

The Breakthrough
INTERCESSOR
SUMMER 2020

Count YOUR Blessings

The Magazine About Prayer



A Prayer for Peace

BY LORETTA WADSWORTH

I weave a silence to
My lips,
My mind,
My heart;
Calm me, O Lord,
As you stilled the storm.
Still me, O Lord;
Keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult
Within me cease.
Enfold me, Lord,
In Your peace.

Loretta Wadsworth has been writing about her experiences with the Lord for many years, and enjoys writing poetry and stories. She hopes to write and share more as the Lord allows her.

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INTERCESSOR

SUMMER 2020

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Leonard LeSourd

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Our Mission:

Bringing together anonymously those needing prayer and Christians willing to pray for them; calling, equipping and encouraging people for this work.



Our Mission

Breakthrough Intercessory Prayer Ministry is here for anyone who wants prayer. Prayer requests may be sent to us by mail, phone, email, fax, or through our website. Your prayer request is sent anonymously to six of our nearly 4,000 intercessors around the world who agree to pray for 21 days for each request they receive. (Prayer requests are identified by first name only, and are never sent to intercessors in the same geographic location as the prayer requester.) You will have your own prayer team of dedicated intercessors holding your needs up before the Lord. People often report an increased sense of peace during the prayer period. As you read this magazine, you will learn about many prayers that have been answered.



Catherine Marshall was given the inspiration for Breakthrough over 40 years ago. She was a best-selling Christian author who became concerned about the many prayer requests sent to her by her readers. At the same time, other readers were writing to tell her that they longed to be used by God but had no idea what they could do. God gave Catherine the vision of matching these two groups of people: those with prayer needs and those Christians who wanted to be part of a ministry. Thus Catherine and her husband, Leonard LeSourd, began the Breakthrough ministry.

The 21-day prayer period was chosen based on the story in Daniel Chapter 10. Daniel prayed for three weeks before the angel of the Lord was able to come and help him. The angel had been detained by spiritual forces from the first day of Daniel's prayer. Our intercessors may receive scriptural insights from God for the prayer requester. Those messages, in the form of Scripture verses, are sent to the office and then forwarded to the person requesting prayer. In turn, prayer requesters send their answers to prayer to the staff, which are then forwarded to the intercessors as encouragement for their faithfulness in praying.

We want to hear from you. Pray about becoming one of our intercessors. It is a small expenditure of time compared to how greatly it will impact your life and change the lives of others. As you read this magazine, think of your own stories of answered prayer that you would like to share. Our editorial committee will consider them for publication in *The Breakthrough Intercessor*. Remember also to send us your prayer requests. It is our privilege and joy to pray for you.

From the Chairman

Recently, the world has been experiencing a time of panic as a result of the spread of the coronavirus, which has just been labeled a pandemic - the first in 100 years. In America, where the Breakthrough headquarters are located, we experienced one of the greatest one-day losses in the history of our stock market on March 8th. The Dow Jones Average dropped almost 8%. America is a very financially prosperous country, but much of our populations' security for retirement is invested in the stock market.

When losses like this occur, people begin to think they will not have enough money to survive – and they panic.

There is no doubt that as the virus inevitably continues to spread, it will have a significant impact on the world's health and economy. Health and wealth are on everybody's mind. Ultimately, we have to have some of both to stay alive.

Coronavirus is just one of the many concerns and dangers plaguing our world. When we look around us, it is easy to despair. But when times like this come, God wants us to look to Him instead and count our blessings!

Our Sunday school class is studying the book of Ephesians. It's a very appropriate book to study for such a time as this. The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the new Christians in Ephesus to inform them of the benefits of their new standing in Christ. It's good for us to review the blessings we have in Christ, especially when we begin to doubt them.

Paul starts right out in chapter one by praising the Lord for blessing believers with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm because of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

Did you hear that? God has granted to us here and now the blessings He has in heaven for us – personal communion and fellowship with Him, and freedom from our sin nature. The only thing we have to wait for is our glorification when we pass from this earth to heaven.

Paul goes on to describe the love God has for us, and will have for us forever: God chose us to be holy and without fault in Jesus before He created the world; He decided (again, before He created the world), to adopt us into His forever family; He purchased our freedom from sin and death by forgiving our sins through His kindness and grace; He provides us with all wisdom, insight, and understanding through His indwelling Holy Spirit; and He guarantees through His Holy Spirit that all of the blessing we have now, we will have for eternity (Ephesians Ch. 1:3-14).

Paul then prayed that we might understand and use the enormous riches of God's glory that he has just explained that we inherited when we trusted in Jesus Christ as our Savior (Ephesians 1:16-19).

Pondering all these gifts from God is amazing. But what do we do next?

We need to believe and ACT on what God has said about who we are in Christ. We can do all things through Christ. We are more than conquerors.

Paul implores us to ask our Heavenly Father in prayer for what we need, and reminds us that He hears and answers our prayers. He cares about us more than we care about ourselves, and is forever attached to us through His Holy Spirit.

God will never leave us nor forsake us. Through whatever crisis we face, He is with us and will provide all we need to be victorious!

Because of your position in Christ, with all your heavenly blessings, your intercessory prayers are powerful, and a blessing to those who are hurting and in need of prayer. This is the Breakthrough ministry, and we thank you for your commitment to pray for people you don't even know personally.

Yet as we petition the Lord for others' needs and for our troubled world, let us not forget to count the blessings He so richly gives – above all that we could ask or imagine.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Michael Smith'.

J. Michael Smith, Esq
Chairman of the Board



Thank you for faithfully supporting our ministry!

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WAYS TO GIVE

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Q. How can Breakthrough maintain a network of nearly 4,000 intercessors who pray faithfully and individually for each request they receive?

A. Your support.

Thank you for your
support.

