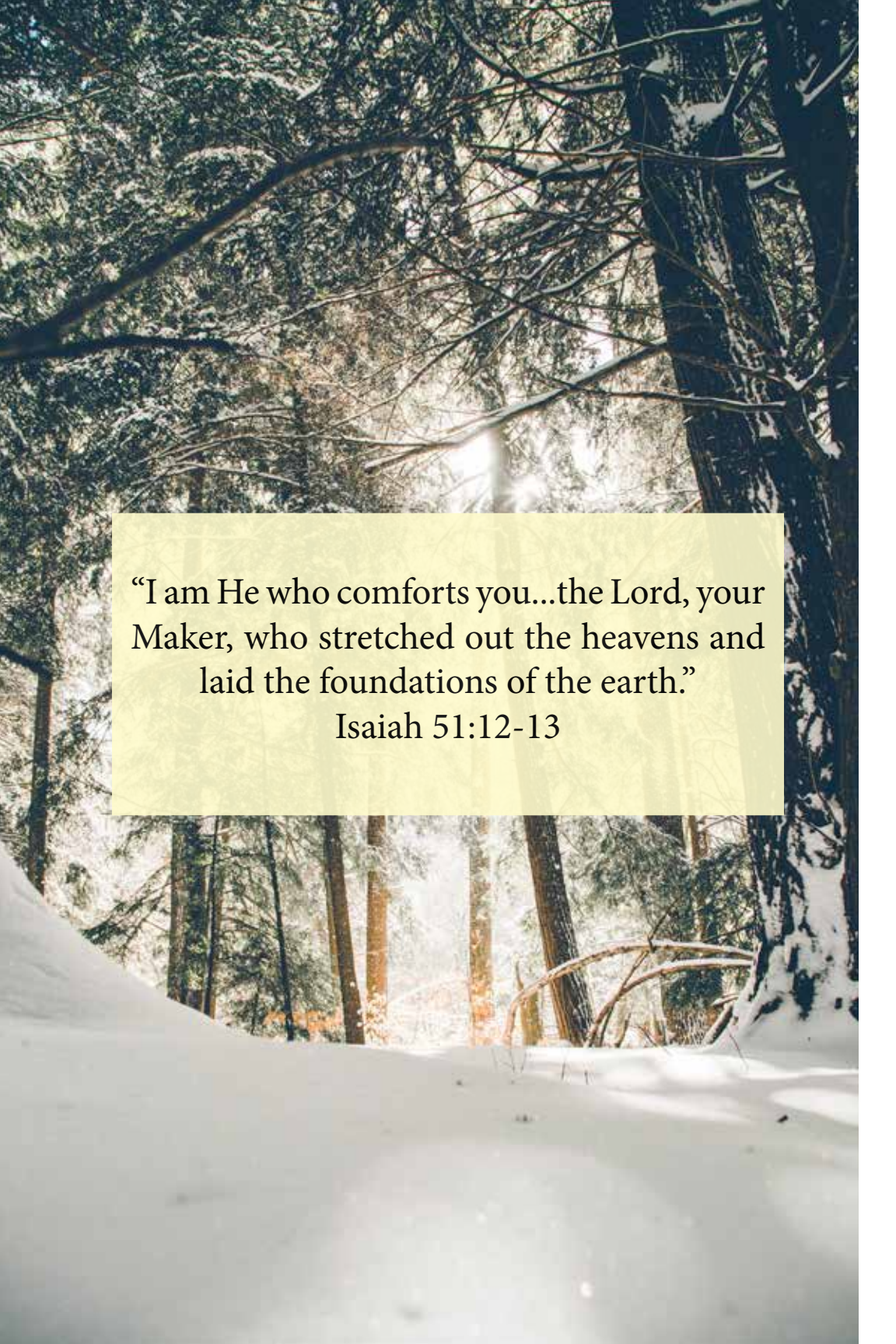


The Breakthrough
Intercessor

Winter 2023

The Comforter
Has Come

The Magazine About Prayer



“I am He who comforts you...the Lord, your
Maker, who stretched out the heavens and
laid the foundations of the earth.”

Isaiah 51:12-13

The Breakthrough
INTERCESSOR

WINTER 2023

Vol. 44, Issue 4

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5 From the Chairman
Michael Smith

7 Christmas Prayer
Peter Marshall

8 To Comfort All Who
Mourn
Catherine Marshall

10 Holding God's Hand
Ethel Kincaid

12 Christmas in Confinement
Roy Borges

15 Winter Morning
Jewell Johnson

16 The Touch of Faith
Peter Marshall

20 God is Bigger Than
Grief
Denise Irvine

23 I Heard the Bells on
Christmas Day
*Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow*

24 The Legacy of
Intercession
Peter Caligiuri

26 The First Christmas
David Sowell

28 Answers to Prayer



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 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.



