


The Breakthrough
INTERCESSOR
Fall/Winter 2025

*Light
and
Truth*

The Magazine About Prayer

The background of the image is a Christmas tree decorated with numerous warm white lights, creating a bokeh effect. In the foreground, an open book with white pages is lying flat on a dark, textured surface. The text is centered within a semi-transparent brown rectangular box.

*"Send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me; let them bring me
to your holy hill and to your
dwelling!" ~Psalm 43:3 (ESV)*

The Breakthrough
INTERCESSOR

ABOUT US

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Leonard LeSourd

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2025**

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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.

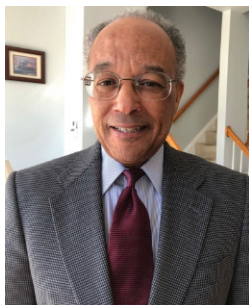
God gave Catherine the vision of matching these two groups of people: those with prayer needs and those Christians who wanted to be part of a ministry. Thus Catherine and her husband, Leonard LeSourd, began the Breakthrough ministry.

The 21-day prayer period was chosen based on the story in Daniel 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



A Nation in Turmoil!

As I write this, our nation has just witnessed the most horrific action that can be witnessed, the assassination of a Christian sharing his faith, in broad daylight, captured on video, for all the world to see. If there ever was a time to pray, it is now!

Our Lord Jesus spoke to us about this:

"Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."
Mark 13:12-13 (KJV)

The Apostle Paul also wrote about this:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good[.]" II Timothy 3:1-3 (KJV)

The word fierce in this passage is defined as being brutal. I think that sums up the murder of Charlie Kirk. Our Lord Jesus was pursued by angry mobs seeking his death. Along with the stoning of Stephen, so was this brave, young man, brutalized for speaking the truth in love, to a wicked and perverse generation.

In the United States we are not used to seeing such open displays of physical brutality against Christians on our own soil. While it has shocked our nation, Charlie's death is resulting in a fire igniting within our land, for the spread of the gospel. In addition, we remain deeply saddened and aware of the tragic brutality being suffered daily by our dear brothers and sisters across the globe, where being Christian means being imprisoned, tortured, and executed for your faith.

As intercessors the Lord holds us accountable for influencing happenings here and around the globe. In some aspects the church

has been negligent in allowing evil to reign in terror, and yet Jesus said these things will increase as we get nearer towards end times. Our fight is light against darkness, good versus evil, love versus hate, knowing that brutality comes from the demonic forces influencing those who do not know God. Oh, that we would spend extra times in earnest prayer, holding back the forces of darkness, so the light of the glorious gospel can shine through.

The Holy Spirit stands ready to assist every believer willing to spend time with Him, to know how to pray, and will energize their prayers as they selflessly spend times in prayer. Prayer is not an elective, and God is not looking for observers. He is looking for those willing to lay down their lives for their fellow brethren. He's looking for those willing to travail in prayer to see God's Kingdom come in power and might. Will you take up the challenge?

For those willing, ask God if your praying is simply obligatory, or if it could be increased in such a way as to make a difference in our lands. Now more than ever, God needs the prayers of the righteous (James 5:17). You make a difference every time you pray. Simply pray, and obey.

As our nation goes, so goes the world. Pray the Lord holds us together, not allowing evil to split us up. Love is our key. Our brothers and sisters here and overseas need us to remember them, asking for God's mercy and grace to be bestowed upon them. The Bible says our faith is the victory (1 John 5:4). We overcome by the Blood of the Lamb, and the Word of our testimony, and love not our lives unto the death (Revelation 12:11).

I pray you are blessed and inspired as you read the articles contained in this edition of *The Intercessor*.

God bless you all,

Brian K. Wells

Chairman of the Board

In Memory of Elizabeth Ellen Smith



April 19, 1944 – March 5, 2025

Elizabeth Ellen Smith, beloved wife, mother, and twin sister, passed into the loving arms of Jesus on March 5, 2025, at the age of 80.

Elizabeth started her work with Breakthrough as an avid intercessor in 1987, subsequently joining the Board of Directors and serving as Chairwoman. Elizabeth brought and demonstrated a strong spiritual desire to please God in all her endeavors, including her time at Breakthrough. I can still remember her welcoming me with open arms and a great big smile when I joined the board in 2008, some 17 years ago.

