



The Breakthrough
INTERCESSOR
SPRING 2021

God Hears You

The Magazine About Prayer

Today I Choose...

BY JEWELL JOHNSON

“Ask and you will receive, and
your joy will be complete”
(John 16: 24).

Choose joy, God’s joy.
While all around is sadness,
hopelessness abounds,
despair overwhelms you—
today choose His joy.

Choose peace, God’s peace.
Though wars assail,
uproars rage,
fear overwhelms your heart—
today choose His peace.

Choose love, God’s love.
The world is filled with hate,
fighting, riots,
family strife, backbiting—
today choose His love.

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.

The Breakthrough INTERCESSOR

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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

Since Breakthrough is an intercessory prayer ministry, it occurred to me to highlight some of the testimonies we receive from those who have asked Breakthrough to pray for them (you can also read shorter testimonies on pages 28 through 31 of this magazine!).

Our founder, Catherine Marshall, began the ministry to ensure that all the people who asked her to pray for them, which were in the thousands, were prayed for. And the twenty-one-day prayer pattern we instituted shows the conviction Breakthrough had about praying for the requestors.

As you can tell from the answers to these prayer requests below, Breakthrough has many effectual prayer warriors. God is moving!

Answers to prayer:

Our dear friend Roy Borges was supernaturally released from prison with time served in January 2021. He had heard he might be released and waited for months. He exclaims, “God got me out! He touched their hearts, and I was released with ‘no supervision.’ I can go anywhere I want, anywhere in the USA I choose. I am at a half-way house run by a Christian organization; they are helping me successfully re-enter society and get started. In 30 days of freedom, God has accomplished so much for me. Thank you for all your prayers, Breakthrough! God heard you and let me out. I will always be grateful to you people. I want to continue writing for Breakthrough.”

Selina writes, “I want to thank everyone for praying in the power of agreement. Thank you very much. The unemployment insurance claim has been finalized in my favor. Glory to God!”

Marcella is in joyful celebration. “My arm was healed. I couldn’t lift my right arm above my waist. Praise God, I now have full use. I can now comb my own hair and can lift my arm up to give God praise. Hallelujah!”

Dana’s good report states, “This month (January 2021), I received the best answers to prayers I’ve been praying for the past 10 years! I received an offer to take an early retirement package after our group was suddenly outsourced. I was just outside of the requirements. Everything has shifted for the better, suddenly! BIG THANKS to all who prayed for me and all my INTERCESSORS! I’m so GRATEFUL!!”

To God be the glory! But remember that intercessory prayer is a partnership between God and us. Prayer is the primary way God has chosen to bless His people, and the more people praying, the better!

God wants to listen to our prayers. He wants to answer them (according to His will and in His good time). But He also wants us to ASK!

We are privileged to be able to link the requestors with the intercessors. We thank you, our prayer warriors and those that provide financial support (we recognize that in most cases you are occupying both roles). Your prayer and financial support expand the Kingdom of God and help prepare for the day of our Lord's return.

I'm reminded of 2 Peter 2:12: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, where in the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." We don't know when that end will come, but we do know that in the meantime, God calls us to prepare, pray, and look for His answers to prayer. If God has answered your prayers recently through the ministry of Breakthrough, please share your testimony with us! We want to rejoice and thank God alongside you.



J. Michael Smith, Esq
Chairman of the Board



Thank you for faithfully supporting our ministry!

Breakthrough's financial statement is available
upon your written request to
The Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs,
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WAYS TO GIVE

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Maximize tax-deductible contributions by making a charitable stock donation with an account you have owned for at least one year. You won't pay capital gains tax and will receive an income tax deduction for the asset's full fair market value.

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Leave your Legacy

Consider leaving Breakthrough a gift in your will to ensure that our ministry can continue calling, equipping, and encouraging people in the work of faithful intercession.

Include the following wording: "I give, devise, and bequeath to Breakthrough, Inc., tax identification number 23-7423474, P.O. Box 121, Lincoln, Virginia 20160 (insert amount, percentage, or nature of gift, or remainder of estate) to be used for its ministry purposes."

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.

Turning the Hurricane

BY JOHNNY L. WOOTEN

A friend asked me one day how to pray for a hurricane. A fierce hurricane was bearing down and looking like it was going to land on the Texas coast. My friend's problem was she didn't know how to pray for the hurricane and its direction. If she prayed for it to miss Texas and go into Louisiana, it would come straight into the path of friends she had in Louisiana. If she didn't pray for it to turn, it would come into Texas and straight into other friends she had in Texas. Which way should she pray for the hurricane to go? Damage in Texas or Louisiana?

I told this sweet friend that Scripture is a tremendous help in our prayers. Throughout our life, by reading and searching Scripture for guidance in situations like this, we can gain an increasing ability to find answers to all of life's problems.

This discernment in Scripture gives us the wisdom we need in order to pray the right way. Jesus gave us an example to go by. He taught us to pray for God's will to be done in all of our problems. We don't always know what to pray for, but when we pray that His will is done, it not only brings us into communion with Him, it also brings us into agreement with each other so we know our prayers are heard. Sometimes it all comes down to accepting the sovereignty of God, knowing He is in control of everything.