Breakthrough's financial statement is available upon your written request to
The Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs,
P.O. Box 526, Richmond, VA 23218



Making Answered Prayer Possible

Several years ago, our board wanted to come up with a slogan that summarizes the purpose of Breakthrough in a few words. Our mission is to connect people with prayer requests to our intercessors who pray for them. The commitment is huge as our intercessors (you) agree to pray twenty-one days for each prayer request. Daniel prayed for twenty-one days to hear from God regarding a question he had. This is our model of persistent, unrelenting prayer that Jesus encouraged in his stories of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-8), and the widow and unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8).

After much discussion we came up with: “Making Answered Prayer Possible.” We wanted our mission to reflect that we didn’t just want to make intercessory prayer available for anyone requesting it, we wanted to express our goal of seeking answered prayer. I know you can say that God answers all prayers, which is true. However, he still encourages us to pray for specific requests. That’s what you are doing when you receive your list of prayer requests unless the request clearly violates God’s will as stated in His Holy Word.

To further our mission, our desire for you is that you will be prayer warriors. That term is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, but it reflects the truth that prayer is spiritual warfare. It is an offensive weapon as part of the full armor of God that we use to advance the Kingdom of God and His church. At the end of Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul writes, “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplications for all the saints.”

The Lord has given us help in learning what it means to be prayer warriors.

- **PRAY IN FAITH** – Having faith that God truly hears our prayers and answers them is crucial to our understanding of answered prayer. In James 1:5-8, God tells us if we lack wisdom, ask and God will give us wisdom if we ask in faith not doubting. He goes on to describe the poor fate of a man who prays with doubts. He is “like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.” There is no stability or trust amidst these waves of doubt. God describes those that doubt God as double-minded. Our faith is based upon God’s promises and past results, which are unwavering.

Jesus said in Mark 11:22-24 that we are to have faith in God and that whatever things we ask for when we pray, believe we will receive them.

- **GOD ANSWERS PRAYER ACCORDING TO HIS WILL** – In 1 John 5:14-15, God assures us that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears and answers our prayers. God reveals His will through His Word the Bible. He also can use a multiplicity of counsel, and His Holy Spirit who helps us to pray when we don't know how to pray. Romans 8:26 says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

- **DO OUR BEST TO OBEY AND PLEASE THE LORD** – 1 John 3:21-23 says, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." John goes on to say that His commandment is that we believe on the name of Jesus Christ and love one another. When we keep God's commandments, we are dwelling in Him and the full power of the Holy Spirit, we will pray the will of God.

J. Michael Smith, Esq
Chairman of the Board



Christmas Prayer

By Peter Marshall

We yearn, our Father, for the simple beauty of Christmas- for all the old familiar melodies and words that remind us of that great miracle when He who had made all things was one night to come as a babe, to lie in the crook of a woman's arm.

Before such mystery we kneel, as we follow the shepherds and Wise Men to bring Thee the gift of our love- a love we confess has not always been as warm or sincere or real as it should have been. But now, on this Christmas Day, that love would find its Beloved, and from Thee receive the grace to make it pure again, warm and real.

We bring Thee our gratitude for every token of Thy love, for all the ways Thou hast heaped blessings upon us during the years that have gone.

And we do pray, Lord Jesus, that as we celebrate Thy birthday, we may do it in a manner well pleasing to Thee. May all we do and say, every tribute of our hearts, bring honor to Thy name, that we, Thy people, may remember Thy birth and feel Thy presence among us even yet.

May the loving kindness of Christmas not only creep into our hearts, but there abide, so that not even the return to earthly cares and responsibilities, not all the festivities of our own devising may cause it to creep away weeping. May the joy and spirit of Christmas stay with us now and forever.

In the name of Jesus, who came to save His people from their sins, even in that lovely name we pray. Amen.

From *The Prayers of Peter Marshall*. Used with permission.



To Comfort All Who Mourn

BY CATHERINE MARSHALL

Most people accept intellectually a belief in some kind of life after death. But usually it remains a theoretical belief until death invades one's immediate family circle.

Then at the time of the funeral, we are handed the victory. The working through of the specific problems that sorrow brings must come later.

Many know that initial victory. As with all God's gifts, we do nothing to earn or deserve it. Undoubtedly a loving Father knows that without this kind of help, many of us could never withstand the emotional shock, would never even be able to get through the funeral.