Elizabeth's enthusiasm for the Lord's work was infectious, always looking for ways to honor the Lord Jesus and to honor Catherine Marshall, Breakthrough's founder. She spoke with great passion during board meetings on issues facing the ministry. She and her husband (Michael Smith) have always been generous, major donors to the ministry.

Elizabeth and her husband founded the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), an organization providing legal support and resources to home school parents all across the country, and internationally. She was a Bible teacher and went on missions trips with her church. Elizabeth was also a member of several other volunteer organizations, always gravitating to positions of authority, being used of God for her great business savvy and zeal for Christian excellence.

Elizabeth had a long battle with COVID, which also affected her memory, from which she never fully recovered. We will miss her greatly. We love her dearly. She was quite a gal!

Brian K. Wells, Chairman



How to Deal with Sin

BY ROY BORGES

We are all susceptible to sin, temptation, and disobedience, so it is important for us to know what to do when we yield to our sinful desires. Sometimes it is hard to face what we have done—especially sins we constantly repeat—but God has graciously given us a way to receive cleansing so we can continue to grow and be the type of person He wants us to be. It means we have to see our sins the way the Lord does. To God, every sin violates His law, grieves the Holy Spirit, and belittles Christ's sacrifice on the cross, so we must take responsibility for it. We cannot try to soften it. Sin is heinous—not just a mistake, weakness, or shortcoming. It is unacceptable and keeps us from doing God's will.

Once we confess it, agree with God, and acknowledge our disobedience instead of making excuses or blaming others, God will forgive us. Agreeing with God about our wrongdoing is a blessed privilege. God says that if we draw nearer to Him, He will draw nearer to us (James 4:8). He will wash us clean of guilt and empower us to turn away from that sin in repentance. Then, we can walk away afresh in holiness—but the emptiness cannot be permanently satisfied until a person comes to Christ. We were created to honor and glorify Him, and no other pursuit can bring a sense of fulfillment and purpose.

Although the apostle John explains

how to deal with sin, his main purpose was to encourage us to turn from it and walk in obedience to God. Sin should be the exception in our life—not the rule.

Our relationship with God is the greatest blessing in life. He made us to flourish with one another, and the people He puts in our lives are meant to walk with us in both good times and bad (Romans 12:15). This doesn't magically happen; it's built over time. We must be willing to not only listen to the needs of those we love, but to help them see their need for God.

The Samaritan woman at the well symbolizes millions throughout history who have tried their best to find love and completion, but this emptiness cannot be permanently satisfied until a person comes to Christ. We were created to honor and glorify Him, and no other pursuit can bring a sense of pleasure and purpose to our lives.

The Bible says that there is a battle going on in us between our spirit and flesh, which is ruled by the sin in us. However, when we trust Christ, we begin to live for Him, and He will give us the power to overcome sin (see Romans 7).

When a person dies to the old life and begins a new life in Christ, he will live to satisfy Him. God's Spirit supplies the power for him to produce good things in his life. He finds that his whole way of looking at the world changes, and he seeks to do things for God.



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."

Thank
you for
your
support!

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

A: Only through your support!

Ways
to
Give

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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."



It Starts with Me

BY NIKKI HENDERSON

As I prepared to speak at a leadership conference some months ago, I asked God to give me something timely to share that would touch the hearts of our leaders. After all, this is such a difficult time to lead. Whether we're serving as leaders in the home, ministry, or the workplace, we are constantly faced with challenges. I initially started crafting messages about leadership in tough times, but then God led me back to a familiar story, to allow me to see a new dimension.

One of the most intriguing examples of prayer in leadership is the account of King Josiah found in II Kings 22:1-13. Josiah became a king at the tender age of eight years old, not by choice, but rather by tragedy. His father Amon was killed, and Josiah was appointed king. Even at a young age, the Scripture notes Josiah as an excellent leader who did what was right, neither looking to the left or right (II Kings 22:2). In the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign, he decided to gather the money brought to the temple to pay the faithful workers of the temple. The goal was to repair and restore the temple. While this process was being fulfilled, the book of the law was recovered and sent to Josiah. This act of justice introduced a light on the laws that were being broken.

When Josiah heard about this and understood the weight of all the laws that had been forsaken, he took an action in verse 11 that I have often overlooked. King Josiah tore his clothing, which symbolized the lack of importance in material items because of his grief. He shifted into a posture of responsibility—first for himself, and then for the people he led. King Josiah understood how much more he needed the mercy than the people did, because he was in leadership. How often do we rush to cover others in prayer while missing the mercy we need to cry out for!