God Was by My Side

BY RUSSELL AND VIRGINIA PAYNE

Russell Recalls: I was at work in March of 2000 when I suddenly experienced a pain above the groin area on my right side. The pain grew so intense that I finally told my co-workers that I was going home. I got in my truck and drove the nine miles home. I know now that it must have been the Lord who helped me, because I don't remember driving home, only lying down once I got there and hearing my wife call the rescue squad.

In the emergency room, I was told that my aorta had ruptured into my abdomen and I would need immediate surgery. The surgeon explained the operation and asked if I had any questions. I didn't have any. Then, she told me that I had only a 50-50 chance of survival. My response to her was what I already knew – that my Great Physician, to whom I had prayed, would be assisting her in the operating room. You see, I had turned the whole situation over to Him when I climbed out of my truck that afternoon.

Virginia Recalls: I had been hospitalized for six days in the middle of that March for influenza, and was still a bit weak that day. I had made it to the grocery store, however, and bought ingredients to make Russell's favorite meal. It was his weekend to work. I had this feeling that he would be home early that Saturday, but he got home at the usual time. On Sunday morning, when he left for work, I also had a strange feeling that something wasn't right. He looked so much larger around his waist than he usually did. I still had the feeling that he would be home early, so I prepared his special dinner, praying all the time.

At exactly 4:30 p.m., he pulled up in his truck and blew the horn. Right then, I knew something was wrong, because he always backed his truck in the yard. It didn't matter how hot or cold or inclement the weather, he always backed that truck in the yard. Russell staggered from the truck, saying, "I have a terrible pain in my stomach." I quickly helped him into the house and to bed.

After a couple of hours, we decided to call our family doctor. While Russell was on the phone with the doctor, I leaned him forward to put some pillows behind his back, and when I did, I saw blood splashes. I grabbed the phone and told the doctor that Russell needed to go to the emergency room. We hung up, and I called 911 for an ambulance. While we waited, I called our children, my brother, and Russell's friend, who all met us at the emergency room.

After a CAT scan, the ER doctor diagnosed a ruptured aorta and called for immediate surgery. I work at Breakthrough, and I called the staff there, and others, to begin praying.

Russell Recalls: I was in the ICU for twelve days after surgery, and prayers kept bombarding heaven. I was moved to a surgical ward to recuperate. As I

began to be able to think more clearly, I recalled events from the operating room. I remember seeing myself seated in a circle, with objects around me protecting me from harm. There was a very bright light. I cannot tell you how large the circle was. As I shared the experience with a visitor, he said that the objects were angels and the bright light was the presence of God Himself. I do not recall visiting the other side, but I can say that I knocked on death's door. My God was in control, and I know that prayers brought me back.

I remember dreaming about the 23rd Psalm, and the Shepherd making me lie down in green pastures and leading me beside still waters. I was told that my wife's pastor came to pray with me, and that I insisted on praying for him also. I do not remember the prayer.

I had many visitors. Some asked about my experience, and what I meant about a power greater than myself being with me all the way. I told them about my God who is still with me, reminding me daily that my health is an answer to many, many prayers.

Nineteen years ago, I was introduced to God through a twelve-step program. As a youngster, I thought I would go straight to hell if I did something wrong. After the program, I knew that if I turned my life over to God, He would always be there. I have had eighteen years of practice, but only lately have I learned not to take my problems back – to totally surrender to Him and not interfere.

About the third day on the surgical floor, my surgeon, who had heard me talk about my faith, asked what I meant about someone assisting her in the operating room. So I began telling her about my God.

My experience is a miracle of answered prayer that cannot be overlooked. And do you know something? God is still in control of my life, and I have not taken it back. It is His.

Republished from the Fall 2000 *Intercessor*.

Russell and Virginia Payne originally wrote this article for our Fall 2000 issue. Russell went to be with the Lord in February 2018. Virginia has worked for Breakthrough since 1976 and remains a faithful part of our ministry.

Look, Jesus! I'm in Your World!

BY DENISE IRVINE

“He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’”

Matthew 18:2-4

My four-year-old great-granddaughter, Olivia, was in the back seat of the car, strapped in her car seat. My husband, Alan, and I had just picked her up to spend the afternoon in our “play room.”

As we turned the corner to the street that led to our condo, she suddenly exclaimed, “Look! We’re in your world!”

Her enthusiastic statement was so simple, so sweet, and yet so profound. In her little mind, we had entered a new realm that she perceived as “your world.” Her words stuck with me all day. I felt like the Lord was trying to tell me something.

“Aha!” I said, as I finally figured it out. “This is a prelude to prayer.”

A revelation flooded my spirit. When I enter the Lord’s world, I enter a world of miracles, a world of health and healing, a world where pain and sorrow cannot win, a world where Jesus is Lord!

The next morning, as I approached the Throne Room in prayer, I started with the words, “Look, Jesus! I’m in Your world!” My prayers then seemed to take on a whole new dimension.

In His world – the world of absolute faith – all things become new. All things become possible. All things become believable, because nothing is impossible with God.

A fresh new faith flooded my spirit as I prayed for God’s answer to my prayers. It didn’t matter how small or how big the request, I knew that in Jesus’ world anything was possible.

And a child shall lead them....

No wonder Jesus said we must become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:2). He also said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). Children have remarkable perception and remarkable faith.

In Matthew 21:16, Jesus rebuked the chief priests and teachers of the law (who were trying to rebuke Him) by quoting Psalm 8:2.

“Have you never read,” Jesus said, “From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise?”

It’s true. I actually felt praise well up within me when I simply said, “Look, Jesus! I’m in Your world!”

Every time we pray, we must realize that we participate in Jesus’ world. His kingdom is not of this world, as He clearly told Pontius Pilate. It’s a privilege and a blessing to enter into the heavenly realm, a privilege made possible by the shed blood of Jesus. It’s a world where everything is good, and where love, joy, and peace reign supreme.