At that time, the first need of the bereaved person is for comfort- just plain comfort. In sorrow, we are all like little children, hurt children who yearn to creep into a mother's arms and rest there; have her stroke our foreheads and speak softly to us as she used to do. But, of course, that is impossible; we are grown men and women. Yet the need for comfort remains.

Our God has promised precisely that...“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God...” “For thus saith the Lord...As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you...”

Strangely in my case I was given the beginning of that experience of comfort a few hours prior to my husband's death. That morning Peter had wakened about three-thirty with severe pains in his arms and chest. The doctor had come as quickly as he could. He has insisted that Dr. Marshall be taken immediately to the hospital.

As we had waited for the ambulance, Peter had looked up at me through his pain and said, “Catherine, don't try to come with me. We mustn't leave Wee Peter alone in this big house. You can come to the hospital in the morning.”

Reluctantly I had agreed. I knew that he was right, though I wanted so much to be with him

After the ambulance had come and gone, I went back upstairs and



sank to my knees beside the bed. There was the need for prayer, for this was an emergency for sure. It could mean only one thing—another massive heart attack. But how was I to pray? Swirling emotions had plunged my mind into utter confusion.

Suddenly the unexpected happened. Over the turbulent emotions there crept a strange all-pervading peace. And through and around me flowed love as I had never before experienced it. It was as if body and spirit were floating on a cloud, resting— as if Someone who loved me very much were wrapping me round and round with His love.

I knelt there marveling at what was happening. I had done nothing, said nothing, to bring it about. Through my mind trooped a quick procession of thoughts...*the Three Persons of the Godhead... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... Sometimes I've known the Spirit within as a nudge, as direction, or reminder, or conscience... Once especially I knew the Son- in that wonderful incident that was the turning point in my long illness... But this is different... this must be the Father... Maybe this is what the Bible means by that lovely statement, "underneath are the everlasting arms." That describes exactly what I'm feeling...*

But what did this mean in relation to Peter, his ailing heart, and the emergency that threatened us? I thought it meant that everything was going to be all right, that Peter would be healed. There seemed to be nothing for which to ask God. Surely there was no need of asking for His Presence; that Presence was all around me. So my prayer took the form simply of thanking Him for the miracle that His love could be such a personal love; for His tender care of Peter and Wee Peter and me.

At 8:15 that same morning, Peter had stepped across the boundary that divides this life from the next. Then I knew that the experience of the night before had meant something far different. I had been granted it so that when the blow fell, I might have the certainty that a loving Father had not deserted me.

Excerpt from *To Live Again* by Catherine Marshall. Used with permission.

Holding God's Hand

BY ETHEL KINCAID FROM "THE FAMILY BOOK OF PRAYERS"

God is there every morning, each day of the week
 But you don't seem to hear
 The greeting He speaks.
 You worry and fret over trials in your life.
 Ever struggling under the burdens and strife.

You agonize, waver, flit to and fro,
 Laboring hard so your pain doesn't show.
 Then someone reminds you that God's waiting there
 All of your burdens He's willing to share.

You only must tell Him of each little need
 And then ask forgiveness with a humble plea.
 He will ever and always forgive you with love
 And send you His blessing and peace from above.

Now you can walk side by side, hand in hand
 In harmony, singing in God's heavenly band,
 Reaching out to those who are lonely, afraid...
 Telling the plan of redemption He made!



WAYS TO GIVE

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.**

Gifts of Stock

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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If you would like to make a stock gift, please contact our office for directions.

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."

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your support!



Christmas in Confinement

BY ROY BORGES

I celebrated my sixteenth consecutive Christmas behind the razor-wire fences of a Florida prison locked up in confinement — a prison inside a prison where the recalcitrant (troublemakers) are kept. In reality, anyone can find himself in the hole by irritating the wrong person.

Because I was going to be locked up in a cell twenty-four hours a day through Christmas, I figured nothing memorable could happen. I did get a five-minute shower three times weekly. Beyond that, there wasn't much to look forward to that year.

Even in prison, I normally expected something good to occur over Christmas. My mom likes to send me two or three Christmas cards, and many of the friends I've met through pen pal writing can be counted on to send greeting cards too.

I decorated my cell with them, and it would put me in the Christmas spirit. I really missed the cards. No cards in confinement. I lost my mail privileges too. I wouldn't get to watch *It's A Wonderful Life* on TV either. No TV in confinement. I missed hearing my sister's sweet encouraging voice on the phone, wishing me a 'Merry Christmas.' No phone calls in confinement.

“I stared at the ceiling from my bunk, wondering if I could praise God in the midst of my circumstances.”