Mothers and fathers need more mercy than their children. Pastors, elders, and ministers need just as much mercy as the flock they lead. Worship leaders need the mercy more than the congregation they sing to, simply because it starts with each of us. We are in a season where we can no longer ask others to do what we are not willing to do ourselves. God is calling us to a place of introspection in prayer—the examination of oneself both in the mental and emotional processes. Even the most faithful king in all of history

understood that he had to rend his clothes and pray for mercy.

When is the last time we got on our knees and cried out for mercy—starting with us? Our earth is groaning and travailing. The calamities of hurricanes, storms, and more are devastating places that have never been touched. We need mercy and grace every day. We are all leaders in some capacity, but the most important person we must lead is the self. It is not just our responsibility to course-correct as we lead, but we must also bear the weight of being off course. Josiah could have sought to initially blame the people, yet he started with humbling himself first.

As you read further in this account, King Josiah's action of prayer and humility reaches the heart of God. In II Kings 22:18, the prophetess sends a message back that changes the course for King Josiah and Judah:

"But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, 'Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.'" II Kings 22:18-19 (KJV)

Josiah's demonstration of responsiveness and humbling before the Lord resulted in a turnaround for others. God made a promise that King Josiah would not see the calamity; instead, he would be able to rest in peace. King Josiah understood that it had to start with him first. If every single person cried out on his knees in prayer, imagine the heart cry that would reach heaven.

It starts with me. It starts with you. It starts with us.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nikki Henderson is a writer and motivational speaker with a message of hope, love, and restoration. Nikki has authored several books, including *My Greatest Blessings: Memoir of a Single Mom*, *Storm Clouds Are Passing: Hold on Until Change Comes*, and *Moments with God: Short Stories for the Soul of a Woman*. She resides in North Carolina with her two sons, Joshua and Jeremiah.

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?

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20160



Daniel's Prayer for Israel

BY DR. VANESA M. SCOTT-THOMPSON

In Daniel chapter 9, there is a passionate prayer for Israel in verses 4-19. In this text, we discover how Daniel prepares to pray, the confessions of sins that Israel had committed, and Daniel's plea to God. Within this scriptural text, there is also adoration of God.

How does Daniel prepare to pray?

In Daniel 9:3 (NIV), we see how Daniel prepares for prayer: "So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes."

Daniel's preparation included fasting and wearing sackcloth and ashes. In biblical times, sackcloth and ashes were a sign of sorrow, mourning, and repentance. In this text, it was a sign of repentance, because Daniel shares the sins of Israel in verses 4-16.

What sins does Daniel confess on behalf of Israel?

Daniel confesses a lot of sins that Israel committed. Some of the key words and phrases in verses 4-16 emphasize the severity of the disobedience, unfaithfulness, and rejection on the part of the Israelites:

- "Wicked" (v. 5)

- "Rebelled" (v. 5)
- "Turned away from your commands and laws" (v. 5)
- "Not listened to your servants the prophets" (v. 6)
- "Unfaithfulness" (v. 7)
- "We have not obeyed the LORD our God" (v. 10)
- "We have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth" (v. 13)

As you look at the list of sins that Israel committed, it is evident that they were doing the opposite of what God desired. God had put something in their life that Satan knew was worth stealing, killing, and destroying. John 10:10a (NIV) tells us, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy[.]"

Every word and phrase on this list has a negative connotation. Every word and phrase on this list is evil, because it goes against the authority and laws of God. Every word and phrase on this list is sinful behavior. Every word and phrase on this list is contrary to God's standard of righteousness and holy living.

How does Daniel plead with God?

"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name." Daniel 9:17-19 (NIV)

Daniel pleads with God in both supplication and urgency for intervention:

Supplication—humbly coming, calling

- "Hear the prayers and petitions of your servant" (v. 17)
- "Give ear, our God, and hear" (v. 18)
- "Lord, listen!" (v. 19)
- "Lord, forgive!" (v. 19)
- "Lord, hear and act!" (v. 19)

Urgency for intervention—crying out for immediate action

- "Look with favor on your desolate sanctuary" (v. 17)
- "Open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name" (v. 18)
- "My God, do not delay" (v. 19)

Daniel's pleading with God focuses on the heart and character of God.

How does Daniel adore God?