The early church did this in Acts. Acts 4:23-32 speaks of the early church praying for boldness when speaking the message of Christ. They were asking for great courage when telling others about Jesus. God answered their requests by not only helping them speak His work courageously, but also by uniting them. Their request is found in verse 29, and the answer is in the last part of verse 31. And what happened when they prayed according to His will? Verse 32: they were all of one heart and one mind.

We don't have to pray for the hurricane to turn a certain way and hope we get it right. God knows the direction it needs to take in order for His will to be done. It reminds me of the old children's hymn, "He's got the whole world in His hands." When we all get together on the same page and pray that God's will is done, all of us can know that God is in charge and hears us, whether we're in a hurricane or in another "storm" of life.

Johnny L. Wooten is incarcerated in the Eastham Unit in Lovelady, Texas. He is the Unit Reporter for the ECHO Newspaper, a facilitator in the HONOR mentoring program, and has written for *The Dead Beat*, *Redeemed*, and the *Intercessor*.

Here I Pray

BY JOHNNY L. WOOTEN

There is a place where no one knows,
a place I kneel on bended knee.
Where I go from all of my woes,
and petitions are sent to Thee.

In this dwelling I go to pray,
communing with my God in there.

There alone I do not delay,
to come and voice my ardent prayer.

Almighty God, Ancient of Days,
does my unrestrained tongue employ.
With my prayer His name do I praise,
for from my words does come forth joy.
From those prayers come wisdom and love,
peace, quiet and serenity.

Given out from the one above,
gifts made especially for me.

In there I leave my frustrations,
not to focus on them again.

For the One who controls nations,
has my life and I call Him friend.

Always fasting with vigilance,
always vigilant when I pray.

Prayers followed by deliverance,
Like the night is followed by day.

God's Grace is Sufficient

BY DANA TRAMBA

I was teaching four Healthy Living classes a week for Dignity Health when the 2020 world-wide pandemic hit. The director of the program canceled all my classes. Suddenly, my calendar was full of white space.

It was a strange time. But suddenly I was able to do things that had been on the back burner for years.

I started scanning photos from Mom's old photo album. I reached out to cousins I had never seen for years and texted them childhood pictures of their parents. Then I sorted files, pondering awards from my nursing career and shredding useless paperwork.

I felt moved to start reading through my prayer journals. As I read, I realized I'd had a longing in my heart from years ago to live closer to my parents. I wanted our children to know their grandparents. That had never happened. I wondered if our son felt the same way and wished we lived closer to his children.

With a blank calendar in July, and fresh memories from reading my journals, I was motivated to write the first draft of my memoir, *Making Peace with the Pieces*, the book I always wanted to write – someday. While writing, I came to the realization that for the last fifty years I was a busy Martha (Luke 10:38-42). But, God has been with me on this life journey, even though I was too busy to notice His presence. I could see where He made something beautiful out of every decision I made, whether good or bad.

After a lot of discussion, my husband Norm and I made end-of-life decisions, and paid for a vault in Wilber, Nebraska, his hometown, to leave our remains. I completed my ethical will that I'd started ten years ago and mailed it to the boys.

I never met Grandma Vi, the mother of my birthmother. My sister Sue loaned me her Bible. Now I had time to explore her writings in the margins, obituaries, and poems she had tucked away in her Bible. It felt like I was having a Bible study with Grandma. I realized that this woman of faith probably prayed for me since the day I was born. She was only one of three people that knew about my birth and placement for adoption. Her intercessory prayers probably helped me on my faith journey.

Being quarantined increased my longing to be close to our sons, who lived a thousand miles away. FaceTime and phone calls were not sufficient. We started sorting through memorabilia and sent packages to the grandkids. Our hearts ached to be closer to the kids and grandkids. We decided to downsize and move to a senior community in Edmond, Oklahoma. We will miss the warm Arizona winters, but we can slip on a jacket and be close to the people we love most in the world.

I came across Mark 6:31 – “Come away with me by yourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” I realized God was speaking to me, and I was thankful

to have a blank calendar and time to spend with Him. Gradually I changed and realized I was no longer a busy Martha. I started identifying with the spirit of Mary.

As we sorted with the intention of downsizing, I realized that we have everything we need. Now that we are settled in Oklahoma, I look to the future and like this new normal with less clutter. Most of all I like the white space in my calendar that I can use for devotions and prayer. I have come to the conclusion that God's grace is sufficient.

The pandemic has been difficult. But I encourage you to look back at the last year. Has God used this time to make space in your life for Him? How has His grace been sufficient for you?

Dana Tramba is a retired nurse and a member of the intercessory prayer team. Her passion is writing and facilitating memoir groups. She recently moved from Arizona and lives at Touchmark in Edmond, Oklahoma. Her personal faith stories are also shared at Dandystories.com.



Never Give Up

BY ROY A. BORGES

“Never give up” is an attitude I had when I used to box. Every time I stepped into the ring, that message permeated my mind and I was determined to win. Now it is a message that echoes again and again in my quest to become more like Christ. The fight is a three round fight that I fight every day.

Round One: I fight the flesh.

It’s a fight against the unholy, sinful tendencies that I was born with and that my old nature practiced. The flesh wars against me, too (1 Peter 2:11). However, when I was born again, God gave me a new nature and He promises to never condemn me again (John 3:3, 16-18). But even though Christ has made me new, my old nature still wants to take control. I still fight this battle with sinful desires. As long as I live in this flesh, I will have to fight this battle (see Romans 6-8 for the Apostle Paul’s advice about how to fight the flesh!).

