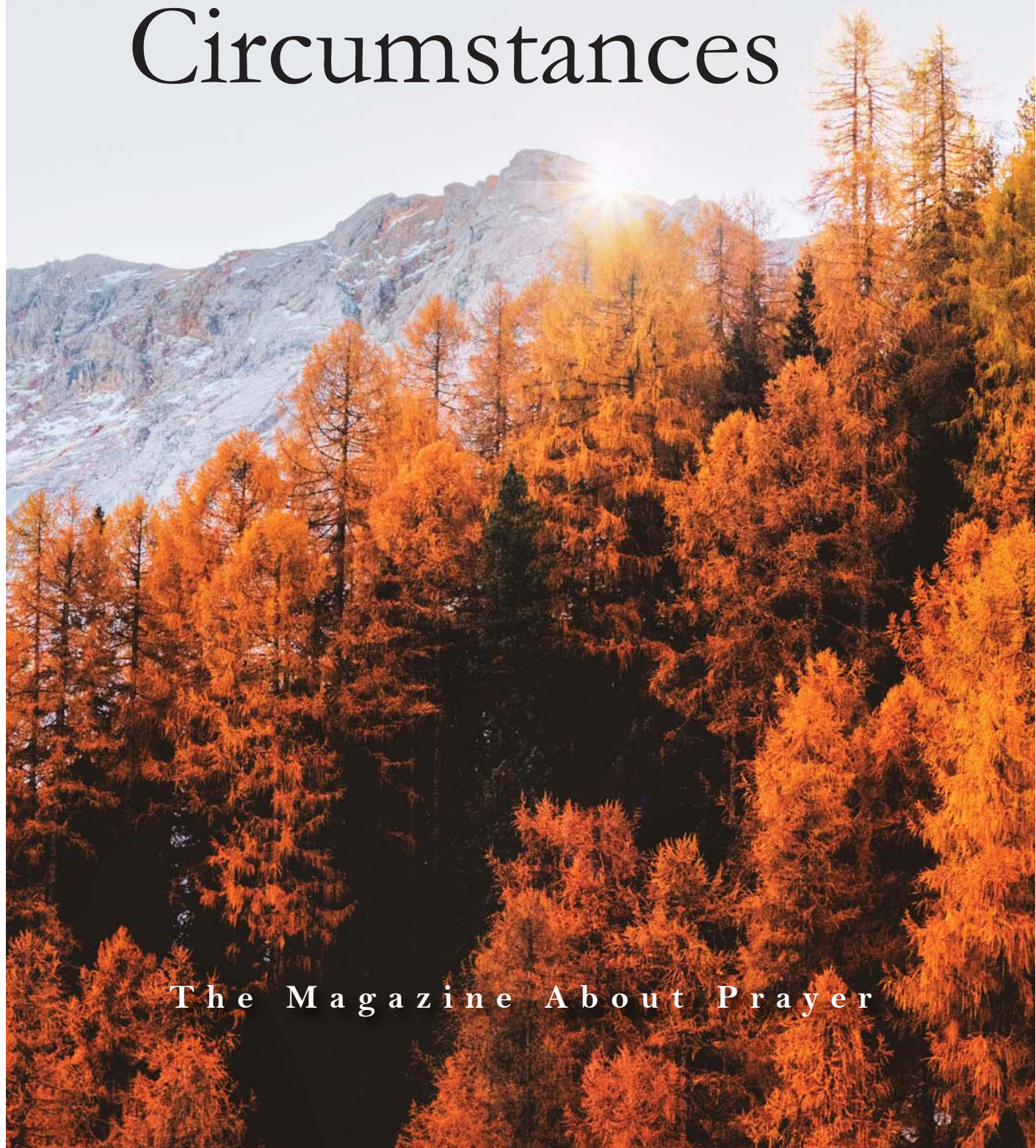


The Breakthrough
INTERCESSOR
FALL 2020

Praying IN ALL Circumstances



The Magazine About Prayer



Always Pray

BY PETER CALIGUIRI

When our eyes first open and the sun peeks in
We can thank the Lord as our day begins
Or when storms close in and darken the sky
We run to find shelter at our Jesus' side

If the corn is ripe or if the fields are dead
We can still thank God for our daily bread
And when we sin and fall under guilt and shame
He forgives if we ask Him in His holy name

After we've run as far as we can
He renews our strength when we pray to Him
When we stand up strong or when we fall down
If we'll pray to the end He has promised a crown

It's not by our wisdom that this battle is won
Nor by our strength that the race must be run
He gives when we ask and when we seek we will find
If we'll pray and not faint to our life's finish line!

*"And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that
men ought always to pray, and not to faint."*

Luke 18:1

The Breakthrough
INTERCESSOR

FALL 2020

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Founders Catherine Marshall
Leonard LeSourd

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Anna Soltis

Contact

Office Address P.O. Box 121
Lincoln, VA 20160
Phone (540) 338-5522
Prayer Fax Line (540) 338-1934
Email breakthrough@
intercessors.org

Our Mission:

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



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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

Are you tired, sick, sad, lonely, suicidal, concerned about our nation, concerned about your lost friends/relatives? Have you lost your job, or lost a loved one? Do not you have enough money to retire? Are you tired of conflict, or afraid of dying? The list goes on and on.

Yet, you are not alone. Though God's work and presence are often unseen, they are constant. And we know the solution - connecting with Him and His plan through PRAYER.

It may seem redundant to ask the above questions of a person like you who is committed to prayer and committed to financially supporting a ministry that is committed to prayer. But my belief is we cannot spend too much time on praying and talking about how, when, and where to pray. In addition to praying for your needs, a stated purpose of Breakthrough is to teach on prayer.

Our Pastor recently finished leading us through a study on the book of James. James was the half-brother of Jesus and the primary leader of the early church. Several things stood out about the letter. It was written to the early Christians who were suffering under persecution that started with the death of Stephen. James is a plain and blunt communicator; and, in my book, James gave some of the best teaching on prayer in the whole Bible, which he saved for last (see James Chapter 5:13-18).