I have been an intercessor for 30 years, and I know sometimes prayer can feel like a burden as the list of prayer requests gets longer and longer and longer. When that happens, I will remind myself of the prelude to prayer inspired by little Olivia. I will look through the eyes of a child and simply say, “Look, Jesus! I’m in Your world!”

Try it sometime... and see if it doesn’t lift you into the realm of childlike praise and faith. After all, in Jesus’ world, His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Denise Irvine resides in South Lyon, Michigan, with her husband, Alan. They have six children, eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Denise currently writes freelance articles for Christian magazines and is a Breakthrough intercessor.



The Trash Man

BY ROY A. BORGES

Jimmy began stealing cars at fifteen years old. By the age of twenty, he was a professional car thief. He made a lot of money, but he spent it all on attorneys' fees. Even professionals can get caught. His lawyers couldn't keep him from a prison sentence.

In prison, Jimmy was assigned to be a "trash man." His job required him to empty all trash cans on the compound and put clean bags in them.

"I'm not doing this stinking job," he told his boss one day. He thought it was below his dignity. But after thirty days in confinement, he changed his mind.

I had an opportunity to talk to Jimmy after he was released from confinement and came to pick up the trash. "How come you don't come to church?" I asked.

"I used to go to church with my parents, when I was younger," he said. "But after they split up, I started stealing cars, and I didn't go anymore."

"An outside group is coming this Sunday. Why don't you come?" I asked him.

After that first week, Jimmy became a regular visitor. He even began to like his job as the trash man. I heard his boss tell the chaplain that Jimmy was the best trash man he ever had.

"Ever since he got out of confinement, he changed," his boss said to me one day.

"Isn't that about the same time he started coming to the church?" the chaplain asked me.

"I think you're right," I said with a big smile.

The day Jimmy was scheduled to be released, he stopped by the chapel to tell me that he had accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He said that he wanted to live his life for Christ and help others.

"Roy, do you think God can use an ex-car thief like me?" he asked.

I took him to Romans 8 in my Bible and we read together, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Months later, I received a letter from Jimmy with a picture enclosed. He wrote, "I got a job with the city in the recycling department." Again, he had become a trash man.

I could hardly recognize him in the picture. His hair was long, and he'd grown a beard and mustache. But the teardrop tattoo on his face and the big, unforgettable smile told me it was Jimmy.

He wrote that all the ways that God was using him amazed him. On his first day at work, he saw a woman running into the pharmacy. She had left work early because her daughter, Rita, left choir practice with a fever. The doctor had prescribed medication, but she had to get it to her daughter right away.

In her rush to get back to her car, the woman dropped her car keys. They fell into the drain and were lost.

“Every minute counted,” Jimmy wrote, “and as I watched this distraught woman in the rear-view mirror of my recycling truck, she cried and prayed. I knew that God was calling me to help her. So I picked up a piece of wire and an old, rusty coat hanger that I’d collected that day - the tools of my old trade. I’m sure I didn’t look like the answer to her prayers, but I was willing to help.”

“‘Can I help?’ I inquired. She gave me a disgusted look that said, ‘What can a trash man do?’ as tears rolled down her cheeks.

“‘It’s okay,’ I said as she blurted out her story. ‘Let’s see if I can start this thing.’

“‘Without a key?’

“‘Well, I’ve started many cars without keys.’

“A few minutes under the hood, and I had the car started. I showed her what I could do with a rusty coat hanger.

“She hugged me and kissed my fuzzy beard before she left. ‘Thank you so much, and God bless you,’ she said, as she drove away with a grateful look on her face.

“The lady also attends my church, and a few Sundays later, she introduced me to her daughter Rita,” Jimmy wrote.

The letter ended, “It’s true, my brother, God does work out all things for good to those who love Him. Have to run. I’m taking Rita to choir practice.”

Roy Borges’ stories have appeared in many Christian publications. He won AMY Foundation awards in 1998, 2002, and 2003. Roy’s book *Faith and Love Behind Prison Fences* was published in 2002.



One with the Persecuted Church

BY DONNA GURR

During my morning prayers one day a year and a half ago, I asked, “What is on your heart today, Lord?”

As I waited for a response, an image formed in my mind’s eye. It was a large tear lying on its side. It supported itself on one arm and splayed the other arm over a small footstool on which it leaned. Shoulders drooped, head downcast, this tear had the essence of a woman who carried deep anguish.

The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. He was presenting to me His costly, persecuted bride – His church. She endured great affliction in many parts of the world, abandoned and alone, with no one to care. There was no witness to her suffering. I felt her crushing heartbreak and isolation. The depth of her sadness and her familiarity with being forgotten settled upon me.

Yet, I knew this was an invitation to partner with Him, and I lifted her up before His throne!

I interceded for many things – among them, that she would rise strong, healthy, and filled with courage and power! I asked Him to make known to her and to us her inestimable value. I prayed that we – the church in the free world – would accept the truth that we are one body with her. When she suffers, we also suffer. I prayed that we would earnestly watch over her, that daily, we would hold her up and bear her burdens and sorrows, that we would make sure she never, ever suffers alone, always there with her in Spirit. I asked that He could trust us to stand with her. We see her!

The impact of this experience left an eternal impact on my spirit. I began a journey of solidarity with my brothers and sisters who suffer for His name. In practical ways, I commit daily prayer time for the persecuted.

My guide is a prayer calendar filled with needs straight from the front lines of persecution. An app on my phone lights up with alerts for critical, often life-or-death situations. Though my suffering brothers and sisters are thousands of miles away, my prayers carry immediate directive power to comfort, rescue, and restore.

I wear a soft barbed wire-like wristband bearing the phrase “One With Them.” Each glimpse of it reminds me to whisper another prayer. I attend mission conferences and international prayer webinars focused on Christian persecution.