Round Two: I fight the world.

This round begins with the fight against the unholy sinful world around me. With its bait, it tries to draw me from holy living. The world tells me, “Live for yourself. Do only the things that give you pleasure. Putting God’s will first and putting others before yourself is too hard.” But Jesus tells me, “Love not the world... If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (John 15:18-19).”

Round Three: I fight the devil.

The devil continues to spin his web of deceit, just as he deceived Eve in the Garden. He is a liar by nature (John 8:44) and he tries to get us to sin in any way he can. He prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Jesus finished what He started. He didn’t spar around with the devil. From the cross he said, “It is finished.” He never gave up until He completed what He came to do. He paid the price for my sins so that I could have everlasting life. Since Jesus has already won the victory, I have strength through His Holy Spirit to resist the Devil’s lies and temptations.

New desires direct me through this fight. Christ lives in me now, and I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and died for me. The Lord has transformed me at the core of my being, enabling me to reflect God’s holiness and to be free from bondage to evil desires (2 Peter 1:3-4). My new desires challenge me to die to sin and live for righteousness (Gal. 5:16-28; 1 Peter 2:24).

I have discovered that the only way to live a holy life is to stay close to Jesus. He put it this way: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).

To stay separated from sin and to be able to win all three rounds of this

fight, we must stay focused on Jesus. He must be in our thoughts and prayers continuously throughout the day.

Yes, sometimes the fight will be hard. God disciplines us because He loves us. Trials are meant to heal us through greater dependence on Him. And yes, we will fail sometimes. But we are called to forget the things that are behind. Forget the failures. Don't wallow in defeat. Press on toward the mark and never, never, give up.

Roy Borges, "God got me out of prison so I could be used out here. I am writing stories and articles. I plan to go to many churches and tell them about the things He did for me in prison and what He is doing now."



A Rose And A Prayer

BY BETTIE SMITH

I want to share how God abundantly answered my prayer for children. I had been married for 5 years and had no children. When I went to the doctor, he told me I probably would never be able to have children.

I prayed fervently, and I kept hearing the Lord tell me through the Holy Spirit that he would give me a quiver full. (Psalm 124:5 – “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.”)

But as time passed and I still had no children, I began to doubt. Was I really hearing from God? So I prayed, “Lord, if this word I am hearing is from the Holy Spirit and not from me, please send me a rose.”

That day, my husband came home with many roses. My mother-in-law had cut them from her rose bush and sent my husband to bring them to me. She had no idea what I had prayed! When I received an answer, I knew that the prayer that I had prayed for children would be answered in abundance. I no longer doubted.

It took another 3 years before the answer came. It started with a call to adopt a 6-year-old boy. He came and we were very happy to have him, but he was so very sad. He missed his sister and brother, so we began to pray that they too would come and live with us.

Six months later, that prayer was answered. I ended up adopting a family of three children. When God answered, it came very quickly! My church family was there to help with food, beds, and all kinds of assistance.

I learned to accept and trust God when he speaks in prayer through the Holy Spirit. These three children became my little family, and I made sure to take them to church whenever the doors were open. I sent them to Christian school. I made sure we did devotional and prayer every day. I had them involved in Christian activity. I now have grandchildren, and praise God for the opportunity to lead my two granddaughters to the Lord in prayer.

God truly hears our cries and our heart’s desires in prayer. I know He is not done with any of us yet.

Recently, I learned about the story of Gideon and his putting out the fleece in Judges 6. In a way, perhaps this is what I did. But God is so good to help us in our feeble faith – He loves us enough to bring us to a stronger faith that needs no fleece. He is able to guide us as little children to a stronger understanding of Him and our faith. He does not despise our weakness as we seek answers, and He truly walks with us.

We Rest On Thee

BY EDITH G. CHERRY

We rest on thee, our Shield and our Defender!
We go not forth alone against the foe;
strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender,
we rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

Yea, in thy name, O Captain of salvation!
In thy dear name, all other names above:
Jesus our righteousness, our sure foundation,
our Prince of glory and our King of love.

We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling,
and needing more each day thy grace to know:
yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing,
“We rest on thee, and in thy name we go.”

We rest on thee, our Shield and our Defender!
Thine is the battle, thine shall be the praise;
when passing through the gates of pearly splendor,
victors, we rest with thee through endless days.

This traditional hymn, poem, and prayer was written by Edith G. Cherry (1872-1897). She struggled with disability and tragedy from a young age, but wrote many hymns and poems attesting to her faith.

Are you a writer?

The
Intercessor
welcomes
submissions!



Has God taught you about prayer?
Do you want to share your
story of answered prayer?
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.

Email: editor@intercessors.org
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P.O. Box 121, Lincoln, VA 20160

Memorials

Debra Jo Morgan
and
Donna and Rob Blakely
in memory of
JANICE CRAWFORD
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

Lost and Found

BY EDWARD TOOLEY

There are certain events that happen on this journey called life that profoundly impact us. Some of these incidents are mysterious and baffling. There is one in particular that I want to share that happened many years ago.

The memorable event happened after an ordinary softball game. The contest was scheduled to be played at a park where our team had never played before. It was odd to play a game so far from the area in which we lived. I was able to get a lift from Tim, who was a good friend and teammate.