Adoration is deep love and worship. During this prayer, Daniel takes the time to adore God. Daniel's adoration reflects God's love, righteousness, mercy, forgiveness, and faithfulness.

- "Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (v. 4)
- "Lord, you are righteous" (v. 7)
- "The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving" (v. 9)
- "Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day" (v. 15)

How can Daniel's prayer be a model for us?

Daniel's prayer includes four elements:

- Preparation: fasting and prayer
- Confession of sin: honestly acknowledging our disobedience
- Pleading with God: asking God for mercy and compassion
- Adoring God: acknowledging God for who He is

This prayer pattern serves as a good model for how we can boldly approach God, particularly when we have sin to confess and a repentant heart.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Vanesa Scott-Thompson's writing has been featured in a variety of Christian blogs and magazines. In 2022, she released her inaugural book, entitled *Foundation Basics for New Members: Teacher & Student Manual*. To learn more about her, please visit drvmst.com.



MICHELLE HORNADAY
in honor of

JENENNE
STEEDLY ALLEN

*Former member
of Breakthrough
Board of Directors*



Prayers of a First Responder

BY KATHY PIERSON

"Unit 904, I need you to respond to a mass shooting at 3000 Town Center Drive."

"904 on the way," I said, turning on the lights and siren of the ambulance. We were minutes away from the offices in the business district where the shooting occurred.

As I pulled into the parking area, people poured from one of three high-rise buildings. I picked up the mic and said, "On scene."

"Stay in your vehicle until the police tell you otherwise," Danny said. Our head dispatcher's voice sounded strained as he conferred with several crews.

I placed our unit in park as a police officer approached my window. "We have six confirmed down. Stay put until further orders," he said.

I looked at my young, wide-eyed partner and said, "This is what we've trained for, Josh. We'll be fine." For his sake, I tried to sound more confident than I felt.

Give us wisdom, Lord.

We watched officers and fire personnel scurry here and there as the police chief shouted orders. I reached for my cell phone to call my husband. When Gary answered, I explained the situation to him.

"I just turned on the TV, and it's breaking news on all the local stations," he said.

"Would you call Pastor and ask him to get some people praying?" I asked. "I'm not sure what we'll be dealing with in there."

"Will do. Please be careful."

I was thankful I'd started my morning like I began every day: spend-

ing time in God's word and asking Him for wisdom with each patient and protection during my shift. The reassuring words from Joshua 1:9 (NKJV) flashed through my mind: "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Another officer approached and said, "You can get your equipment ready now."

Josh pulled out the stretcher, and I loaded it with our medical box and oxygen tank. We stood by our vehicle until they waved us forward. It felt eerie when they lifted the yellow crime scene tape and said, "You're in."

We scaled the long flight of stairs and rolled through the double doors. As we approached the elevator, officers ran by, cocking their rifles. I shivered as the sound echoed repeatedly off the walls of the foyer.

God, I'm trusting you to keep us safe.

As we stepped off the elevator, a coworker approached us and whispered, "The psychiatrist's office, where the shooting occurred, is over there." He tilted his head toward a bank of clear glass to our right.

I glanced over his shoulder and saw a suit-clad man lying on the floor, with his head in a pool of blood.

Oh Lord, please be with that man's family.

An officer walked up and said, "Someone shot the doctor and then emptied his gun several times into a room of people in group therapy. The space is tight, so we're sending in one crew at a time."

When my fellow employees came out with their patient, we were waved in. We came to an abrupt halt at the only doorway to the room and stared in horror at the scene before us. Chairs and end tables were overturned, bullet holes riddled the walls, and shards of glass were everywhere. Four people lay scattered on the floor.

A paramedic from the fire department said, "The two on your left appear to only have cuts and abrasions. The man in the right-hand corner was shot, so he'll be transported next."

We left our stretcher and equipment by the door and moved toward the man who had been wounded by gunfire. To get to him, we had to step over a deceased woman. Sadness gripped my heart.

We approached our patient. "Sir, we're here to take you to the hospital," I assured him.

He nodded. His complexion was pale, and his hands shook as we carefully lifted him. He moaned as we lowered him onto the stretcher. Blood stained the upper portion of his tan pants.

Oh God, heal these people physically and emotionally.

The medic accompanied us out of the building and down the flight of stairs. After my partner and the paramedic were in the ambulance, I shut the back doors. Climbing behind the wheel, I notified dispatch we were en route to the hospital.