James points out three specific times to pray:

- **When we are suffering emotionally and spiritually under the stresses of life.** “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of all of them.” Psalm 34:19

- **When we are cheerful.** Prayer is speaking to God in the good and bad times.

- **When we are suffering from a sickness that needs healing.**

James gives some keys to getting ours and the prayers of others answered. For those seeking healing, he expresses the importance of the local church and the role of elders. He instructs the sick to call the elders to the house or hospital, with specific instructions for the laying on of hands through the anointing of oil and prayer. For those who don't have a church home, or folks they can rely on to pray for them, they call on us.

James also gives some important preconditions to answered prayer for healing and all other requests.

- **Confession of sin, one to another.** The release of guilt and bitterness can only be brought about through confession of sin, especially to the one we have sinned against or held grudges against. Of course, the first person we have sinned against is God, and that is rectified through I John 1:9: When we confess our sins to God, he is faithful to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all of our unrighteousness.

- **Praying in faith, believing.** God answers the prayers of those who believe who God is and what he says, and who diligently seek him. If we

don't have faith or have little faith, we must ask God to give us great faith.

•**The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous person is powerful.** If we are in Christ we are righteous by definition. We can be successful in prayer. We must, however, remember that all righteousness and power is not truly ours, but God's.

James uses Elijah as the example of an effectual, fervent, righteous person whose prayers were answered. He was a great Old Testament Prophet who performed great feats and miracles. But before we say, "Hey, I'm not in his league," we must take a closer look at his life. Elijah definitely had his highs and lows, just like us, and even seemed to struggle with depression. Again, if we are believers in Jesus, we qualify, just like Elijah, as a righteous person.

Secondly, Elijah was effective because he prayed the will of God. We can also be effective if we will pray according to what we know about God's will as reflected in his Word, and through asking God for discernment as how to pray in each and every situation.

Thirdly, Elijah had success because he didn't give up too soon in praying. Patience is one of the key virtues of effective prayer warriors. God does not want vain repetition, but faithful, trusting perseverance.

Thank you for being willing to pray for others and to financially make it possible for those that, perhaps, don't have anyone but Breakthrough to pray for them. Prayer is work, but if we do not weary, in due time we will see God's reward. We are grateful to James for helping us learn how to be effective prayer warriors - and to you for being one of those warriors!

May God bless us all!



J. Michael Smith, Esq
Chairman of the Board



Thank you for faithfully supporting our ministry!

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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.

Nudged By An Angel

BY JEFF FERRIS

One Saturday evening in the summer of 1986, I went to the local nursing home on one of my regular visits. This time, my wife Ginny wasn't with me – as a new, first-time mom, she was staying home with our infant daughter, and my sister was coming to see the baby. I was alone as I stepped through the doors.

Back when the nursing home ministry began, three years before that evening, our church was very involved. There was no shortage of singers and musicians eagerly dedicating their time and talents to this humble work. Those early visits included full chapel services with up-tempo hymns, a short sermon and personal interaction with the residents. Investing our hearts—and backs—in each service, we hauled in a complete sound system, guitars, bass, and even a drum set. Fortunately, a piano was available to us through the nursing home; otherwise, we would have likely transported an upright every month for our pianist.

But in time, many of the contributing church members had directed their efforts elsewhere or simply lost interest. This was due in part to the sad reality that residents gradually passed away or become too frail to join us for service. But Ginny and I adjusted to the changes and continued, and the ministry was gradually turned over to us.

On that evening in 1986, I went alone with only my Bible—no sound system, no singers, no additional support. I was wondering if we should even continue this particular outreach.

Was it making a difference with anyone?

Would God would even be there, experientially, as He had been on the many other occasions? After all, many of His beloved there had already passed on to be in His presence.

Was this now a waste of time?

Instead of conducting a chapel service, I simply went room to room for personal visits with whoever was up to it. Not many were. Though I knew the place well, I felt very much like the proverbial bull in the china shop, stumbling around amongst priceless, fragile individuals.

Would anyone benefit from my being there?

The resident that we had especially enjoyed over those first years was Mary, a fiery old gal who often livened up the services with her sparkling eyes and shouts of praise. But even she was now in decline, bedridden and unresponsive. That was how I found her that evening as I made my rounds.

When I tried to engage Mary in conversation, she stared blankly. Gone were the sparkle and her words of triumph. I said a prayer for Mary. She didn't respond. I then read her a Bible passage. Nothing. Finally, before exiting the room, I patted her hand and said, "God bless you, Mary."

Suddenly, I saw life reignite in that precious woman. The gleam in her eyes

returned, and she exhibited the behavior of the Mary that we had come to know and love. With enthusiasm in her voice, she replied, “God bless you and keep you!” Then the emptiness returned, and she settled back onto her pillow.

Those would be the last words I would ever hear from Mary, but with them—with that bold sentence—I felt a small sense of accomplishment, a flicker of worthwhileness. If only for a few seconds, I sensed that I had connected with Mary and tapped into the faith and joy that she had shared so often in her own contagious way.

When I returned home that evening to our small, one-bedroom upstairs apartment, I was glad to see that my sister was still there, sitting with Ginny on the balcony. The baby was asleep inside. It was a beautiful evening to be outdoors.

After stepping out onto the balcony, I turned toward the house to face my wife and sister. Without thought, I leaned back into a sitting position on the metal balcony railings. Though I am not a heavy man—and certainly wasn’t at the age of twenty-four—the entire railing section suddenly gave way beneath me.

I had sat down, leaning back with my full weight. Basic physics and simple gravity should have sent me tumbling backwards onto the sidewalk one story below, as the railing pieces did. Instead, I found myself being propelled forward toward the house, landing on my hands and knees, away from the balcony’s edge.