Tim was not alone. He brought his dog and loyal companion Ranger. It was not unusual for Tim to bring Ranger to our games. Ranger was a good dog. He would sit obediently in the dugout cheering our team wildly by constantly wagging his tail. I guess you could regard him as our trusted mascot.

The game was a back-and-forth struggle in which our team came away with a last-inning win. We were all feeling jubilant as we packed up for the long trip home. But the positive atmosphere disappeared quickly as Tim suddenly realized that Ranger was missing. That was most unusual, because Ranger was an obedient dog and never strayed too far.

Some teammates had already gone home, but the ones still present took off in all directions to find our valued buddy.

After some time of searching, still no Ranger. It was getting late and it was just Tim and me continuing the search. We had checked every nook and cranny at the park, but still no sign of him. We decided to get in the car and drive around the area.

As we began to drive, Tim started to lose it. The realization of going home without Ranger overwhelmed him. Tim's family got Ranger when he was just a pup, and they regarded him as a member of the family. Tim kept saying that there was absolutely no way that he could go home without him.

After some time driving around the streets, Tim suddenly pulled over and stopped the car. He was overcome with the situation at hand. Tim started to plead with God for help. His prayer was short and full of emotion.

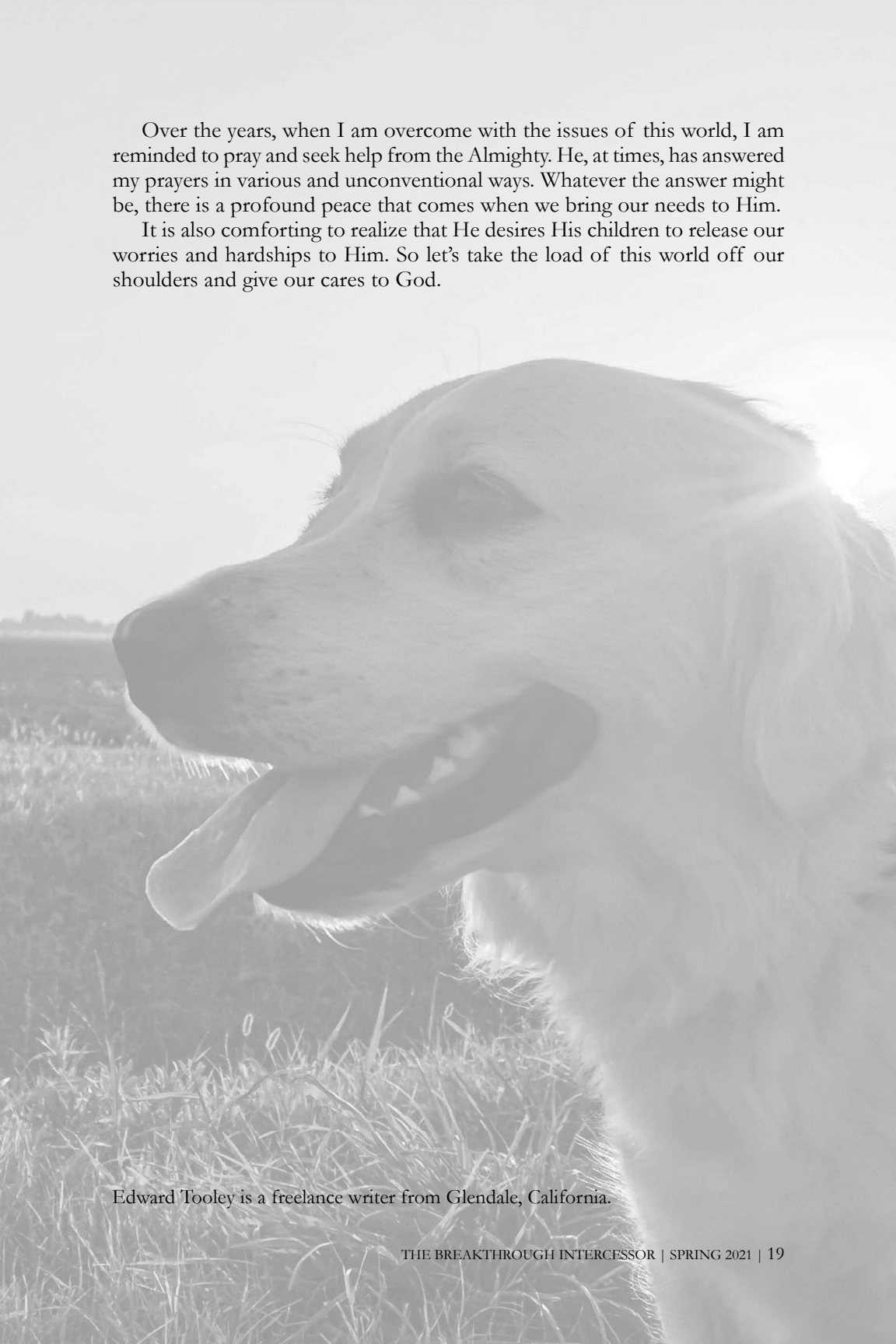
Then it happened. Immediately after praying, Tim turned his car lights on, ready to continue the search. Suddenly, Ranger pranced right in front of the car!

Was this some kind of dream? Could it really be Ranger? Tim and I rushed out of the car and quickly realized that it was Ranger, in body and fur. Tim was both elated and somewhat upset at his furry friend, but certainly more elated.