The Christmas meal wasn't too bad. One slice of canned turkey, a cup of sweet potatoes, and a spoon of cranberry jelly were a departure from the regular mundane. But it didn't match the treats I got from volunteers at the chapel. I especially hungered for the Cuban coffee and donuts one of the Spanish volunteers brought. No chapel services for those in confinement.

In a way, that Christmas was like the first Christmas two thousand years ago. Most people went about their lives, paying their bills, cooking dinner, getting ready to go see relatives. Nobody noticed anything different, including the innkeeper who told a young couple to sleep in the barn.

Oh yeah, a few shepherds working the late-night shift got a spectacular celestial show by some angels who proclaimed, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will to men!” (Luke 2:14). The sheep probably knew something was up. Some wise men, eastern Magi, had begun their journey to Jerusalem, looking for someone called the King of the Jews. They had studied ancient manuscripts and knew that the Scriptures foretold the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

But for the rest of the world, it was just another day. No holiday music, no discount sales, no trees with lights, nothing special — except to be counted in a census by their Roman occupiers so they could be taxed. Maybe the Romans were having tax parties. But they didn't know that God had arrived, “and they shall call His name Immanuel...God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

Christmas night in confinement, alone in my cell, I read in my Bible about Paul and Silas, who were also inside a prison. They “were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners listened” (Acts 16:25). Despite their miserable predicament, they praised God.

The lights went out, and I stared at the ceiling from my bunk, wondering if I could praise God in the midst of my circumstances. I could hear a mouse nibbling on some crackers I had left out for him. Then suddenly, I heard a voice come out of the vent above the toilet. It was Andrew in the next cell.

“Merry Christmas, Roy,” he said.

“Merry Christmas, Andrew,” I replied.

“Do you know any Christmas songs?” Andrew asked.

“Yeah, I know a few.”

“I’ll sing one if you sing one,” he said.

“Are you kidding? Have you been reading the Bible?” I asked incredulously.

“No, why?” Andrew replied.

“Never mind. What do you want to sing?”

“Joy to the World.” And he sang every verse. I sang the chorus with him. Then it was my turn, and I chose “Silent Night.”

Then he sang “O Come All Ye Faithful.” And I answered with “Feliz Navidad.”

“Hey, I remember that one from the Christmas play last year. Wasn’t that the song you sang? What was the name of that play?” asked Andrew.

“Yes, it was me. It was called *“The Real Meaning of Christmas.”*”

“That’s right,” Andrew recalled. “And a lot of people liked it. Boy, things have sure changed.”

“You’re right, but the real meaning of Christmas hasn’t changed. It doesn’t matter where you wake up or what day it is— God has arrived. Immanuel is with us. He is here to bless you, save you, heal you, grant you peace, and do many more wonderful things.”

“I have another song,” Andrew said and sang “O Holy Night.” It was completely silent in the quad as everyone listened. It was a moment I’ll never forget. It reminded me of Paul and Silas and made me realize that every day is Christmas since God has arrived. It wasn’t just another day, and I wasn’t alone. Immanuel was in confinement with me, in my cell, blessing me.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After over 30 years in prison, Roy’s prayers were answered and he was released in 2021. “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.”

Winter Morning

“In the morning, O Lord, you hear my
voice”

(Psalm 5:3 NIV)

Winter morning, cold and dim,
I rise and stumble in the dark,
to pour a cup of coffee,
light a candle, and take the Book
from off the shelf.

In the stillness of the dawn,
I meditate on the mysteries of God,
His goodness,
on the beauty of His name.
He fills my soul with joy,
peace to last the day long.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jewell Johnson lives in Arizona and is mother to six children and grandmother to ten. Besides writing, she enjoys reading, playing the piano, and quilting.

The Touch of Faith

By Peter Marshall

“And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, ‘Who touched me?’” Mark 5:31



You may ask: How can I touch Christ? It was one thing for that woman long ago, for she saw Him with her eyes, and could touch Him with her fingers.

She heard His voice, saw the sunlight dance on His hair. He was in the flesh then, and she could touch Him. How can I, today, touch Him with the same results?

Some of you may seek healing of body or mind or of soul. Some of you may seek guidance on some problem. Some of you need faith to stand up under tensions and suspenses of life. Some of you seek forgiveness and a new beginning.

All of us need to touch Christ for some reason or other. As the Church offers this wonderful new life — this peace of mind and heart — this healing of mind and soul and body in Christ's name — perhaps she ought more and more to give instructions with her soul medicine.

You are justified in looking for directions on the lid or some instructions for taking a manual of operation.

Perhaps I can make some suggestions which will be helpful.

First, give God a chance. Take your problem, whatever it may be, to Him in prayer. Tell Him all about it — just as if He didn't know a thing. In the telling be absolutely honest and sincere. Hold nothing back.