No sooner had the railing pieces bounced and clattered on the cement when I heard Mary’s voice echo in my ears, “God bless you and keep you!” I knew immediately that an unseen hand had nudged me because of those words.

Ginny and I would continue those nursing home visits for a sum of fourteen years. Our children got involved as well. And there was never a visit where I didn’t think of a frail elderly woman named Mary. She had spoken God’s blessings and keeping over me. And God granted it with nothing less than an angel’s nudge.

A career-long tool and die maker by trade, Jeff answered a calling to write professionally while out of work in 2006. His efforts quickly excelled, leading him on a literary journey strewn with an assortment of printed works. These include numerous inspirational articles published on multiple platforms, radio show scriptwriting, song lyrics, copywriting, and ghosting autobiographical projects. Since December 2010, Jeff has made extensive writing contributions to Pathway Christian Newspaper in his hometown of Toledo, Ohio, where he resides with his wife, Ginny, with whom he has three adult children and four grandchildren.

When Things Get Messy

BY ERIN KASCHUB

Proverbs 14:4 states, “Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty.” Another way to interpret that phrase is to say, “You can live a mess-free life, but it will be an empty life.”

Life is messy and complicated and filled with diverse personalities who cannot seem to get along. Many of the prayer requests I receive are from people who are having relational difficulties.

One lady wrote on our prayer wall that she was bitter and angry because she has to care for her mother again. A man in a famous TV ministry writes in several times a week asking for prayer for difficult situations. Another writes almost daily that she wants her best male friend to become her future husband but he does not feel the same way. That same young girl wants nothing more than to move away from her controlling and overbearing mother. A third woman writes multiple requests daily for help on her job, and another cannot get along with her coworkers or her neighbors.

Although I may never meet these people here on earth, I can pray for them as if their needs were my own. Even though I am not always at my computer, I can remember their requests and pray as I go about my work. Throughout the day, as their needs come into my mind, I pray for them again.

Whenever my personal friends text me throughout the day, I can pray for the needs of my friends as well as the needs of strangers.

One of my friends is near a breakdown over the demands her mother puts on her, so I pray for her as well as the anonymous caregiver I do not know. Another friend is lonely, so I pray for the desperate young girl from the prayer wall, while I pray for my lonely friend. Another person is trying to constantly clean up relational problems that a parent creates. So I can pray for the lady I have never met, whose mother pushes her buttons, while I pray for my friend.

The same holds true for all the requests that are sent from Breakthrough. I pray for them at a specified time each day, and pray for them throughout the day as they come to mind. Perhaps a news story reminds me of a request or a conversation brings the prayer list to mind. Some requests I have prayed for many years after they were sent in. As their particular need pops in my mind, I know it is God’s way of prompting me to pray for them.

Life is messy, but God is good.

Life is unpredictable and at times unrelenting, but God is always there to listen to us.

One prayer I prayed for an overwhelmed friend of mine went something like this:

“Lord, help her to see You and feel You in all these moments. Father, help her to know that You are in control. Lord, let her see herself as a bus driver

and her problems are nothing more than noisy children in the back of the bus that she can easily leave in Your hands. Help her to envision herself as a superhero who is well able to overcome all these challenges with You on her side. Help her to see her problems as nothing more than leaves floating on a river with her standing safely on the bank watching them float away.”

Knowing that God is in control and He has a plan for everything makes the process of praying a delight.

God loves these people and their requests more than I do, and He certainly knows more about the intricacies of each request. He has a perfect plan for all of life’s messy and uncertain situations. He even has a plan for each of life’s messy and imperfect people.

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.



God's Mercy

BY ROY A. BORGES

God's mercy is a beautiful attribute to have. Everyone wants it and everyone needs it. But it's expensive, and it comes with an attitude that has a special kind of heart. It's a heart that cares more about others than it does about self.

So, how do I get that kind of heart in prison, where most are primarily concerned with what is good for them, not others?

Jesus shows me that real mercy takes the kind of heart He displayed. He left His home in heaven, became a man, and died so that my Heavenly Father could forgive all my sins. Jesus was the only way it could happen. He was the only one who could pay that debt, and He did it on the cross at Calvary between two criminals.

One of them said to Him:

"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

And Jesus said to him,

"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Even in His misery, Jesus had mercy on this criminal who believed in Him. The key to forgiving others is in remembering how much God has loved and forgiven me.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Why is it so difficult for me to forgive who has wronged me a little when God's love has forgiven me for so much?

It's difficult because I have a selfish heart. But when I realize God's infinite love and forgiveness when given to me through Jesus' death on the cross, it makes me want to love and forgive others.

As a believer, I fix my eyes on Jesus. He is my guide. It's not easy in prison to keep my focus on Jesus when many are just looking out for themselves. But when I choose to be like Jesus and I am kind, compassionate, and forgiving, it has a ripple effect, and it impacts the way I interact with God and the people around me.

I can relate to Paul's writings in 2 Timothy. After all his devoted years of teaching others and sharing Christ, knowing that death was imminent, alone in prison, he could say that he had been faithful to his calling. The good news is that the heavenly rewards are not just for the giants of the faith, like Paul, but for all who are eagerly looking forward to Jesus' second coming.

Paul's words encourage me to keep fighting, no matter how difficult the fight may seem, for when I see Jesus I will discover it was all worth it.

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." (Matthew 5:13)

If seasoning has no flavor, it has no value. As a Christian, if I make no

effort to affect those around me, I am of little value to the cause of advancing God's kingdom. If I live like the world, I am worthless as a Christian. God doesn't want me to blend in with everyone else. He wants me to affect others positively, just as seasoning brings out the best flavor in food.

Loneliness is a common feeling, especially when you're locked up in prison, and it can easily make you depressed and keep you from having mercy on others.

Paul knew what it felt like. His life and the letters he wrote in the Bible offer me encouragement when I am lonely or slow to give others mercy. So I read them over and over, and God's Holy Spirit helps me to understand how I can have mercy and put others first, even in prison. For as Paul says:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

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.