The car ride on the way home was filled with a number of emotions. We experienced a deep and satisfying feeling of relief that we were coming home with Ranger. There was a tad of satisfaction that we won the game, but overriding it all was gratitude and exaltation that we have a Heavenly Father who hears and answers our prayers.

Over the years, when I am overcome with the issues of this world, I am reminded to pray and seek help from the Almighty. He, at times, has answered my prayers in various and unconventional ways. Whatever the answer might be, there is a profound peace that comes when we bring our needs to Him.

It is also comforting to realize that He desires His children to release our worries and hardships to Him. So let's take the load of this world off our shoulders and give our cares to God.



Edward Tooley is a freelance writer from Glendale, California.

A Pair of Sandals

BY JEFF FERRIS

Terminated! Yep, true story. I was fired from my job. There was little consolation in knowing the occurrence was unjust; the result was the same. With a jolt to my senses and an undeniable dent in my career, I was put out of work. And God was okay with it. In fact, it was His idea.

It happened on my wife's birthday in August 2006. I had been hired only ten months prior and immediately encountered a prevailing managerial tension and hostility. Doing my best to dismiss it, I went to work every day and did my job – until suddenly I didn't have one.

I'd like to borrow the old line that says, "The day began like any other," but really, it didn't. Not even close. That day for me came with an overwhelming presence standing at my bedside. It greeted me ever so disturbingly the second my eyes opened. Never had I experienced anything like it before or since. The world had tilted. I felt deeply troubled and alarmingly disoriented, and there was no logic behind it.

Even as I prayed that morning, I couldn't shake this unexplainable feeling. It rode shotgun with me and hovered over my shoulder when I arrived at work. And then the shoe dropped. But with that shoe came a pair of sandals. Jesus immediately showed up. He arrived on scene at the most critical moment, and the gloomy presence evaporated. That's the most accurate way I can describe it. What's more is that an inexplicable peace settled over me as unexpectedly as the vanishing gloom.

While standing there facing a screaming madman, it was as if Jesus literally walked up, placed His arm around my shoulder, and whispered in my ear. I could clearly hear it over my boss's rant. What did Jesus say? "You are going to lose your job today, but it's going to be all right." Moments later, I was let go. With the peace of Christ and God's undeniable grace, I shook the man's hand and sincerely thanked him for having hired me. And I left with my head up because I had been given a glimpse of what was truly happening. It was an unseen war in the spiritual realm. Although I understood that much, it didn't change the reality of my sudden unemployment. That part stung.

Here's a line I truly can borrow: "What a difference a day can make!" I'll admit it was difficult to be home the next morning and watch my kids head off to school and my wife leave for work while I had no place to go. But I was aware that God was doing something extraordinary; especially when I nonchalantly said, "What am I supposed to do?" and God answered me. It wasn't a prayer. It wasn't a formal inquiry. It was a rhetorical question muttered in despondency inside an empty house. But God heard it, and He answered, quickly and clearly. "You should be writing." Suddenly I began living what Charles Dickens wrote: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.

That day I started dividing my best and worst times between job hunting and writing. Four months in, I became a hired biographer on a major

project. That was when the real struggle began, because it seemed to signify a closure to my career. I was now officially (gulp!) a writer! But how could that be? I held no such credentials. The best I could show was an A grade in a couple of mandatory composition classes that helped me earn a meager undergraduate's degree in Nothing Pertaining To Journalism.

How could I not experience imposter's syndrome? I was a washed up tool and die maker! Why would I not feel like a fraud as this writing gig sent me on fly-offs? How could I feel genuine while dining with people far outside my social status? Was I a writer, or simply masquerading as one?

Nothing made sense. My income level had dropped dramatically, but my writing continued to blossom. And my tool and die career remained sunken for nearly four full years. After that time and in His own mind-boggling way, however, God restored my former career and blessed it beyond what I could have ever imagined. Hence, I now maintain a rejuvenated vocation and a growing avocation.

Another common phrase says, "I said all of that to say this." Here's the takeaway that I hope to present: You might be having a day like I experienced on that morning in 2006. The world rolled over on you as you slept. You woke up to gloom, hostility, or loss. Your immediate situation hovers like a heavy, dark cloud. Listen for a shuffling sound. In violation of OSHA's safety shoe policy, there's a pair of sandals heading your way! Jesus will step in and make a difference that you never would have believed. God isn't caught off guard. He isn't shocked by what happens. He isn't unaware, detached, or uncaring. Although He is light, He does His best work in times of darkness. And then the sun comes up!

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.

...as we forgive those who sin against us

by Catherine Marshall



Forgiveness has two sides that are inseparably joined: the forgiveness each of us needs from God, and the forgiveness we owe to other human beings...Jesus warned us that if we want the Father's forgiveness, there is only one way to get it: start the flow of forgiveness between heaven and earth by forgiving our brother from the heart. The story of Harvey Smith, a friend of my husband Len, is an extraordinary example of a man's need to forgive those who have wronged him.

This young minister wrote Len that he would soon be passing through New York. A meeting was arranged....Len had told me the bare outlines of Harvey Smith's story - his experience with forgiveness - but I wanted to hear it directly from him.

...Our guest settled himself in a lounge chair and crossed his long legs. He has an easy manner and the soft speech of a southerner. "Forgiveness? I used to think I knew a lot about that subject." Suddenly Harvey Smith's thoughts seemed far away.