When we arrived, the ER staff was on high alert. They quickly ushered us into a trauma room. While the medic gave his report, Josh and I transferred

the patient from our stretcher to a hospital bed. I replaced our sheets and pillowcase and rolled the gurney into the hall.

I found my partner in the room where emergency personnel finish paperwork. He was staring at the clipboard on the desk in front of him. This was a tough call for a newbie. I placed my hand on his shoulder. "I'll finish up here. Go get some fresh air."

Dear Lord Jesus, be with Josh, and help me to get our paperwork done.

Each police officer, paramedic, and EMT did exactly what was required of us, and we were there for each other as we dealt with the emotional ramifications in the days ahead.

I'm retired now, but when I hear a siren, I ask the Lord to keep the crew safe and to give them wisdom and safety when they get on scene. In recent years, newscasts have made us aware of other mass shootings. I pray for the victims and families involved, but I also say a prayer for the emergency personnel. I know the pictures that will flash through their minds as they lay their heads on their pillows that night.

Each time I tell emergency personnel I'm praying for them, they express their appreciation. Whenever we hear a siren, or we hear of another tragic shooting, may we all remember to pray for the victims, their families, and all those involved in their care.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathy is a freelance writer whose stories have appeared in *Power for Living*, *Nature's Friend*, *Now What?*, *Women Riders Now*, *Faith on Every Corner*, a *Broken Moments Anthology*, *Creation Illustrated* and in her local newspaper. She lives in Hendersonville, N.C., with her husband of fifty-one years, near their son and three grandchildren. Kathy is a long-standing member of the Blue Ridge Writer's group. Her passion is to write stories that encourage and uplift.



Losing Your Worldly Identity and Finding Your Path to Christ

BY ELKANAH ZANATTA

"I don't think I want to go to church anymore," my new friend said, shortly after getting into the passenger seat.

"What?" I asked, bewildered. "Did something happen at church?"

My new friend, whom I will address as Emily, is in her early 20s. She recently moved to the area with her husband, whom I will call Derrik. A few days before, she had called me, intoxicated, and asked for some advice about her marriage. The conversation quickly turned into a long tale of abuse and her sinful addictions and struggles. Emily and Derrik had been married for only a few years, and as the conversation continued, what was presented was a lot of infidelity, hurt, and unforgiveness.

I took a deep breath and recommenced my question: "Is it because of the past, or a current situation that has happened?"

"It's everything, Elkanah. I believe in God, but I feel so lonely. I go on social media, and I download these apps, and the compliments I receive feel good. I then have a few drinks, and I end up calling Derrik and confiding what I had done or threatening him with what I will do. I know he regrets marrying me. Why is God not helping me? I don't want to continue to cheat on him." Her face became red with frustration and sadness, and she began to cry.

As we continued to talk, I learned that she didn't have a stable upbringing, and she encountered a lot of spiritual abuse and abandonment. She confessed she was looking for love and attention. She admitted she just couldn't get enough affection. Additionally, she was lost in her identity. I could sense she was looking for something more out of life. Her unhealthy coping skills didn't help her mental state, nor did the unresolved regret and shame she was enduring.

I paused as we stopped at a red light, and I put my hand on her shoulder. Then I said something she didn't anticipate: "Everything you've expressed to me in some capacity I have had to deal with. I too have regret and shame. I too have said or done things I wish I didn't do. You are not alone. We all try to find our identity in the world, but the world will not fill you. It will provide a big side dish of sin and consequences."

"It doesn't feel that way...It seems like your life is perfect. I walk into church, and everyone's life seems like they just have it all together. Even when I pray, I just have a brain full of muffled voices. I have gone through so much over the years. My pain became my birthright to commit sin. The more I tried

to bury my hurt, the more my struggle with bad habits and ongoing affairs continued. I do feel bad for what I do, and sometimes I can't even look in the mirror—yet I just keep doing it."

After a moment, I continued. "I am so sorry for the things you went through when you were younger. I can't fill that deep hole. Derrik can't fill that deep hole, and your addictions will only dig the hole deeper. But you know what? God can not only fill the hole, but fill it to the top, where there is no longer a pit for you to fall in."