Another Day

BY KATHLEEN FESSLER

Morning arrives
My pillow still wet
Tears from the night
Why am I upset?

Not eager to rise
As I wake up alone
Without my companion
New sorrow I own

Then I recall
My Lord is with me
Holding my hand
Hope rises in me

My loved one's in heaven
Relief comes to me
I know he's in glory
From pain he's set free

I pour myself coffee
Savoring the brew
And sun rays I see
Brightening my view

I walk to my porch
And hear a bird sing
My eyes notice flowers
Planted last spring

One more day without him
Yet I'll make it through
Recalling his last words
"I'll wait for you."

Kathleen Fessler is a member of the Fountain Hills Christian Writers Group in Fountain Hills, Arizona. Her articles and poems have appeared in magazines such as *The Christian Journal*, *Christian Devotions*, *The Lutheran Journal*, *Gem*, *Live*, and others.

I Fall On My Knees

BY JEWELL JOHNSON

**“Let us . . . come boldly unto the throne of grace.”
Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)**

When there's no escape,
no place to go;
when there are questions
with no answers,
I fall on my knees.

When I'm misunderstood,
friends turn away.
I feel alone,
all options gone,
I fall on my knees.

When the sun doesn't shine,
dark clouds gather above,
courage fails,
hope grows dim,
I fall on my knees.

I whisper His name,
cling to His promise,
look to the Light,
go to the throne—
I fall on my knees.

Jewell Johnson is a mother of six and grandmother to nine children. Besides writing, she enjoys reading, quilting, and playing the piano. Before the coronavirus, she taught an adult Bible class.

Are you a writer?

The
Intercessor
welcomes
submissions!



Has God taught you about prayer?
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Do you write poetry about prayer?

Send in your submissions for consideration!

Guidelines:

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.

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Praise and Thanksgiving

OLD PURITAN PRAYER

O My God,
I bless Thee for the soul Thou hast created,
For the body Thou hast given me,
For Thy royal bounty providing my daily support,
For a full table and overflowing cup,
For social joys of relatives and friends,
For ability to serve others,
For a heart that feels sorrows and necessities,
For a mind to care for my fellow-men,
For opportunities of spreading happiness,
For loved ones in the joys of heaven,
For mine own expectation of seeing Thee.
Increase my love, O my God,
through time and eternity.

Amen.

When Life Doesn't Make Sense

BY PAT BAKER

We buried my uncle Dan last summer. A World War II veteran, he was buried with full military honors in a solemn yet beautiful ceremony. One of the defining events of his life was his service in the war, and it seemed entirely fitting that his funeral and burial took place on Memorial Day weekend. That, at least, made sense, though the events leading up to his death did not, humanly speaking.

Six months earlier, he had suffered a massive stroke at the nursing home where he lived. It robbed my gentle, articulate uncle of the ability to speak or move. After a month of unsuccessful therapy, the nursing home resigned itself to simply keeping him as comfortable as possible.

In the months that followed, I struggled to comprehend the sovereign wisdom of a God who apparently had a purpose in this type of existence for my uncle. My uncle and I were close, and I prayed fervently for his recovery - but instead, his miseries increased. He developed bedsores that stubbornly refused to heal, despite the attention of a concerned nursing staff.

I thought of the testing of Job and wondered how God was redeeming this experience in my uncle's life. "Lord," I prayed, "hasn't he suffered enough? How could increasing his misery make him any more fit for Your kingdom?"

Yet it seemed my prayers went no further than the clouds. Five months after the stroke, it was determined that the tissue around the bedsore on his foot was dying. His lower leg would have to be amputated if there was to be any hope of recovery.

Overwhelmed with the seemingly senseless power of it all, I now began to simply pray for a release from a painful existence for him. Although he survived the amputation, God granted my request when He finally took him home two weeks after surgery.

Though relieved that he was now in heaven with the Savior he loved, I was left with a deep sense of loss and many lingering thoughts about the purpose of prayer in the midst of the sovereign outworking of God's plans. In the weeks that followed, the Holy Spirit not only comforted me but led me to a rediscovery of Psalm 57.

The psalm records the prayer of David during a time when he would have been hard-pressed to see the hand of God at work. King Saul was seeking to kill him, and David was hiding in the deepest part of a cave with a band of outlaws. Saul's men were so close that David could hear their shouts. He must have wondered how this fit in with God's plans to make him King over Israel someday.

Psalm 57 is referred to as a "miktam" of David. According to *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*, a miktam of David means a "secret" of David. A closer look at this psalm will reveal some of the secrets concerning

prayer during those times when life seems like one big question mark. When nothing David perceived made sense, what gave him assurance and peace concerning God's control over all the events of his life? What was the secret of his stability and confidence in the face of daunting circumstances?

God is a sovereign refuge. "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in You my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed." (Psalm 57:1) In the face of danger and uncertainty, David fled to the refuge of his God. Even as he hid in the innermost recesses of a cave, he sheltered his soul deep in the shadow of his Father's wings. But where is this place, and how can we find it?

In the phrase, "shadow of your wings," the word for "wings" is the word that in the original Hebrew also meant "skirt" or "corner of a garment." These words refer to the four-cornered prayer shawl of "tallit" of the Hebrew man to which highly symbolic tassels are affixed.