Our minds are sometimes shocked when we permit our hearts to spill over, but it is good for our souls when we do.

If we would only have the courage to take a good look at our motives for doing certain things, we might discover something about ourselves that would melt away our pride and soften our hearts so that God could do something with us and for us.

Then the second step is to believe that God will hear you. Remember that He heard the poor woman who only touched the hem of His garment. Believe with all your faith that He cares what happens to you. You must believe that. You can't doubt it when you look at the cross.

Next, you must be willing to wait patiently for the Lord. He does not answer every prayer on Sunday afternoon. You may have to wait until Friday. But wait. God is never in a hurry.



Then when He speaks to you — as He will — do what He tells you. He may not tell you audibly. You may not hear our voices — as did Joan of Arc. You may not see any writing in the sky and have any unusual experience. God could, if He wanted, send you messages in that way, but that is not His usual method.

It generally comes down to your own conscience— a sort of growing conviction that such and such a course of action is the one He wants you to take. Or it may be given you in the advice of friends of sound judgement — those who love you most.

God speaks sometimes through our circumstances and guides us, closing doors as well as opening them.

He will let you know what you must do, and what you must be. HE is waiting for you to touch Him. The hand of faith is enough. Your trembling fingers can reach Him as He passes.

Reach out your faith— touch Him.
He will not ask, “Who touched me?”

He will know.

Excerpt from *The Best of Peter Marshall*. Used with permission.

Are you a writer?

The Intercessor welcomes submissions!

Guidelines:

1. Articles should be 500-1,000 words.
2. Poems should be at least 12 lines.
3. Topics must focus on prayer: an experience or teaching supported in Scripture.
4. Authors give Breakthrough permission to edit material for length and content.



Has God taught you
about prayer?

Do you want to share
your story of
answered prayer?

Do you write poetry
about prayer?

Send to:

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Mail: Breakthrough
Editor

P.O. Box 121
Lincoln, VA
20160

God is Bigger Than Grief

By Denise Irvine

When my husband, Alan, passed away, my anguish felt insurmountable. Not only did I lose my husband, prayer partner, companion, and best friend (next to Jesus), I lost my job and my purpose for getting up in the morning. I was Al's primary caregiver for eight years, so with him gone I had nothing to fill my life. The pain was so intense; I thought the tears would never end.

Then one morning during my quiet time with the Lord, I read these words of Jesus: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). Here, Jesus had just announced to his disciples that He was going to be handed over to evil men and crucified; yet, His desire was that His joy might remain in them, even as they grieved His cruel death.


That gave me pause for thought. I concluded that, even during grief over the death of a loved one, Jesus wants His joy to remain in us.

"Lord," I prayed, "I don't think this deep, consuming grief is Your will. I want Your joy to remain in me."

That night I went to bed meditating on Psalm 4:7: "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased."

"Jesus," I prayed before falling asleep, "please put gladness in my heart. Thank You. Amen."

I awoke sensing something different — a holy gladness that superseded my grief. I knew Jesus had answered my prayer. He had put gladness in my heart.



I praised God for delivering me from deep sorrow; but like any deliverance, now I needed to walk in it. A few days later, my friend and prayer partner, Pam, told me about “The Morning & Evening Sacrifice of Praise,” which her pastor would lead daily throughout the month of May. Pam gave me the link so I could join in. Every morning and evening at 6:00, countless women around the world joined to praise and thank God together. It was powerful. The Lord kept my joy solid through this daily sacrifice of praise.

My next issue involved peace of mind. I struggled to maintain peace, as the enemy bombarded me with worrisome thoughts. You’ll never make it financially... you have no purpose now... you’ll never survive without Al’s calming presence... you’re all alone now.

Then one morning, the Lord spoke to my heart: “Peace... be still, My child. In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. My peace I give unto you, but not as the world gives. My peace is a lasting peace. Come to Me and receive My peace.” He then led me to John 16:33a: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace.”

I meditated on this Scripture all day. I wanted Jesus’ lasting peace. I centered my thoughts on Jesus and His Word, not on my circumstances. When I did, sure enough, the peace of Christ filled my heart.

Once I had peace of mind, the attacks became physical. My stomach knotted up and my hands began to shake. All the trauma of the past eight years came rushing through my body – all the 911 calls, all the emergency hospital stays, all the stress of multiple surgeries and, finally, Al’s transition into Heaven. Like after-shocks, the trembling rose up in me uncontrollably.

I went to the doctor and got something for my nerves. I then got on my knees and got honest with God. “Help me, Lord! I’m a mess inside!”

