend, who is God, we begin to fulfill the requirement of Heb. 11:6. “...without faith it is impossible to please him because anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and rewards those who diligently seek him.” As we come to know God we bring a strength and power to our corporate prayers. We then, begin to align with God’s will. As we place him on the throne of our hearts and submit to his will we can begin to pray the transformational prayers that will first change our lives and then help shape the kingdom work. Let our prayer today be, “Lord teach us to pray as you taught your disciples to pray.”



Pray for Your Enemies

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906 - 1945), a German theologian, pastor, and ecumenist, studied in Berlin and at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He played a central role in the Confessing Church during the Nazi period and has become one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century. Because of his participation in the resistance against the Nazi regime, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in the concentration camp at Flossenburg on April 19, 1945.

Discipleship was the largest and most influential book published by Dietrich Bonhoeffer during his lifetime. Within its pages he confronts his readers time and again with his own stark challenges to their facile, less than Christlike ways of being Christian. What did it mean to declare oneself a follower of Jesus Christ? What were Christians to do about the seemingly “impossible demands” of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount? How effective and relevant were the Matthean Beatitudes again the materialism, militarism, and ruthless dictatorship that had come to dominate Germany in Bonhoeffer’s own time? How were Christians to act responsibly in the Church Struggle created by Hitler and Nazism?

These were issues that had disturbed Bonhoeffer during the gestation period of this book. He declares at the outset that his sole concern is to search not for new battle cries and catchwords but “for Jesus himself.” Bonhoeffer’s questions were shocking in their directness: What did Jesus want to say to us? What does he want from us today?”

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew 5: On the “Extraordinary” of Christian Life

The Beatitudes

The Enemy—the “Extraordinary”

“Pray for those who abuse and persecute you.” That is the most extreme. In prayer we go to our enemies, to stand at their side. We are with them, near them, for them before God. Jesus does not promise us that the enemy we love, we bless, to whom we do good, will not abuse and persecute us. They will do so. But even in doing so, they cannot harm and conquer us if we take this last step to them in intercessory prayer. Now we are taking up their neediness and poverty, their being guilty and lost, and interceding for them before God. We are doing for them in vicarious representative action what they cannot do for themselves. Every insult from our enemy will only bind us closer to God and to our enemy. Every persecution can only serve to bring the enemy closer to reconciliation with God, to make love more unconquerable.

How does love become unconquerable? By never asking what the enemy is doing to it, and only asking what Jesus has done. Loving one’s enemies leads disciples to the way of the cross and into communion with the crucified one. But the more the disciples are certain to have been forced onto this path, the greater the certainty that their love remains unconquered, that love overcomes the hatred of the enemy; for it is not their own love. It is solely the love of Jesus Christ, who went to the cross for his enemies and prayed on the cross for them. Faced with the way of the cross of Jesus Christ, however, the disciples themselves recognize that they were among the enemies of Jesus who have been conquered by his love. This love makes the disciples able to see, so that they can recognize an enemy as a sister or brother and behave toward that person as they would toward a sister or brother. Why? Because they live only from the love of him who behaved toward them as toward brothers and sisters, who accepted them when they were his enemies and brought them into communion with him as his neighbors. That is how love makes disciples able to see, so that they can see the enemies included in God’s love, that they can see enemies under the cross of Jesus Christ. God did not ask me about good and evil, because before God even my good was godless. God’s love seeks the enemy who needs it, whom God considers to be worthy of it. In the enemy,

SCRIPTURE :
Matt. 5:43-48

God magnifies divine love. Disciples know that. They have participated in that love through Jesus. For God lets the sun shine and the rain fall on the righteous and the unrighteous. It is not only the earth's sun and earthly rain which descend on good and evil, but it is also the "sun of righteousness," Jesus Christ himself and the rain of God's word which reveal the grace of his Father in heaven toward sinners. Undivided, perfect love is the act of the Father; it is also the act of the children of their Father in heaven, just as it was the deed of God's only begotten Son.

"The prayers of neighborly love and of nonrevenge will be especially important in the struggle fought by God toward which we are moving, and in which to some extent we have already been engaged for years. On one side, hatred is fighting, and on the other, love. Every Christian soul must seriously prepare for this. The time is coming in which everyone who confesses the *living* God will become, *for the sake of that confession*, not only an object of hatred and fury. Indeed, already we are nearly that far along now. The time is coming when Christians, for the sake of their confession, will be excluded from 'human society,' as it is called, hounded from place to place, subjected to physical attack, abused, and under some circumstances even killed. *The time of widespread persecution of Christians is coming*, and that is actually the real meaning of all the movements and struggles of our time. Those opponents intent upon destroying the Christian church and Christian faith cannot live together with us, because they see in all of our words and all of our actions that their own words and deeds are condemned, even if ours are not directed against them. And they are not wrong in seeing this and feeling that we are indifferent to their condemnation of us. They have to admit that their condemnation is completely powerless and negligible. They sense that we do not relate to them at all, as would be quite all right with them, on the basis of mutual blaming and quarreling. And how are we supposed to fight this fight? The time is approaching when we—no longer as isolated individuals, but *together* as congregations, as the church—shall lift our hands in prayer. The time is coming when we—as crowds of people, even if they are relatively small crowds among the many thousands-times-thousands of people who have fallen away—will loudly confess and praise the crucified and resurrected Lord, and his coming again. And what prayer, what confession, what song of praise is this? It is prayer of *most intimate love for those who are lost*, who stand around us and glare at us with eyes rolling with hatred, some of whom have already even conspired to kill us. It is a prayer for peace for these distraught and shaken, disturbed and destroyed souls, a prayer for the same love and peace that we ourselves enjoy. It is a prayer which will penetrate deeply into their souls and will tug at their hearts with a much stronger grip than they can manage to tug at our hearts, despite their strongest efforts to hate. Yes, the church which is truly waiting for its Lord, which really grasps the signs of the time of final separation, such a church must fling itself into *this prayer of love*, using all the powers of its soul and the total powers of its holy life" (A. F. C. Vilmar, 1880).

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Discipleship*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 4. Translated from the German Edition by Martin Kuse and Ilse Todt, English Edition Edited by Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, Translated by Barbara Green and Reinahrd Krauss. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2001.

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