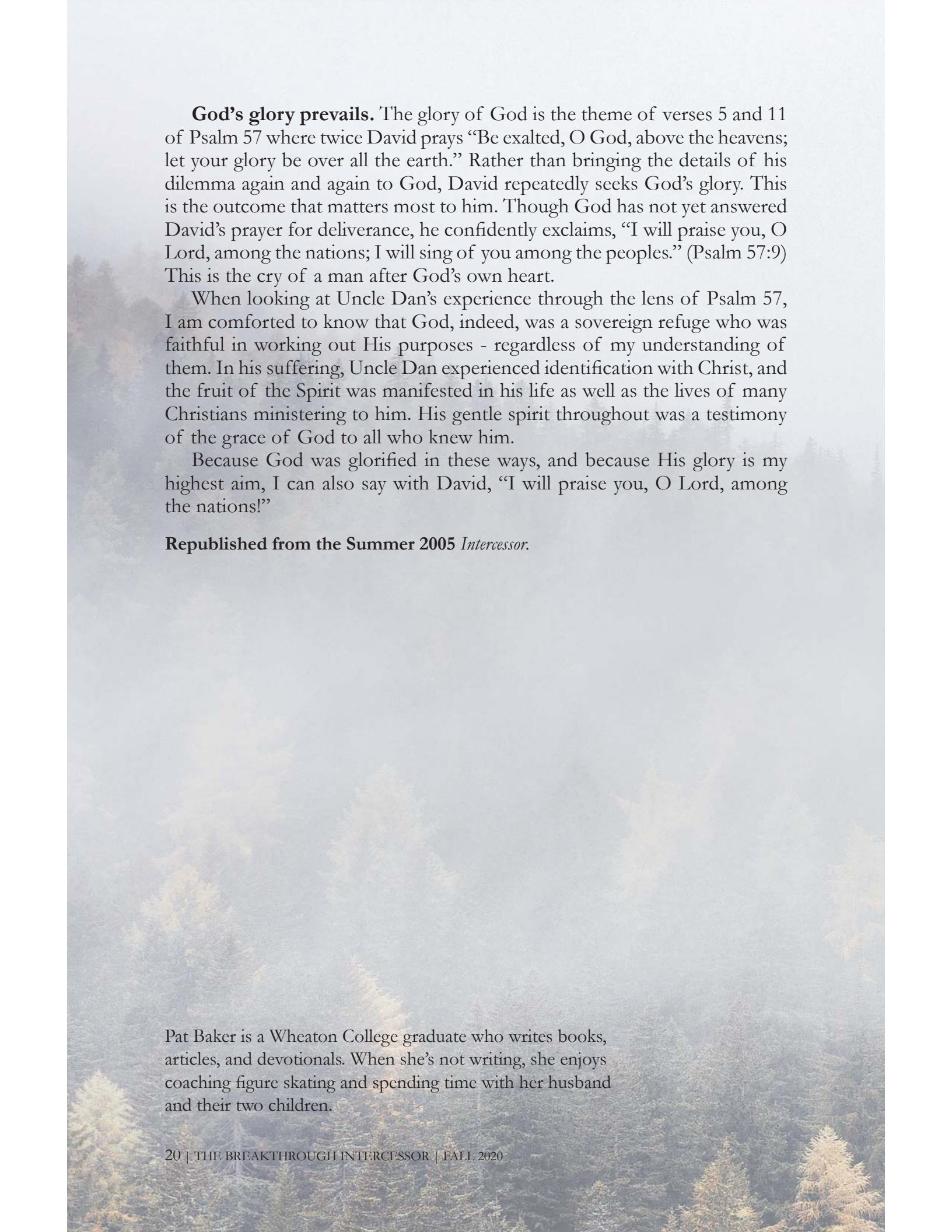
The act of praying under the prayer shawl also symbolizes a desire to come into the presence of God. To enter into His presence was to enter into His rest; there one could find peace even when navigating the stormiest of life's seas. David's place of refuge was, therefore, both the protective, sovereign authority and presence of his God. Let's briefly review some of the other truths about God found in Psalm 57.

God is faithful, merciful, and good. In verse 1, David calls on God's mercy; in verse 3, God sends His mercy and faithfulness; in verse 10, David exalts the One whose mercy and faithfulness reach "to the heavens."

Why is God's faithful mercy such a store of comfort and security to David in a crisis? Because the mercy of God is always a reflection of His immutable "character" and "covenant." God's covenant of love with His people is so binding that He claims that it is as sure as the coming of day and night (Jeremiah 33:20-21). God's love is not simply an attitude toward us, but a binding commitment based on His solemn promise repeated throughout Scripture: "I will not violate my covenant, or alter what my lips have uttered."

God is purposeful toward me. What a comforting promise is found in the second verse of Psalm 57! "I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills His purpose for me." Not only can I cry out to a God who has a specific purpose for my life, but this God is the "Most High" God - none can refute His decrees or thwart His purposes. In the face of seemingly insurmountable affliction, God's purposes remain central to the question of "why."

An example of this is found in John 9:1-3, where Jesus was asked if a man's blindness was due to his or his parents' sin. Jesus' response was to sidestep the whole issue of responsibility and to focus on the fact that the purpose of suffering is to display the power of God in a life, and that this purpose, though often mysterious, brings Him much glory. Romans 5 tells us about some of the effects of suffering that bring about God's glory: "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Rom. 5:3-4)



God's glory prevails. The glory of God is the theme of verses 5 and 11 of Psalm 57 where twice David prays "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth." Rather than bringing the details of his dilemma again and again to God, David repeatedly seeks God's glory. This is the outcome that matters most to him. Though God has not yet answered David's prayer for deliverance, he confidently exclaims, "I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples." (Psalm 57:9) This is the cry of a man after God's own heart.

When looking at Uncle Dan's experience through the lens of Psalm 57, I am comforted to know that God, indeed, was a sovereign refuge who was faithful in working out His purposes - regardless of my understanding of them. In his suffering, Uncle Dan experienced identification with Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit was manifested in his life as well as the lives of many Christians ministering to him. His gentle spirit throughout was a testimony of the grace of God to all who knew him.

Because God was glorified in these ways, and because His glory is my highest aim, I can also say with David, "I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations!"

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Pat Baker is a Wheaton College graduate who writes books, articles, and devotionals. When she's not writing, she enjoys coaching figure skating and spending time with her husband and their two children.

Lessons From A Hummingbird

BY DANA TRAMBA

I gaze out my window and
Enjoy the red bells drooping from the coral fountain.
I soak up the sunshine and beauty of Your creation.