By bedtime, I had a deep conviction that, in His time, God would stablish, strengthen, and settle me. The after-shocks ended in time, and my body slowly started to settle.

During this time of grief, fogginess often clouded my mind. My thoughts would become confused and I sometimes had trouble processing conversations. The Lord led me to this scripture: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

As I meditated on this Scripture, I began to experience more and more clarity of thought. Eventually my mind cleared completely. The Word of God is powerful.

With these issues resolved, one ache still remained. I missed having a husband to talk things over with. One morning, the Lord reminded me, “For thy Maker is thine Husband; the LORD of hosts is his name” (Isaiah 54:5). I remembered the day when He first whispered those words to my heart. Now, 40 years later, I was back to square one. I needed to trust the Lord to be my Husband. I needed to trust Him to listen to me, and to talk to me. I needed the same relationship with Him that I had at the beginning.

When I needed joy, the Lord gave me His joy. When I needed peace, He gave me His peace. When I needed my nerves to calm down, He gave me His Word and settled me. When I needed a husband, He gave me Himself.

Grieving the loss of my husband is one of the hardest things I’ve ever experienced. But, I learned that if I trust Him with all of my heart, God is bigger than grief.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Denise Irvine has been a Breakthrough intercessor for 23 years and a freelance writer for 30. She writes for the glory of God and to encourage other believers. The Lord has blessed her with a quiver-full of kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids. She is pictured here with daughter, Jennie, and son, Brian.



I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

1 I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

2 I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

3 And in despair I bowed my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

4 Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men."

5 Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Christmas Hymn by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The Legacy of Intercession

By Peter Caliguiri

“Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous are as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (Genesis 18:25, ESV).

We begin looking at prayer this week, with one of the most vital purposes of prayer: intercession. If you are interested in a deeper look at intercessory prayer, I highly recommend Andrew Murray’s book, “The Ministry of Intercession.” It is interesting to me that until we encounter Abraham (the Father of our Faith) we hear very little about prayer in the Bible. Surely Enoch prayed, along with other good guys, like Noah and Abel, but only Abraham’s prayers are recorded in detail. But if you think that Abraham started out by praying super spiritual requests, you will be greatly disappointed. One of his earliest prayers that we have is found in chapter 15 of Genesis where he begins by saying,

“O Sovereign Lord, what will you give me since I am childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” (Genesis 15:2, ESV).

Then, even when God promises Abraham that despite his age, he will not only have a son, but God will give him the entire land of Canaan, what is his response?

“O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?” (Genesis 15:8, ESV).

Though these questions seem both a bit selfish as well as impertinent, God is not at all bothered by them. He loves Abraham’s prayers, and He is preparing to answer them one day in a spectacular fashion. Abraham’s prayers (and even better, God’s response) give me hope as I grow in my own prayer life. After all, we don’t delight in listening to our children only after they have graduated from college.

We enjoy even their most immature conversations while they are toddling around our house, and we are still changing their diapers! Skipping ahead to chapter 17, we listen in again to Abraham praying a few years later, as now he is praying for someone besides himself.

And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” (Genesis 17:18 ESV).

And then in the same way that friendships deepen as we become more deeply committed to one another, God continues to draw Abraham into a more intimate fellowship. So, just a couple of years later we come to Abraham, the intercessor in chapter 18. Here, he is no longer praying for himself, or even his family. This time, Abraham is asking for God’s mercy for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and God patiently listens to his every word.

Then Abraham asks, “...will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25b, ESV).

What a question to ask God! It almost sounds like Abraham is making an accusation and yet God does not leap to His feet in anger. Instead, God gently guides Abraham’s prayers, step by step, towards greater and greater mercy. “Spare the city for fifty righteous.” Evolves to forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and finally only ten (Genesis 18:24-33).

The biggest surprise for me is that eventually those who were spared were the family of Lot. These were not folks who I would have picked out as a particularly special, loving group. No! They were complicated, messed up, far from perfect, and a lot like us!

So be encouraged today. God has given us a legacy of intercession that stretches all the way back to Abraham. Just as God cared enough to listen to Abraham pray for his own imperfect family, so God longs to hear us cry out for ours. He is eager to teach us, He is eager to listen, and He is waiting to answer us in spectacular fashion far beyond anything we could ever ask, think or even imagine!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My wife Nancy and I have been married for 50 years and have two sons, six lively grandsons, and one wonderful granddaughter! I love to serve in nursing home ministry and write devotionals, poetry, and songs.