We stopped at our destination, a local hiking trail, and headed for our walk. I then shared my struggles with regret and shame, and how all God's children struggle with sin. I advised her that we just need to hand over our lives to God. I passionately dived into a few scriptures I memorized. One of these scriptures is Isaiah 1:18 (KJV), which says, "'Come now, and let us reason together,' saith the Lord: 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" I explained to Emily that although we do commit sins, God does not look at us the way that humanity looks at us. It doesn't matter what we have done; if we submit ourselves to the Lord, He will wipe our slates clean. I also continued to remind her that a father will correct his children. Hebrews 12:6 (KJV) says, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, [a]nd scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Being a Christian does not mean we are going to be perfect. On the contrary, as Christians, we will experience temptations and struggles.

As Emily listened, a new spirit came upon her, and her guilt was being released. After a short prayer, the words "shame" and "regret" turned into "repentance" and "submission." She had a new enthusiasm for life. It is a joy to report that Emily and Derrik are together. They sought out Christian counseling, started over in a new town with a new church family, and they both rededicated their life to Jesus Christ.

No matter the choices we make in our lives, God won't desert us. He values us, and we are his children. Emily, like many others, tried to find her identity in this world, but we know that the world only leads to carnal sin. With the Light of Jesus, we can make our way back to our Heavenly Father's arms and be assured in truth of who we are and where we belong.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elkanah Zanatta is a former youth leader and Christian prayer counselor. She studied divinity at Christian Leaders Institute and has a degree in human services management. She enjoys giving thoughtful insights to a variety of Christian magazines, where she dives deep into her testimony, theology, and the liberating truth of God's love.

Remembering Mom

BY DAN LARUE

"How does one face life when abandoned by God? How does one cope?"

These were a few of the questions I faced in the midst of my mother's battle with Alzheimer's. Formerly, I had worked as a home health aide before my job as the director of a rural public library, so when my mother's memory lapses and erratic behavior became more common, I could no longer chalk it up to "bad days."

These became more pronounced after surgery for a broken hip. The anesthesia had been too much, and for several days, she failed to recognize where she was or to know some of her visitors.

I brought her home, as I'd also brought my father home after a fall and broken hip. He was a hemophiliac, and surgery wasn't possible, so after several weeks on traction, the hospital, learning of my job at the time as a home health aide, gave me instructions for his physical therapy. Soon he was up and walking to town again for his breakfast. With mom, I remembered how to give her physical therapy with guidance from the hospital. They were both happier at home.

She improved for a while, enough to plan an 80th birthday party. None of her siblings remained alive, but the house was filled with cousins, neighbors, nephews, and nieces. That night, and for weeks afterward, she gushed about it having been the best day of her life.

I worked in the county to the east. When I thought of moving us there to be closer to home in an emergency, at first she was in agreement, then she got cold feet, and the family doctor advised against it.

So I couldn't move, nor could I find work closer to home. I had seen Alzheimer's in my former job and knew what to expect. So I prayed and prayed and argued with God. He didn't answer my prayers for a new job, nor for a new home closer to work, nor did he heal her, as some verses would lead one to believe. It was clear. I was abandoned. My prayers went up and hit the ceiling and fell back on my head. As C.S. Lewis commented after his wife died, it seemed that I heard a door slammed shut, and I could hear God walking away and bolting a door at the end of a long hall.

Yet He hadn't.

One of the greatest blessings was that my mother never lost her sweet spirit, unlike some Alzheimer's patients. Her personality never changed, and she always knew my name. I may have been her father or her brother in her mind, but she always greeted me with pleasure in her

eyes and a cry of "Danny!"

The time came when she became aware of the growing memory loss. Several times, I heard her crying in the night as she worried about what was happening to her. We spent time those nights talking and crying together. There were verses she never forgot, like Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV): "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Her biggest frustration was that she was the last survivor of eleven siblings. She'd taken in her older sister when that sister's health failed. She felt alone. Since I wasn't married, and help could not come from my siblings, I was told to put her into a home.

Quietly, the Lord sent help in a variety of ways. Through the recommendation of a friend, we hired Linda to come and help mom with living issues three days a week. Mom became a close friend with her and her friend, Nora. These dear Christian ladies had their own physical issues that prevented them from working full-time, but they kept Mom out of a nursing home for almost two extra years.

At the time, I attended an evangelical church with a great Bible teacher as pastor. It prided itself as a family church, and it was true, yet it seemed to have difficulty relating to a single man caring for an elderly parent. I was active in attendance and in teaching and service there, but I often wondered what was necessary for them to realize how much we were struggling. From Sunday to Sunday, I attended alone and heard little encouragement from week to week.