Suddenly a hummingbird whirrs by
Pauses and refreshes itself with the nectar.
I understand, You are answering my prayer

In my rushing around -You are showing me,
I need to pause and be nourished by Your love
Like the hummingbird needs the nectar for his energy.

I thirst for Your love -
You are my energy
How wonderful is the world that You made.

Thanks for sending the hummingbird to remind me
That pausing and feeling your presence
Are my disciplines, as You guide me throughout my day.

Dana Tramba is a retired nurse, and a member of the intercessory prayer team. Her passion is writing and facilitating Reflections, a memoir group from Red Mountain United Methodist Church in Mesa, AZ. Her personal faith stories are also shared at Dandystories.com.





The Problem OF Falling Rocks

by Peter Marshall

Driving along the highways that run through the mountains, you may have noticed the frequency of signs that read: "Beware of falling rocks."

I have seen them many times and have often wondered why they did not say "Beware of fallen rocks," for I do not know what one could do about rocks that were in the act of falling as one drove along.

Now this is a hazard of driving along these highways that no precautions can avoid. Your rate of speed has nothing to do with it, nor the way you handle your car, nor the condition of your tires...the hazard is there, and there is nothing you can do about it.

It is typical of those troubles in life which no caution can avoid, and which have nothing to do with one's conduct, be it good or bad...when they come, they come, and that's that.

This is not fatalism, but recognition of what God has set up in the world. He has made certain natural laws which govern inanimate things.

The question I ask you to consider is, what should be our attitude toward these troubles that we can do nothing to prevent? The commonest attitude is one of worry, for this is the most common and widespread of the transgressions that mark our inconsistency as Christians.

I suppose the cartoon character "The Timid Soul," meeting one of these signs along the highway, would peer anxiously above his shoulders, and seeing the overhanging boulders, would turn his car around and drive back. But suppose he decided to drive on and risk it. He might drive very carefully and worry all the time, lest one of those huge rocks break loose and come crashing down upon him and his new car. But what good would his worrying do him? It wouldn't hold the rock up there; neither would it jar it loose.

The worrying of the driver has no effect upon the rock, but it has a tremendous effect upon the driver...

Jesus had a lot to say about this very thing. In the sixth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, you will find quite a full quotation on this theme in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said "take no thought for the morrow" - that is, no anxious, troubled thought - or we might well say, "Don't worry about tomorrow" - for that is precisely the meaning of His words...

If you borrow trouble from tomorrow, anticipate the difficulties that you see, or think you see ahead, are you the better able to cope with them?

Can you, by worrying, keep something unpleasant from happening? Do you soften the blow, ease the burden, or lessen the pain? Of course not, but you stand a good chance of reducing your ability to take it.

I want to make a distinction between thoughtful consideration on the one hand, and useless fretting on the other - that destroys peace of mind, takes away appetite, and leaves a person sleepless and miserable. It is this latter useless fretting that I have in mind.

The futility of this was illustrated perfectly in the case of our little boy. The year he was in kindergarten, he enjoyed it very much, for it was nearly all play. Then, when he moved up into the first grade, he was shocked to dis-

cover that he had to learn things - in short, he had to think and had less time to play. He was very unhappy about it, and as he wrestled with the problem of learning the letters of the alphabet, how to read them, and how to write them, his mind was troubled...having been told that he had twelve years of study before him, and then possibly four years of college after that, he was most miserable.

He would confess between his sobs that he was worrying about going to college, and what he would do when he got there. Now, this seems to us ridiculous - but not any more than some of the things we grown-ups worry about.

Of course, if you are not a Christian, you have plenty to worry about. But if you are a Christian, if you are a child of God, then your worrying is not only futile, it is sinful.

...When Christ turns the searchlight of His penetrating insight and decisive intellect upon worry, He defines it in a very simple way. He sees it as nothing more or less than lack of trust in God.

With regard to the rocks that may fall upon us...the only happy way to deal with them is the way of faith - faith in the purposes of God, faith in the presence of God, faith in the promises of God, faith in the power of God to deliver us from any trouble.

Only when we have faith can we be free from fear.

A good deal of the strain and tension of modern life is due to our unwillingness to accept situations that are beyond our control. Christians must be realists as well as idealists, and Christ was both. There was never clearer realism than is to be found in the teachings of Jesus...

We have to learn to cooperate with the inevitable. We'd better. Man proposes, but God disposes. There are so many things in life beyond our control that he is wise who recognizes the fact and who says: "God willing, I will do this or that..."

This is not mock piety, but clear recognition of life's contingencies, and our helplessness in certain situations.

The rocks will fall. We don't know when, and we cannot find out for sure. Worrying about it, fearing it, does not help. Life must go on, and so must we. But we can go on without strain...

One of the things Christ definitely promised us was trouble. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," He said. But we must never forget that He added: "But be of good cheer" - or, in other words, "Cheer up...I have overcome the world."

Now, when trouble comes, when the rocks do fall, it will not help to reject faith altogether, and fling away in revolt from all that you once believed...Just because you may not understand what has happened to you, or why it should have come, is no reason why you should throw it all away.

If Christ is right, then there is a loving purpose in it all, even if our tear-filled eyes cannot see it. If Christ has not lied to us, then there is a purpose behind even the darkest providence...It must be the underside of love, for

God is a God of love. When you are in the sunshine you may believe it. But when you are in the shadow you must believe it, for nothing else.

The promises of the Scriptures are not mere pious hopes or sanctified guesses. They are more than sentimental words to be printed on decorated cards for Sunday school children. They are eternal verities. They are true. There is no perhaps about them.

How does the prophet know that God will neither leave nor forsake us? How does the psalmist know that the brokenhearted and afflicted will be comforted? Because they themselves had dark days and lonely nights, that's why! Because they themselves had gone through it...