The First Christmas

by David Sowards

King David had descendants, too numerous to name.
One of them was Joseph, who would gain lasting fame.
Joseph was engaged to a woman named Mary.
God said to her one night, "My child, you shall carry."
All that Joseph wanted was to do that which was right.
He considered leaving her, but God appeared to him one night.
The Lord said, "Please take Mary to be your lawful wife.
Because she will bear My child who will save all with His life."
The emperor Augustus ordered a census taken around.
Every man had to register by going to his hometown.
So Joseph and Mary left to go to Bethlehem.
By now she was expecting, so a donkey aided them.
When they got to the city, there was no room for strangers.
The only place for the baby to sleep was in a wooden manger.
So Jesus was born, wrapped in cloths, and laid in that humble place.

It was a small beginning for the Savior of the human race.
While the shepherds of that country were in fields tending flocks,
An angel of the Lord came down and gave them quite a shock!
"Don't be afraid," The angel said. "I bring good news for you."
"On this day, your Savior is born, so this is what you should do."
"You will find the child in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes."

And then a great army of angels suddenly arose.
The angels sang their praises to the Savior born that day.
The shepherds got excited and left right away.
They found the baby as they were told and were quite amazed.
They went back to their fields, full of hope and praise.
Now Bethlehem was in Judea, where Herod ruled as king.
After Jesus was born, some wise men asked him things.

"Where is this baby born who will be king of the Jews?"
"We have seen his star in the east, can you give us any news?"
When Herod learned of their wish to find and worship the child,
He became angry and disturbed and his evil thoughts ran wild.
He consulted with priests and the teachers of the law.
They studied all their writings and this is what they saw.
"From Bethlehem in Judea, a new leader will reveal
That he is the chosen king of the people of Israel."
Herod sent for the wise men and learned about the star from
them.
And when he found where it appeared, he sent them to Bethle-
hem.
Herod gave them these instructions, "Go see what you can do.
Try and find this child so I may praise him, too."
So the wise men left, they found the star, and followed it.
It led them to the house of Jesus, where they came to visit.
When they arrived at his house, they saw the child with Mary.
The wise men knelt and worshipped him and gave him gifts they
carried.
Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were given from their hands.
Then the wise men left Jesus to return to their own lands.
But they did not go to Herod, God warned them that day.
In their dreams, he said, "Don't go back!" So they returned an-
other way.
That was the first Christmas so long ago.
It changed the world we now know.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Sowards is a poet, singer, songwriter, guitarist, pianist, nov-
elist, short story writer, local TV show host, screenwriter, playwright,
painter, cartoonist, graphic novelist, stand-up comedian, magician,
comic strip artist, and other creative professions.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

My initial request was for my daughter and her battling suicidal ideations and a couple of attempts along with an eating disorder. She is no longer suicidal and no longer starving herself.

-Tony

Melissa was able to purchase an older used car and they are back on the road. Praise God!

-Loralei

God has protected M. She got carbon-monoxide poisoning taking a shower in the same room as the propane tank and water heater and did not know!

Praise God! Someone found her!