"Every time my congregation repeats that one sentence in the Lord's Prayer, I stand there in the pulpit wondering if they realize the terrible condition of forgiveness they are acknowledging"

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"The sentence 'Forgive us our trespasses as' - that is, in proportion as - 'we forgive those who trespass against us.'"

"Christ was even more specific after he had finished teaching them the prayer," Len added, "when He says that if we do not forgive other men, God will not forgive us. That seems rugged."

"I've had good reason to ponder that teaching," Harvey continued. "It certainly doesn't mean that God is threatening to punish us by paying us back in kind."

"But Jesus must have meant what He said," I added. "He could not have been more clear-cut or emphatic about it."

As the three of us discussed the sentence in the Lord's Prayer, we came to the conclusion that the terrible sentence is there not because Jesus willed it but because it states an inescapable fact, a law. When we hold unforgiveness or malice in our hearts, then we cannot possibly have our hearts open to the love of God. We are the ones who have shut the door on forgiveness, not God.

And then Harvey Smith spoke several memorable sentences which I hope I can quote accurately:

"In forgiveness, there has to be a flow. It is the law of the tides; the law of seedtime and harvest. No receiving without giving; no dead-sea hearts are possible. As we give, it is given unto us..."

And then Harvey told us his story.

In the autumn of 1950, Harvey Smith had come to New York City from Law Grange, Georgia, to attend Columbia University. Soon after arriving, he met a boy named Jack in one of his classes. Jack was a young man with an unhappy background, reared in a broken home. He had just done a miserable

stint in the Navy, and now was confused about his future. He seemed to need a friend, so Harvey let him share his apartment. It was a basement apartment in the shadow of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

What the southerner did not know was that Jack had always been an emotionally disturbed person. This unhappy truth came out soon enough. Periods of seeming normalcy would be followed by uncontrollable temper tantrums. As these became more frequent and Jack's drinking bouts grew heavier, Harvey realized that this was a situation he could not handle. Moreover, his unhappy friend refused to go to a counselor.

Finally Harvey knew what he had to do. He would move out and leave the apartment to Jack. His plan was to find a room nearby, so that they could still be friends. Perhaps then he could be more objective and so be of more help.

...It was only later that he realized how shattering this was to the distraught man. Apparently he had become Jack's only security. Now love was being withdrawn, and his whole world was collapsing.

The agitated Jack pleaded at first. Then rage took over. He struck out at Harvey, who protected himself from the flailing arms and held them until the other boy quieted down. When the anger seemed to be spent, Harvey went over to the mirror to tend to a cut on his nose. At that moment, he heard a noise like a snarl behind him. As he wheeled, Jack shoved the door closed with one foot. In one hand, he was brandishing a hammer.

Harvey was not frightened. He was a larger man than his apartment-mate; he was sure he could disarm him easily. But as he grabbed for the hammer and kicked it under the dresser, he felt a heavy blow in the back. Then as the two men grappled, there were two more sharp thrusts in Harvey's back.

This was the worst tantrum yet. He must get Jack out of the room. He shoved his antagonist back to the door, then held him with one hand, while with the other he turned the latch. Suddenly there were two more lunges at him, one to the abdomen and one to the chest. At that moment Harvey's eyes caught the flash of a knife.

Summoning all his strength, he shoved Jack into the hall...and stood leaning against the door, trying to understand why he could not get his breath. Through the closed door he called for help...Then Harvey realized that his voice did not sound right. Feeling something sticky on his sweater, he looked down. Red-tinged bubbles were seeping through the sweater from his chest. A sickening realization swept him. "I've been stabbed. My lungs are punctured."...He collapsed in a heap on the floor.

...Jack appeared again in the doorway. He stood over his helpless victim, the bloody knife still in his hand. Lying there, Harvey knew there was nothing he could do to prevent Jack from finishing the job.

...Instead, Jack half-lifted, half-dragged Harvey to the bed. From far away, his assailant's voice came to him, "Harvey, can you forgive me?"

Harvey tried to open his eyes. Jack's face swam lazily above him. *Jack was sorry.* The haze cleared a bit. He saw Jack raise the knife to plunge it into his

own chest. *Must stop him...* With his last strength, Harvey half-raised himself, grabbed the knife, and dropped it behind the bed.

Now the blackness began to close in. But Jack's request for forgiveness lay like a stone on Harvey's mind. He heard his own voice from a great distance, "Yes, Jack, I forgive you."

Mind and spirit seemed to be separating from body. *That's not me, the natural man speaking. That came as a response from all the things I've ever learned in my Christian faith...* There were no more thoughts.

...For a week, Harvey hung between life and death. Most of the time he was conscious and thinking clearly, but he had to lie still. With both lungs punctured and collapsed, the least movement might cause hemorrhaging.

There was pain too - much pain, and at moments, self-pity. *Do I really know the meaning of forgiveness? I told Jack I had forgiven him. I gave it all I had. And it wasn't enough, because I still feel resentful.*

...Then an idea came to him. Are any of us ever blameless? Maybe it had been out of pride and not a little self-righteousness that he had been trying to help Jack. Perhaps his "goodness" had actually been a stumbling block to Jack.

...This isn't easy. Forgiveness is costly. Am I really willing to pay the price? Do I really forgive him?

...He thought back to that moment when he had lain on the bed with Jack standing over him brandishing the bloody knife. "Yes, Jack, I forgive you..." The instinct that had told him that this was not really him speaking had been right.