I think that the Christian treatment of trouble is splendidly illustrated by the oyster, into whose shell one day there comes a fine grain of sand...and there, like an alien thing, an intruder, a cruel, unfeeling catastrophe, it imposes pain and distress and presents a very real problem. What shall the oyster do? Well, there are several courses open.

The oyster could, as so many men and women have done in times of adversity and trouble, openly rebel against the sovereign providence of God.

The oyster, metaphorically speaking, could shake a fist in God's face and complain bitterly: "Why should this have to happen to me? Why should I suffer so? What have I done to deserve this? With all the billions of oyster shells up and down the seaboard, why in the name of higher mathematics did this grain of sand have to come into my shell?"

The oyster could conclude: "There is no justice. All this talk of a God of love and mercy is not true. Now, since this calamity has overtaken me, I'll throw away all the faith I ever had. It doesn't do any good anyway."

...Or the oyster could say - again, like some men and women when adversity strikes - "It can't be true! It isn't true. I must not permit myself to believe it."

The oyster could say... "There is no such thing as pain. This grain of sand doesn't make me uncomfortable, and I'm not going to allow my mind to think of unreality. There is no such thing as pain. It is an error of the mind, and I must, therefore, project my thoughts on positive planes of beauty, truth, and goodness...and if I fill my mind with such thoughts, then I shall know that pain is unreal."

...There is another attitude that the oyster could adopt - a very commendable one - that calls for a lot of fortitude and courage and determination.

The oyster could say: "Now that this hard calamity has overtaken me, this thing that hurts and cuts and stabs, this enemy that bruises and bleeds - now that this has come upon me, I must endure it to the end. I must show them all that I can take it, and I won't give in. I will hold on if it kills me. I must remember that the darkest hour is just before the dawn."

Now, there is something noble in that, something praiseworthy in that attitude. But the oyster does not do that, because the oyster is at one and the same time a realist as well as an idealist. There is no point in trying to deny the reality that tortures every nerve, so the oyster doesn't try...nor would

grumbling and rebelling do any good, for after all the protests and complaints, the grain of sand would still be there.

No, the oyster recognizes the presence of the grim intruder, and right away begins to something. Slowly and patiently, with infinite care, the oyster builds upon the grain of sand, - layer upon layer of a plastic, milky substance that covers each sharp corner and coats every cutting edge...and gradually.... slowly...by and by, a pearl is made - a thing of wondrous beauty wrapped around trouble.

The oyster has learned - by the will of God - to turn grains of sand into pearls, cruel misfortunes into blessings, pain and distress into beauty.

And that is the lesson that we are to learn along this pilgrim way. The grace of God, which is sufficient, will enable us to make of our troubles the pearls they can become. It is no mere figure of speech.

...One enters the presence of the Lord through gates bedecked with pearls - every pearl a trouble, a heartache, a misfortune, which, by the grace of God, has been changed into a beautiful, lovely thing. No wonder they speak of pearly gates!

Our Father, give us the faith to believe that it is possible for us to live victoriously even in the midst of crisis. Help us to see that there is something better than patient endurance or keeping a stiff upper lip...May we have the faith that goes singing in the rain, knowing that all things work together for good to them that love Thee.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Excerpt from *The Best of Peter Marshall*, by Peter Marshall, edited by Catherine Marshall. Used with permission from Marshall-LeSourd LLC.

Peter Marshall (1902-1949) was a Scots-American pastor and chaplain of the United States Senate. He was the husband of Catherine Marshall, and the subject of her first book, *A Man Called Peter*, written after his death. His sermons and spiritual writings, such as the surprise bestseller *Mr. Jones, Meet the Master*, continue to be influential today.

Memorials

Frances and Bob Edwards,
treasured intercessor
and supporters,
in fond remembrance of

BOBBIE PARSONS

Theresa Newell
in fond remembrance of

BRUCE NEWELL

treasured intercessor, Board
Chairman, 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

Thank you for praying for J's alcohol addiction. She is much better now. She has successfully completed six months in rehab, and is living an alcohol free life!!! She is now continuing to go to all her sessions, her group, AA, and her counseling appointments. THANK YOU LORD!!

- Juanita

Our first-born son could've died in a horrible wreck, but he was fine two hours later!

- Lucy

My son has been delivered from methamphetamine after twenty years. He has also now experienced a spiritual awakening! Praise God!

- Darlene

I had a pressure wound for eight months. They tried everything to close it up - then the manifestation of God's healing power happened! Only by His grace I am healed.

- Pat

J was saved before he died. Thank you so much for your support and your prayers.

- Pam

Thank you so much for prayer for my daughter, who had a beautiful baby girl with no complications. The obstetrician mentioned that he was amazed that the baby was so healthy, because there was a large knot in the cord that should have caused major complications. We are so thankful for God's protection!

- Sylvia

The biopsy they did on my face for cancer came back negative. Our Lord is good to us...no matter what the joy or trial. There are so many "God stories" and answers to prayer in this journey.

- Miriam

Each time we send prayer requests, our lives are noticeably blessed. Thank you so much for the prayers that help keep us going.

- Ann

You prayed for the reuniting of my family...now I see progress is being made, praise God!

- Bobby

Several months ago, I requested prayers for my daughter and teenage granddaughter, whose relationship had broken to the point that my granddaughter left home and refused to speak to her mother...Now she has moved back home...is doing well with her job, and even took her mother and I out for Mother's Day at her expense!