-Felecia

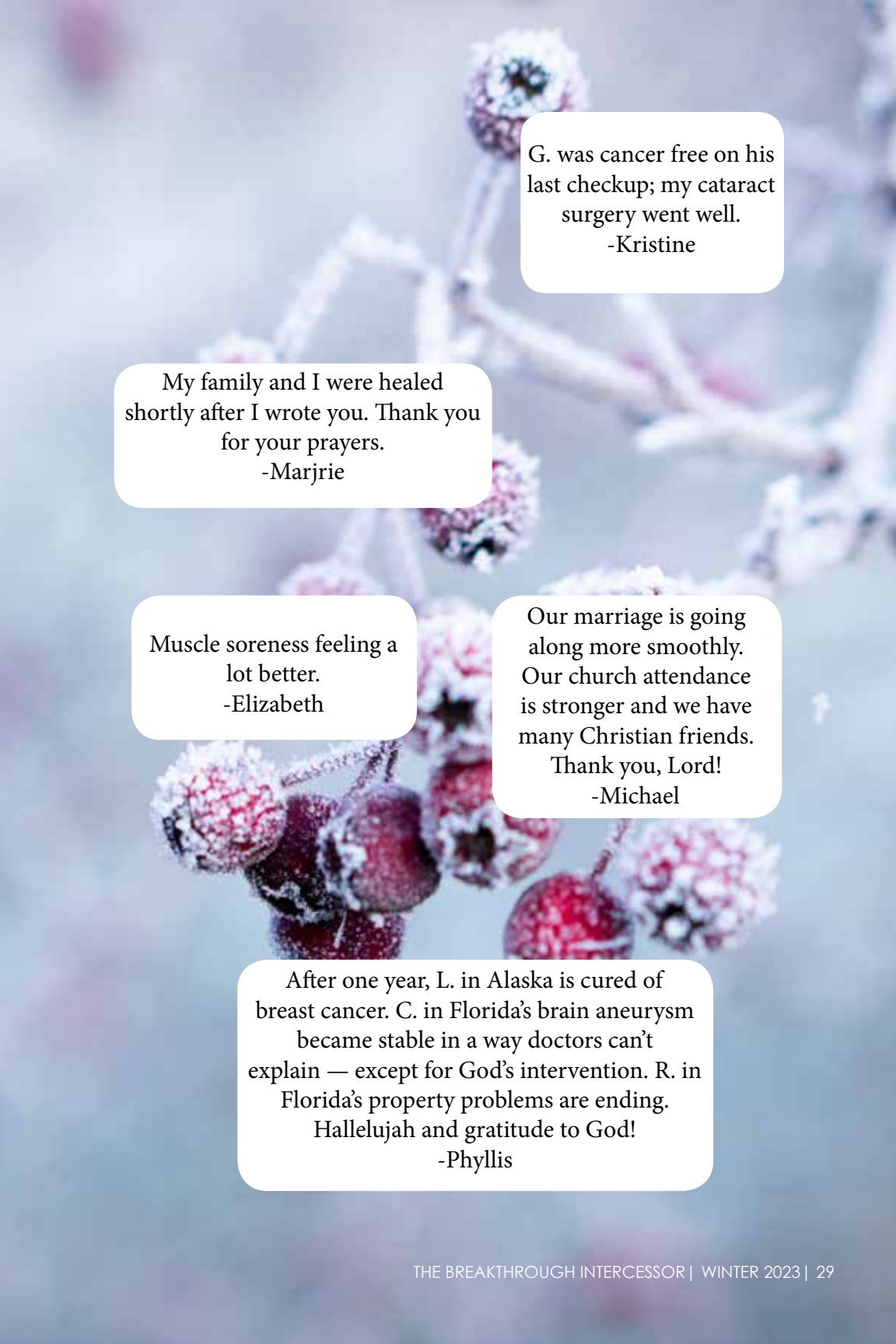
My daughter received a job. Thank you.

-Mary

Beginning August 1st, the Intercessors began 21 days interceding for my sister for healing of cancer.

Her latest reports show no bone marrow cancer, cancer centralized in leg, no surgery needed, chemo treatments reduced from 6 to 3, no longer Stage 4, and reduced to Stage 1. Praise God forevermore!

-Jeanne



G. was cancer free on his last checkup; my cataract surgery went well.
-Kristine

My family and I were healed shortly after I wrote you. Thank you for your prayers.
-Marjrie

Muscle soreness feeling a lot better.
-Elizabeth

Our marriage is going along more smoothly. Our church attendance is stronger and we have many Christian friends. Thank you, Lord!
-Michael

After one year, L. in Alaska is cured of breast cancer. C. in Florida's brain aneurysm became stable in a way doctors can't explain — except for God's intervention. R. in Florida's property problems are ending. Hallelujah and gratitude to God!
-Phyllis

For granddaughter who is pregnant and sick. Healing by God's grace. Much better.

-Julie

Successful conference — paper well received and published in Poland in August. Safe travel and opportunity to share gospel on plane with young woman and Uber driver on the way home. Salvation please

Lord!!

-Theresa

I asked for your prayers as I suffered with results of shingles — itching and nerve pain. Well, God heard and answered! The pain is gone and the itching only comes periodically. I know that God answered your prayers and I thank you!

-Bertha

The Consular at the US Embassy accepted my Visa application. I am now waiting for my Visa to come out.

-Stephen

Brother-in-law had been battling infections and a low platelet count due to his chemo treatment. He is home and feeling better. Thank you all for continued prayers.

-Cathy

My nephew called me yesterday and for the first time in years, he asked how I talked to God, how I hear from Him and what happens when you're born again. I advised him to ask our dear Lord to be with him and his future wife as they take sacred vows. Glory to God!
-Fay

I prayed to be used by God and am now preaching part time at a local church. Praise God.
Thanks for praying!
-Charles

Liver and eye health concerns have been lessened over the past few months. Healed of vertigo and UTI...since July.
-Helene

K's dad gave his life to Christ and about 3 hours later went home with the Saviour. God bless you all for your prayer support.
-Sandra

Son, N. needed prayer: your Intercessors, through his ongoing trials, delivered him from a psychiatric ward for suicidal people, into a homeless shelter, from there to a dorm for homeless people and obtained a job. Now he has a steady job but is looking for improvement by finding an appropriate place to live and be near his work. Without your prayers, he would be totally lost or worse, dead without the Lord!
-Dean

Winter 2023

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