As a volunteer with Open Doors USA, an organization that supports our persecuted brothers and sisters in the world, I learn more about what I can do. I represent this issue to my church and region and have spoken multiple times on Christian persecution. I also meet face-to-face with those suffering and those who minister to them. Their stories of profound loss and pain expose a fiery love for the Savior and incredible faith and endurance.

“...There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.” (1 Cor. 12:25-26a)

In my simple prayer that day, I received a gift. It is this profound truth: we are one body, intricately woven with cords of love (Eph 4:15-16). In a healthy body, when one part bleeds, the others experience it, and are swift to administer aid. This is God's design. Jesus Christ, our head, cares deeply for His body. Indifference wounds Him as much as opposition.

Prayer is the #1 request from our persecuted brothers and sisters. Their greatest appeal to us is not for money, food, or even escape. It is prayer. It takes but a moment in our day to bring them to the forefront of our hearts and pray:

Lord, give me your heart for Your persecuted bride. I humbly ask You to show me what it means to stand with my persecuted brothers and sisters and sustain them with my fervent prayers.

They face threats, prejudice, rape, beatings, imprisonment, and even death for claiming the name of Jesus. Help me not to turn a blind eye to their suffering.

Be tangible to them, Lord. Let them behold You, the One who overcame the world, their Savior and Rescuer. Strengthen them by Your mighty power in their hour of need.

I also pray for their persecutors. May the witness of Your love and forgiveness shine through those enduring persecution and bring their persecutors to eternal salvation. Amen.

When we pray, we can know with confidence that one day, we will see the effect of our prayers.

To me, one of the greatest sources of pain for the persecuted church is our lack of awareness of what they endure. As a result, we are not praying. My aim is to faithfully pray for and support this remarkable yet often forgotten member of Christ's bride and to share in her sorrows.

I ask you to join me. Do you see her?

Donna serves her church on the missions team, representing the persecuted church, and as a member of the prayer and sermon teams. Donna also volunteers as a "Connector" with Open Doors USA. She enjoys walks on the beaches of the beautiful Oregon coast, where she lives with her husband and her pets. She currently writes devotionals about what Jesus speaks to her in prayer and in her daily walk with Him.



Are you a writer?

The
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welcomes
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Articles should be 500 to 1,000 words. Poems
should be at least 12 lines.

Topic must focus on prayer: an experience or teach-
ing supported in Scripture.

Authors give Breakthrough permission to edit
material for length and content.

Email: editor@intercessors.org
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Come Down O Love Divine

BY BIANCO DE SIENA

Come down, O love divine, seek Thou this soul of mine,
And visit it with Thine own ardor glowing.
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
And kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, 'til earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
And let Thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
Shall far out-pass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace, till he become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.

This ancient hymn, poem, and prayer was written by Bianco de Siena, an Italian Christian poet who lived and wrote in the 13th century. His hymns were popular for their simple, direct, yet rich style.

Beyond the Crisis

BY NICOLE ARNOLD-BIK

A splash of brilliant color caught my eye as I pulled out of the Break-through driveway late one afternoon. Rolling to a stop just a few yards down the street, I stared in wide-eyed surprise at the flamingo-pink building up ahead.

Recently renovated, the polished building had kept its original color - a quiet, lackluster white - up until eight hours ago. For months I'd admired the steady repairs taking place around the property, eagerly awaiting the finished product. Ladders and paint cans leaning against the wooden siding that morning had signaled that some kind of tilt in the color spectrum was about to take place. Now...it looked as if a giant thunderbolt jolt of magenta had zapped the building and turned it into a Pepto-Bismol palace.

Was this the owner's idea of a finishing touch? I wondered.

Just as soon as I began to question the owner's taste, I saw a spray-painted message on a scrap of plywood propped in front of the two-story eyesore. "It's just primer!" read the sign, anticipating the gasps of onlookers like myself. I smiled at the thought of this comical reassurance. Bold words against such an unsettling backdrop! "Trust me," the owner was saying. "I'm not finished yet. I know what I'm doing. Just wait and see." He wanted observers to understand his objective - to know that the strange results in front of them, although necessary, were not permanent.

As we read through John chapter 11, Scripture gives us a scenario where Jesus propped the same scrap of plywood against another unsettling backdrop. When Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was dying, He reassured His disciples, "This sickness will not end in death." After arriving in Bethany several days after Lazarus' death, Jesus also promised Martha, "Your brother will rise again."

Like the owner of the pink renovation project, He reminded His onlookers of the work in progress - the unfinished spiritual business at hand. While this heartbreaking development initially seemed to stick out like a sore thumb in Jesus' ministry, casting doubt on His character and friendship, He gently maintained that these circumstances were not outside His control. Lazarus' death would not be permanent.

Clouded by confusion, skepticism, and despair, His reassurances fell on deaf ears. Not until after Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead did they begin to grapple with the concept that the most irreversible, unexpected, and alarming events - even death - presented no barrier for Jesus. In fact, Jesus seemed fond of unsettling backdrops like these. Rather than paralyzing or stunting His mission, crises propelled His mission forward - presenting an opportunity for His sovereign power and divinity to stand out in sharper relief.

Of all of Jesus' disciples, Mary was the first to fully grasp this concept.

And not only did she grasp it, this experience also taught her to *anticipate* it. Kneeling before Jesus one chapter later, in John 12, and anointing His feet with perfume intended for His burial, she demonstrated that her faith had been forged in the fire of her brother's crisis. While other disciples ignored and even denied Jesus' prediction of His imminent death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21-23, Mark 8:33), Mary's action showed that she *embraced* this prediction, trusting Jesus in the midst of a new crisis. Lazarus' death and resurrection had trained her for this moment.