He had not the ability to get rid of the surging resentments, the bitterness, the self-pity, the temptation to compare Jack's conduct to his. He could not cleanse himself of those emotions, but the One who had spoken those words of forgiveness for him that day in the apartment could complete the job for him now. All he had to do was to be willing to let the resentment go and to set his will toward forgiveness. *But forgiveness is costly: it cost Christ a great deal.*

As he lay in his hospital bed, near death, Harvey found the meaning of life. Out of new understanding, from the depths of his being, came the words "Jack, I forgive you." And at last there was peace in his heart.

...Then Harvey learned something else about forgiveness. It was his red-haired doctor who taught him. "You're going to get well," she told him one morning.

The patient smiled at her. "I've known that for several days. It's mostly thanks to you, too."

"No. There's another reason. Your condition has been so precarious that anything could have tipped the scales...I've watched you closely. You've been at peace with yourself, especially the last ten days. If you had held on to any hate at all, that negative emotion would have sapped so much of your energy that you probably would not have pulled through."

Throughout the rest of the day, Harvey pondered the doctor's words. In this case, hateful, unforgiving thoughts would literally have destroyed him.

The doctor was right. Her patient eventually did make a full recovery.

...The three of us marveled at the events that had dovetailed and conspired to bring Harvey to the place where God wanted him. Then I asked, "What happened to Jack?"

"He was sentenced to several years' treatment in a corrective institution. I understand that he is now out again." Harvey was silent for a moment. "There is so much to learn the hard way about forgiveness."

Then he repeated again the steps.

"First came the realization that I was not without blame, that none of us ever are. Second, that forgiveness isn't easy - it's costly. And then I learned that from God's point of view...the forgiveness process between Jack and me is not finished yet."

"But Harvey," Len interrupted, "after all that has happened, and considering Jack's emotional situation, do you really think a constructive relationship could be established now?"

"It takes faith to think so," Harvey answered slowly. "I can't honestly say that I relish trying it. But it's unfinished business, so only God can tell me how to finish it."

I have a feeling that Harvey will get back to Jack. Someday I shall learn the final chapter of this extraordinary story.

Excerpt from *Beyond Our Selves* by Catherine Marshall.
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Waiting for Answers

BY KATHLEEN FESSLER

Oh Lord, it's hard to wait
For answers to our prayers.
Sometimes it seems you're late.
Your timing's not like ours.

Allowing trials in life
Helps our faith to grow.
You know just what is best,
Patience you bestow.

Knowing us completely,
You guide our inner lives.
Help us trust your timing.
Until your help arrives.

Kathleen Fessler is a member of the Fountain Hills Christian Writers Group in Fountain Hills, Arizona. Her articles and poems have appeared in many Christian magazines.

Answers to Prayer

Over the past several years, I have asked for prayer for my son. He decided he no longer believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior. We have been praying for him for over 30 years. God has answered our and your prayers for him. He has come back to belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior after 33 years!

- Karen

You prayed for J. She went to be with the Lord with her daughters by her side. Her daughter said it was the best day of her life.

- Patricia

I asked how my friend's back is doing, and told him I asked Breakthrough Intercessors for prayer long ago. He replied that it has been good for a long time, so the prayers must have worked!

- Mary Elizabeth

My little grandkids didn't have to be quarantined with their angry, abusive mother. Hallelujah! Thank you for all your fervent prayers. Blessings!

- Lynn

My son bought a home and is very content there. God provided just what he was ready for.

- Shelly

I am doing physical therapy and walking much better. Also, I am required to still work from my home office at this time. Thus, I am able to continue my therapy nearby and don't yet have to travel for my job outside. This gives me more time to heal.

- Monica

K is home from the hospital after two months and two weeks, healed from COVID-19. Thank you, intercessors, for praying for him. And thank you, Lord, for healing him!

- Patricia

My smoking addiction has been cut to less than half. Praise God! He's helping me cut it in half again.

- Anonymous

B was brain-dead and in a coma. He woke up. Thank y'all, and thank God!

- Brooklyn

My son, D, has had several good doctor check-ups and is doing well in spite of many serious conditions!

- Velma

J, who was 89, found out she had cancer. She faithfully submitted herself and her health to the Lord. Within days she had passed pain-free. It was so holy a moment that her daughter said they didn't know whether to cry or praise God! The presence of God was very discernible as she shared this saint's triumphant crossing over into Heaven with God. Hallelujah!