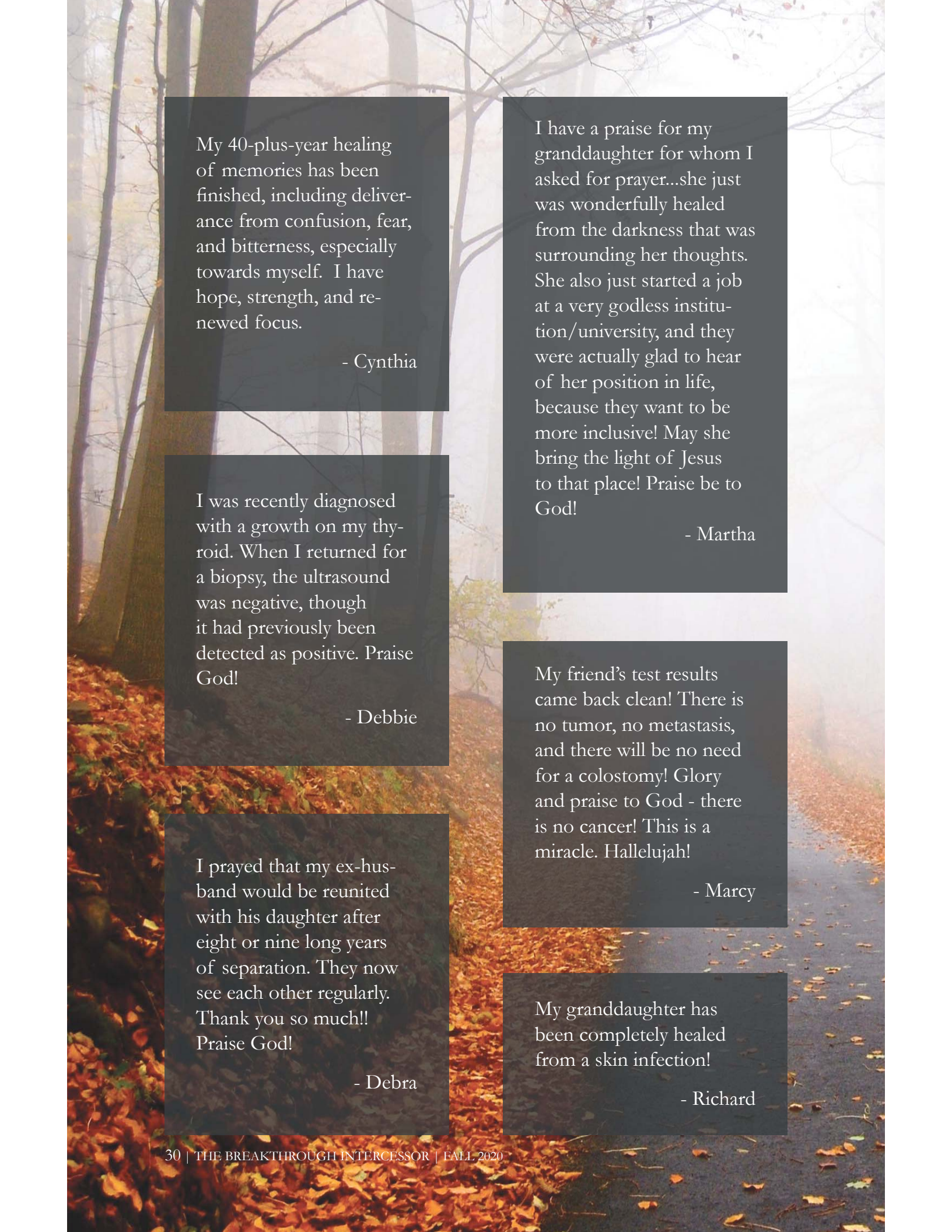
- Judy

My brother...has a history of poor decision-making, financial and emotional challenges. Thank you for praying...the situation has improved significantly! He has now moved to be with his wife and sons, and has secured another overseas position, which he is excited about. He and his wife also seem to be getting along well.

- Stacey

I have seen God changing the heart of my daughter-in-law. She is healing and showing love in her words to my son.

- Melinda

A misty forest path with fallen autumn leaves. The path is paved and covered with a thick layer of orange and brown leaves. The trees are tall and thin, with bare branches reaching up. The ground is covered in a thick layer of fallen leaves, and the air is hazy with mist.

My 40-plus-year healing of memories has been finished, including deliverance from confusion, fear, and bitterness, especially towards myself. I have hope, strength, and renewed focus.

- Cynthia

I have a praise for my granddaughter for whom I asked for prayer...she just was wonderfully healed from the darkness that was surrounding her thoughts. She also just started a job at a very godless institution/university, and they were actually glad to hear of her position in life, because they want to be more inclusive! May she bring the light of Jesus to that place! Praise be to God!

- Martha

I was recently diagnosed with a growth on my thyroid. When I returned for a biopsy, the ultrasound was negative, though it had previously been detected as positive. Praise God!

- Debbie

My friend's test results came back clean! There is no tumor, no metastasis, and there will be no need for a colostomy! Glory and praise to God - there is no cancer! This is a miracle. Hallelujah!

- Marcy

I prayed that my ex-husband would be reunited with his daughter after eight or nine long years of separation. They now see each other regularly. Thank you so much!! Praise God!

- Debra

My granddaughter has been completely healed from a skin infection!

- Richard

Yahweh, thank you for turning my family's hearts toward God and each other.

My Advocate, thank you for vindicating my family. Alpha and Omega, thank you for assigning the right psychiatrist to my dad so he has someone after you to talk with.

El Elyon, thank you for bringing the right buyer for the estate.

Jehovah-Raah, thank you for helping all of us to have a real relationship with you and each other.

- Anonymous

Financial blessings came to my granddaughter through a job that was an answer to prayer! She was in such need and God is providing.

- Claire

I received a prayer card from you just as I was thinking about sending you a prayer request. The card said, "If you did not request us to pray, the Holy Spirit selected you." I was blown away, thrilled, excited, and so very thankful...to the Holy Spirit for this.

- Mary

My stress over my math course has been relieved. I am excelling at my studies and looking forward to completing it!

- Anonymous

After a hurricane seriously damaged our apartment, my insurance paid some of the repair cost, but not all. You prayed that they would pay the rest, and they just did...God bless you!

- Mary

The person you prayed for hasn't talked about suicide for eight months.

- Margaret

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P. O. Box 121
Lincoln, Virginia 20160
www.intercessors.org

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