Now, on the threshold of what seemed like impending disaster - against an even more sinister backdrop, the death of her Savior and friend - Mary needed no other reassurance than to glance at her brother. She knew that Jesus had authority over life and death. The approaching dark hour of His death would not be permanent, and He would bring glory to Himself in a new way.

In her book *When Life and Beliefs Collide*, Carolyn Custis James writes this about Mary's spiritual growth: "Jesus was no longer just a miracle worker to Mary. She now knew that He was Lord of life and death, that He was, in fact, God in the flesh...Mary evidently not only comprehended the gospel, her actions had just articulated the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Everything Jesus had taught Mary through the death and restoration of her brother came together in this single act, which was her statement of faith."

Like Mary, have we learned to look beyond what seems like the "final blow" of personal crisis and trust that God is not finished yet? When we pray for specific results and then see all our circumstances pointing more and more in the opposite direction, are we too distracted by our dashed hopes to see that these circumstances are simply landmarks along the road to God's greater answer? Are we willing to kneel at Jesus' feet and confess, not just with our mouth, but also with our actions, that God's purpose is higher than ours?

Under the shadow of disaster, may we listen to His repeated reassurances in Scripture:

"...He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 1:6)

"...For I am God, and there is no one else...declaring the end and the result from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure and purpose..." (Isaiah 46:9-10)

And may we also learn to pray accordingly: "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy and lovingkindness, O Lord, endure forever - forsake not the works of Your own hands." (Psalm 138:8)

Republished from the Summer 2007 *Intercessor*.

Nicole Arnold-Bik served as Editor of the *Intercessor* and as a member of the Editorial Committee from 2006 to 2008.

Becoming an Answer to Prayer

BY ERIN KASCHUB

What have you been asked to pray for lately? Every day, new prayer requests are sent our way. Friends want us to pray for job situations, health issues, financial strains, decision making, or relational problems. Just think about all the needs people ask you to pray for.

In the last week, I have been asked to pray for one friend who found a suspicious lump, another undergoing medical tests, some sweet sisters in Christ who are dealing with rebellious teenagers, others who are too invalid to leave their homes very often, another friend who is in the sandwich generation of caring for ailing parents and children simultaneously, and others who cannot afford their rent. Those are just a few of the many requests that my friends have asked me to intercede for.

When it comes to most of the issues presented, I can do nothing tangible to help. Prayers are the most important thing I can give to those in need. God is a big God, and none of the requests are too difficult for Him. Every situation is in His hands. He can change them in a moment's time.

Just as I can do nothing in my human power to help with the issues mentioned above, I can do nothing in my own strength to answer the most important need individuals have – to be reunited with God and each other in heaven. I will probably never meet some of the unsaved people I pray for while on earth. However, I will come in contact with other people who are just as lost. The cashier at the grocery store, the foul-mouthed co-worker, the person sitting next to me in the doctor's office, the couple at the dog park, and the grouchy neighbor are just a few of the people God has placed around me for me to tell about His great love.

I come from a lineage of women who firmly believed in speaking words of encouragement to every store clerk, waitress, office receptionist and stranger they would meet. My grandmother made a diligent effort to find one compliment about each person she met, regardless of age, race, gender, or socioeconomic status. She believed in the value of every person. My mother took it a step further, and passed out scripture verses or prayers to people she would interact with. Later in my life, I met two additional women who also intentionally stocked their purses with scriptures and cards to pass out as they went about their daily errands.

The value of those little scripture cards eluded me until the day my boss pulled me aside to tell me that she was saved because of a tract that someone handed her. Until my boss shared her testimony, I had never known anyone who had come to faith because of a piece of paper given by a complete stranger. This strategy doesn't work for everyone. But because of my boss's life transformation, her two sons and her husband (a Vietnam veteran) all became Christians.

Likewise, those of us reading this magazine could potentially reach count-

less numbers of people by reaching out to just one person. The one individual that we reach could be the direct answer to the prayers of a father, mother, grandparent, sibling, friend, co-worker, aunt or uncle. When we take the time to show love to a stranger, we may be showing them the love that someone else prayed they would see.

We all have friends, co-workers, and loved ones that we want to see in Heaven with us one day. But the very people we love most may not ever listen to us as we tell them about the truth of God. However, the people we are praying for may listen to someone else.

As we pray for God to send laborers to speak to our lost loved ones, we can also go through our daily routines being mindful that we can be used by God to touch the hearts of others. When we give a word of encouragement to a stranger, ask a waiter how we can include him/her in our mealtime prayer, leave a Christian magazine on an airplane or in a doctor's office, hand a written prayer to a store clerk, or place a tract in a hotel lobby or restaurant menu, we could possibly be the answer to another person's prayers.

On this side of Heaven, we may not know how much our influence is valued by the people praying for their lost loved ones. But, one day, when we are all called to our heavenly home, we may be greeted by individuals from around the world who say to us, "Thank you for witnessing to my lost family member. Because of you, that person is in Heaven with us today."