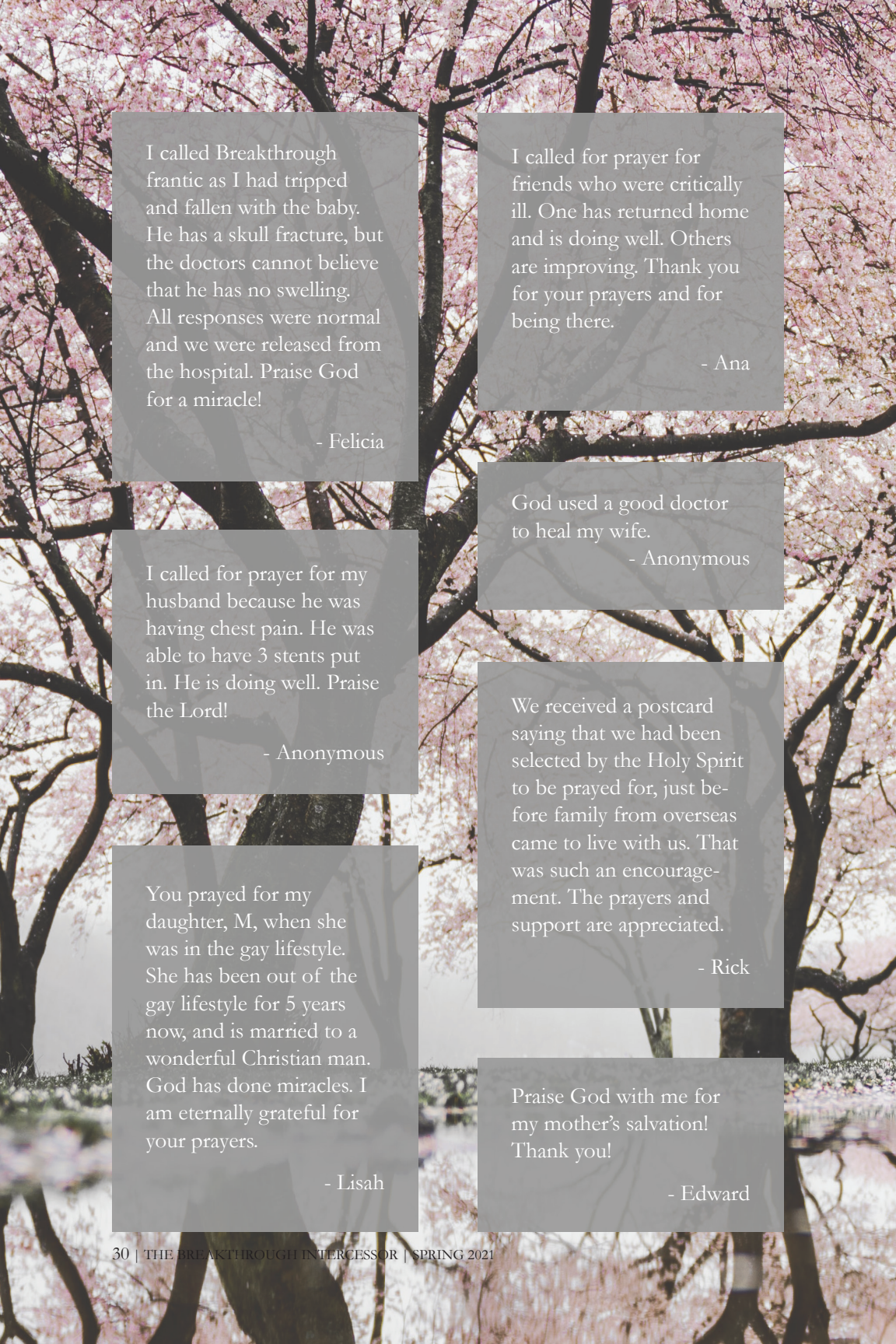
- Anonymous

My hand surgery went well and I have just finished therapy. I so appreciate your prayers during that stressful time. Lord, bless your prayer warriors!

- Kari

Miraculously recovered from a stroke in January. Praising Him! Also had much favor during a 2-day hospital stay. Much thanksgiving.

- Anonymous



I called Breakthrough frantic as I had tripped and fallen with the baby. He has a skull fracture, but the doctors cannot believe that he has no swelling. All responses were normal and we were released from the hospital. Praise God for a miracle!

- Felicia

I called for prayer for friends who were critically ill. One has returned home and is doing well. Others are improving. Thank you for your prayers and for being there.

- Ana

I called for prayer for my husband because he was having chest pain. He was able to have 3 stents put in. He is doing well. Praise the Lord!

- Anonymous

God used a good doctor to heal my wife.

- Anonymous

We received a postcard saying that we had been selected by the Holy Spirit to be prayed for, just before family from overseas came to live with us. That was such an encouragement. The prayers and support are appreciated.


- Rick

You prayed for my daughter, M, when she was in the gay lifestyle. She has been out of the gay lifestyle for 5 years now, and is married to a wonderful Christian man. God has done miracles. I am eternally grateful for your prayers.

- Lisah

Praise God with me for my mother's salvation! Thank you!

- Edward



My prayer request was sent to you in April 2019. My prayer was for God to bring me a husband after years of waiting and praying. I was bold enough to ask God if I could know who my husband is by my brother's wedding in August of that same year. About 6 weeks later, I was introduced to a guy...by July we were dating. In August we were engaged, and I danced with my fiancé. In November of that same year, we were married. God did it! Thank you so much for interceding in prayer for me.

- Beth

Every prayer request that I send to Breakthrough is met! Thanks.

- Phyllis

The Lord blessed me with a job doing something I really enjoy!

- Sparti

Thank you for praying for D, who came down with CV. She was in intensive care. The doctors only gave her a 20% chance of survival, but she is now doing better.

- Linda

I asked for prayer for my husband, who had COVID, and for me not to get it. He recovered very quickly and only had a fever for about 3 or 4 days. I was tested twice, and my result always came back negative and I felt good. Thanks so much for your prayers! God is so good!!

- Claire

My daughter was fired from her former job. She came home and was unemployed for six months. Through prayer, she got another job, plus unemployment benefits. We are all praising God!

- Anonymous

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