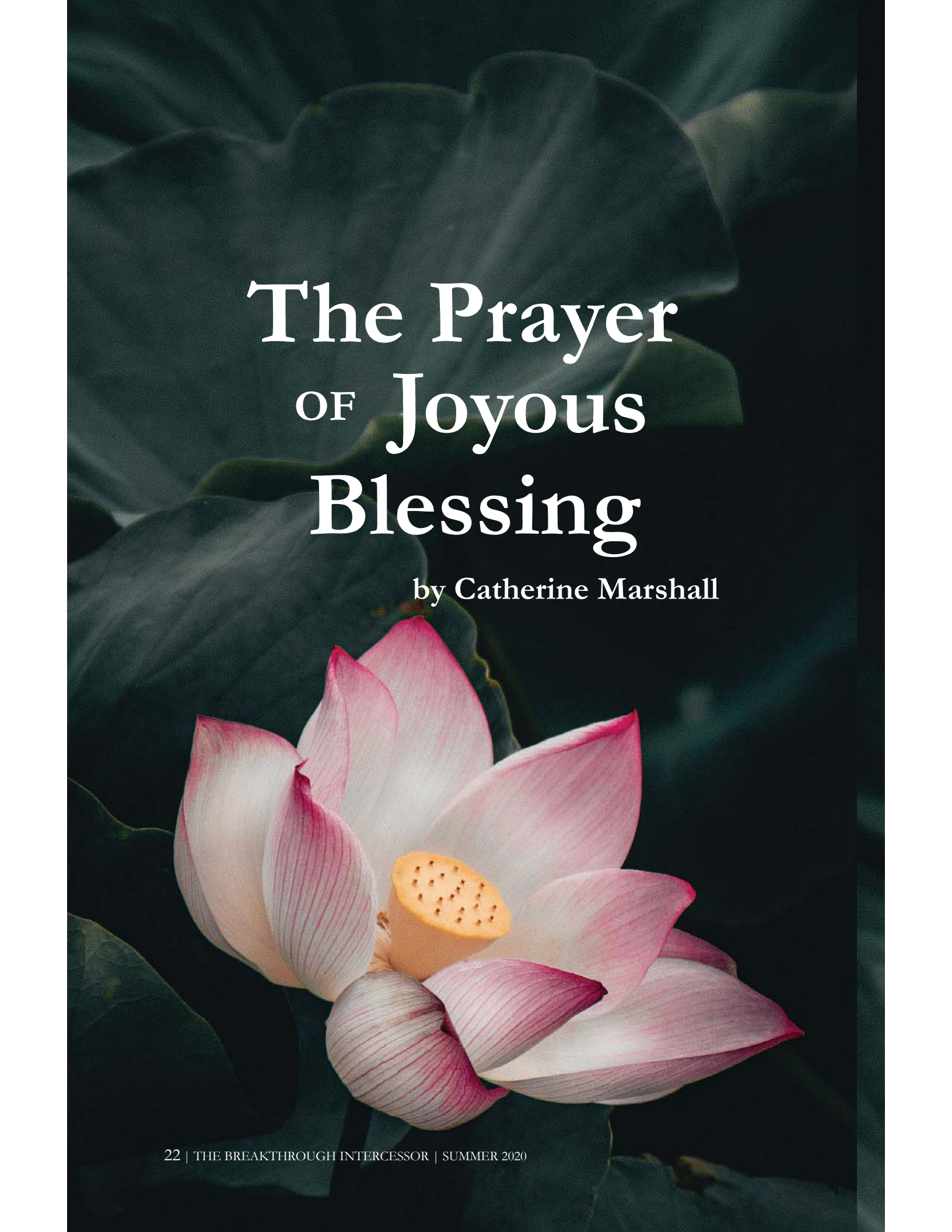
Every time we leave our homes, we have opportunities to point others to Christ. Whether we interact personally with others or simply talk to bank tellers and restaurant employees through the drive-through, we can be laborers for Christ and the answer to someone else's prayer. Here is a sample prayer we can pray for the people we will come in contact with:

Dear Lord, we know that it is not Your will for any person to perish, but for all to come to repentance (Matthew 18:14, 2 Peter 3:9). Holy Spirit, draw these people to Christ (John 6:44) and testify of Christ to these individuals (John 15:26). God, bear witness to these people so they will know that You are the One, true God (Hebrews 2:4). Create a longing in them for You and an emptiness in their hearts for You (Luke 10:21). Open their spiritual eyes and let Your light penetrate all satanic blindness (1 John 5:16). And, Lord, when they hear Your voice, help them not to harden their hearts to You (Hebrews 4:7).

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Erin lives outside Atlanta, Georgia with her family and her two rescue dogs. She has been an intercessor for over 20 years and enjoys teaching Sunday School at a local nursing home.





The Prayer OF Joyous Blessing

by Catherine Marshall

Some years ago, I knew of a home in Washington, D.C., which was full of tension because of an aunt's nagging faultfinding with the children. Ellen, the mother of the family, did much praying about this situation, mostly that God would take away the aunt's hypocritical attitude. Nothing at all seemed to happen as a result, and Ellen became increasingly resentful of the aunt's attitude and presence in her home.

One afternoon, Ellen - whom I had known for many years - dropped by our home to return a borrowed book.

"I know I must look a wreck," she apologized. "I feel like a ball knocked back and forth between the children and Auntie."

In the midst of discussing her problem, I had a sudden inspiration. "You've been asking God to change your aunt's disposition, and you say she's more faultfinding than ever. So why not forget about trying to change your aunt, and just ask God to bless her - in anything and everything?"

Ellen looked astonished. "You mean I should ask God to bless Auntie whether she deserves it or not?"

Before I could answer, my friend had a counter-thought. "I see it," Ellen said thoughtfully. "I guess none of us *deserves* anything from God, do we?"

"That's exactly my thought," I told Ellen. "Nothing we could ever do would be good enough to earn a scrap or a rag from His hands."

"Then, Catherine, let's try your idea. But will you pray with me about it right now?"

"Of course. But remember, Ellen, when you ask God to bless someone, what you're really saying is 'Make him or her happy.' That's the literal meaning of *blessing* in the Bible - happiness."

As I recall, Ellen's prayer went something like this: "Lord, I know it's Your will that we be happier in our house than we have been. And I know that can't happen while any one of us is unhappy. Bless Auntie now in whatever ways she needs. Give her the gift of happiness. Help the children to love and respect her - and show me how I can be kinder to her. Amen."

A week later, my friend telephoned. Ellen said that day by day her prayer was being abundantly answered. "The atmosphere here at home is completely different. You know, this blessing business is dynamite! But I still don't understand why that prayer was answered when none of the others were. Why would there be such power in wishing joy for someone?"

Perhaps one reason we are surprised when God moves to bless someone when we ask it, is that we have thought of Jesus Christ as primarily "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." No man with an attitude of gloom could ever have drawn little children to Him. Only an enthusiastic man who went out to meet life with unflagging zest could have attracted rugged fishermen as His disciples. Sadness couldn't last long when a man delightedly threw away his crutches or a leper went off leaping and singing on his way to show his clean new flesh to the priest. And don't forget that the Gospels record Jesus as breaking up every funeral He attended!

Certainly, Jesus was unblinkingly aware of life's problems and disappointments: "In the world ye shall have tribulation," He promised His disciples. "But," He added, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Or in other words, "Cheer up! The worst that the world can do is no match for Me."

The real source of Jesus' joy is given us in unforgettable words first spoken by the Psalmist, and centuries later by the author of Hebrews:

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Hebrews 1:9)

He who knew no sin and *is* righteousness had a personality sparkling and overflowing with a degree of gladness which none of us can match. How can it be otherwise!

That's why the Prayer of Joyous Blessing does not depend on our merit, or lack of it. Jesus is the *only* Righteous One, therefore, the only finally Joyous One. But this joy He longs to share with all who will receive it.

Now we begin to see why my friend Ellen was on firm ground in not making her aunt's "worthiness" a condition for her Prayer of Joyous Blessing. She knew that Jesus has told us: "Love your enemies...bless them that curse you."

As soon as we begin to obey Him, we find that blessing those with whom we have difficulties and the answer to those difficulties go hand in hand...

If you and I were running the world, probably we would not allow the wicked to prosper. But the simple truth is that often they do prosper. All through the centuries, this fact has bothered men...But Jesus was and always is the Realist. He simply took it for granted that because God is love, the wicked will often prosper "...for he maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

"Therefore," said Jesus, "if you are going to be true sons of your Father in heaven, then you'll have to pray for the very best to happen to everyone you know - no matter how you personally may have been mistreated or hurt by them."

Is Jesus saying then that goodness or wickedness are of no consequence to God? Not at all! Sin is a serious matter, serious enough to have sent Christ to His Cross, and our world closer and closer to the brink of disaster. But the point is that self-righteous prayers or accusing prayers do not change men from bad to good. Only joyous love redeems.

Our Dutch friend, Corrie ten Boom, was trying hard to obey Jesus by loving her enemies one night in a Munich church. She had just finished her talk when she spied him - a former German S.S. guard especially loathed by the prisoners in the concentration camp at Ravensbruck. This man had been one of many who had "despitefully used" Corrie and her sister Betsie during her imprisonment there. Betsie had died in this camp. After Corrie was released in late 1945, she went about the former enemy country of Germany, speaking out to all who would listen, the message that God had laid on her heart like a live coal - forgiveness.

And now here he was, the first of her actual jailers whom Corrie had seen since her release. This was the man with the leering face and the mocking voice who had stood guard at the shower-room door in Ravensbruck. Corrie's heart sank as she saw the man coming towards her.

"Fraulein," he said ingratiatingly, extending his hand, "thank you for your message. To think that He has washed our sins away!"

Corrie felt her right arm go stiff, ramrod straight against her side. Even as a storm of angry, vengeful thoughts boiled up inside her, she knew how wrong they were. She who had just finished talking about loving our enemies was being asked to make good her words.

She tried to smile, struggled to raise her arm, but she could not. Her heart felt no trace of warmth for the man standing there with his hand extended.

"Jesus, I cannot forgive him," went her quick inward prayer. "Give me *Your* forgiveness." Then Corrie's arm reached out and as her fingers touched the man's, incredibly, she felt something like an electric current begin at her shoulder, race along her arm, and pass into the German. Simultaneously, there sprang into her heart such a joyful love for the former guard as she would not have believed possible. Thereafter, Corrie found that she *could* pray with ease that God would rain abundant blessings on the former guard.

That's the way Corrie ten Boom discovered what all of us have to come to sooner or later: we can love our "enemy" enough to ask gladness for him only if He who was anointed with so much gladness does it for us.

Long before Jesus' day, the ancient Israelites had stumbled on the truth that gladness is a key to God's presence: *The joy of the Lord is your strength...In Thy presence is fullness of joy...Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing...*

As he wrote his Psalms, perhaps David was remembering the day he had literally come into God's presence with singing - and dancing. Israel's standing enemies, the Philistines, had finally been defeated. The sacred ark could now be safely brought to Jerusalem. So David had brought it: "With gladness... he danced before the Lord with all his might...with shouting and the sound of the trumpet."

Michal, his wife, watching his joyous abandon, had been embarrassed. Her husband was making a fool of himself! So she "despised him in her heart." The writer of the old story then adds a curious footnote to the story. Michal was never to have the most fervent desire of her heart granted: she was to remain childless until the day of her death.

Scripture does not explain this further. We can guess that Michal's inability to enter into David's joyousness was merely a symptom of deeper trouble. The queen despised her husband...she was probably habitually nursing grudges and resentments - prime blockers to answered prayer.

Had Michal been able to forgive, joy could have joined hands with love, perhaps to grant her fervent desire for children along with many another answered prayer.

Agnes Sanford, the Episcopal rector's widow, has told about how she first met the power of joy when her baby had been ill for six weeks with abscessed ears. Her prayers for healing, she said later, were made with fear and desperation in her heart. Then one day a young minister called. "I'll go upstairs and have a prayer with the baby," he offered.

The mother was skeptical about his prayer achieving anything that hers had not, but showed him the way to the baby's room. The young rector tenderly held the baby's head in his big hands. Mrs. Sanford said later, remembering the incident, "Light shone in the minister's eyes. I looked at him and saw his loving joyfulness, and I believed. For joy is the heavenly 'okay' of the inner life of power..."

The baby promptly went to sleep. When he awoke, he was well.

Queen Elizabeth's standard flying over Buckingham Palace in London is the sign that the queen is in residence. Joy looking out of the Christian's eyes is the sign that the King is in residence within...

Having so often seen the Prayer of Joyous Blessing gloriously answered, I've begun to wonder recently if here we don't have a key to the problem of world peace. Even for those who take prayer seriously, it isn't easy to know how to pray for other nations. It is especially hard when their ideals are not ours, and when they consider themselves our enemies.

Perhaps Christ would say to us, "The people of all nations are My children, too. The more violent, greedy men ignore Me and prey on My innocents, the more they need to be released to My all-encompassing love."

Now obviously, we cannot bless and pray for people who spitefully use others or with whom we are at odds, unless we recognize that no self-effort can manage this, and let Christ - living in us - love others for us.

But it may be that if even a handful of citizens could pray with that kind of joy for the people of "enemy" nations, with the expectation of good, asking for God's all-abundant blessings on them in every sphere - tremendous results would be forthcoming.

Our first reaction may be... "Too risky!" ...But it is not a risky way to pray, once we see that God's way is to make "His sun rise on the just and on the unjust," and that His sun of joy is the only power in the universe capable of transforming the hearts of men - no matter their problems, their politics, or their nationality.

Excerpt from *Adventures in Prayer* by Catherine Marshall.
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Memorials

Ellie Leite
in memory of
MANNY LEITE
treasured intercessor
and supporter

“...‘Blessed are the dead who die
in the Lord from now on.’
‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they
may rest from their labors, and
their works may follow them.’”

REVELATION 14:13

Answers to Prayer

A friend down the hall from me...had diabetes and a lot of health problems, like a cancerous lump in her side...many places in her body showed cancer. I requested prayer for her twice last year. She had her final exam and is totally clear, no cancer. Her face shines. She is so happy and looks younger, like a new person.

- Joan

Asking me to pray for her is a new development in my sister-in-law...thank you for your prayers!

- Patricia

A few months ago, I asked for prayer for my daughter-in-law, who was having trouble adjusting to her surprise pregnancy. I see renewed joy!

- Greta

The baby is home and recovering from pneumonia, with expectation of a full recovery. Thanksgiving to God!

- Monica

Our daughter received victory in identification of bacteria and also received healing.

- Jeanne

Thank you so much for your prayers for my daughter...She went to the hospital with a heart situation and was in two different hospitals for six months. She got better unexpectedly, meds not needed. She is very well and back to work now. Doctors called it a miracle. God bless you all so much.

- Joan

My friend, who is seventy years old, was in the hospital for over four months with a kidney transplant. Eventually he was able to return to church in a wheelchair. But then, he WALKED in - a miracle.

- Anonymous

Thank you, Father, for healing my daughter of her addiction and for curing my heart disease.

- Ann

My brother's children came to be with him to make peace and have forgiveness.

- Rolande

We could feel your prayers, and although my husband still hasn't decided what to do about his doctorate paper, he has been more alive spiritually than he was before, and more thoughtful of me and our boys. Also, he decided to start a men's accountability group about how to have victory over pornography. This is a wonderful breakthrough...may many come to it and be helped! Thank you!

- Blanche

I recently asked for prayer for my friend's son-in-law, who had unfairly lost his job and had a wife and four children to support. On the last day of the prayer period, he had two job offers. He accepted one...and the family's financial position has been greatly relieved. Thanks be to God for His love and support.

- Karen

My sister's living arrangements were totally orchestrated by God, exactly as we had prayed for years would happen.

- Sharon

I recently received an answer to a difficult situation that I had you pray for - [finding] a new physician. God has directed me, brought healing, and has brought kind and compassionate doctors into my life to help me through this difficult aging process.

- Lorita

Thank you so much for praying for my brother. He was diagnosed with lung cancer. We are a close family and we were very worried. I contacted Breakthrough for prayer... we are now praising the Lord that after two biopsies it was determined that it is not lung cancer, but a rare infection. He is under treatment and getting better. Thank you for your prayers.

- Ana

Many months ago, I asked for prayer for my granddaughter, that God would drive a wedge between her and alcohol. She is now attending AA.

- Dorothy

Praise God!!!! In answer to all our prayers, my good friend has gotten probation and a fine instead of prison time! Thank you for praying with us. I truly believe that you have all helped save my friend's life!

- Crystal

My daughter was on the verge of death from liver disease. Doctors told us to plan her funeral when she went into septic shock. Two days later, she began to recover, and has since been home, living on her own, and the liver is functioning!

- Debra

Had breast cancer for three years. Clear now. Praise the Lord Jesus.

- Cindy

Thanks for your intercessors keeping me in prayer...the next Sunday I was walking early in the morning and a car came to hit me. But, thanks to Jesus and his angel team, I felt a swoosh next to me and found myself in a baseball slide in the grass. I looked up and saw the car leaving, with car parts, a broken car mirror, and glass next to me in the grass. Not a bruise or cut on me. Hallelujah. Thanks for your prayers. God is so good!!!

- Pauline

Thank you so much for praying for my daughter. She gave her life to Jesus last Saturday in church! She has been drug free for over five months.

- Anonymous

I requested that your intercessors pray for the shalom/peace of the Lord to cover my body, to fill my mind, and to reign in my spirit. In spite of many sorrows and attacks in my life, I can now testify that His shalom has indeed come to me in body, mind, and spirit. Thank you Father!!

- Claire

My friend has no cancer in her lymph nodes! Thanks be to God. Thank you for lifting up my friend.

- Maribeth

My husband returned and remarried me after divorce in 2008.

- Debra

I had a very bad fall in January and asked for prayer for healing and to be able to continue to teach my Old Testament class. Although I still have slight pain, I am able to keep going.

- Janet

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