Again, help came from two sources. A cousin invited me to attend a Promise Keepers men's group in her church. Here were Christian men—single and married—who supported each other. It grew to be a vital source of emotional strength—and I found another church.

It was Good Friday, 1999. Normally, I'd be at my church for services, but I felt empty and didn't want to go. Instead, I drove Mom and her niece for a ride through the countryside north of town, to the area Mom always called "over home." This was where she had grown up on a hardscrabble farm during the Depression and lived until her parents' death when she was a teen. Later that day, home once again, she asked why I never took her "over home" for a ride.

I went to Good Friday services that evening at a local Lutheran church. As my grandparents had been Lutherans, and a cousin was a pastor in that denomination in a rural parish, I was familiar with the liturgy.

The cantor chanted the words from Psalm 22:1 (NKJV): "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?"

This is how I feel, I thought, and I was strangely calmed. As the lights dimmed and a bare wood cross was laid against the naked altar, I thought, *This too is how I feel, stripped bare and abandoned*, but since Jesus was abandoned for me, I realized that He understood what I was going through.

Later, on Easter morning, I was back, kneeling at the altar for the Eucharist. When the assistant handed me the chalice of wine and said, "This is the blood of Christ, shed for you," the dam broke, the Spirit rushed in, the tears came, and I sobbed as I knelt there. I joined that church eventually, and the pastor, wonder of wonders, had taken his mother with Alzheimer's into his house. We talked for hours in his study. He taught me the theology of the cross from Luke 9:23 (NKJV): "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." I came to understand the possibility of meaning to Mom's illness. Later, when she became incontinent, she decided one day to go to a nursing home. She didn't want her son to clean up after her messes, which I had been doing. Naturally, she forgot that decision later. She died 20 years ago, just a few days short of her 88th birthday.

Reflecting upon all this later, I realized just HOW the Lord had been supporting me quietly. During all that time of work and not knowing what I'd find when I came home, I realized that I had slept soundly each night during those years. Having a nervous temperament, it was nothing short of a miracle. Without the sleep, I would never have had the strength to continue as long as I did. I don't regret any of what happened. I did what I could, and the Lord did the rest.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am 71 years old and spent more than 30 years as a library director in Hamburg, PA. My hobbies include gardening fruits, roses, annuals, and vegetables; cooking; reading and reading some more; being a "cat dad"; traveling abroad to Europe to practice my languages and visit friends there; and writing fiction. I write about friendship—"the forgotten love," as C.S. Lewis called it—and the faithfulness of God.

A Shaft of Light

By Catherine Marshall



Something happened to me yesterday when Virginia, Freddie, Len and I met. For a moment a shaft of light seemed to break through the darkness. When I awoke this morning, however, the darkness still surrounded me. My prayers still seemed to bounce back from the ceiling.

Then for the first time in months, a new and gentle thought came to rest on my mind: *Read Isaiah 53*. It didn't come from my thoughts, nor would Satan likely be sending me to Scripture. With a surge of hope, I knew it had to be from the Lord.

I read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah eagerly, struck anew by this foretelling of how Jesus would suffer hatred and rejection, of how alone He would be on the cross. These passages leapt out at me:

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he never said a word....He was buried like a criminal...but he had done no wrong....Yet it was the Lord's good plan to bruise him and fill him with grief. Isaiah 53:7, 9-10 (TLB)

I had read this passage many times before, even since Amy Catherine's death, but it had not affected me as it did now, particularly the tenth verse. God made His own Son suffer, but it was a "good plan." More than "good," it was perfect, as only something from God could be. It was terribly important to the future of the human race that Jesus Christ have His dark night experience on the cross. Yet what a desperately dark night it had to be for Him, a time of despair and abandonment, for Him to have cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Suddenly I was overwhelmed with feelings of remorse, embarrassment, gratitude and relief, all mingled together. Reading about the saints and their trials had not touched or enlightened me the way this sudden realization had. For reasons of His own, God had allowed Amy Catherine to be born genetically damaged. Her death served God's purposes, fulfilled His plan in some specific way not revealed to us, just as Christ's death on the cross baffled and dismayed His disciples at first, but did not destroy their faith.

I heard my own words, "What's destroying me is that I don't understand." I, from my tiny human vantage point, demanding to see into the secrets of eternity!

....Instead of feeling rejected and abandoned, I suddenly felt ashamed. When Amy Catherine died, I demanded that God explain Himself to me, and when He didn't, I proceeded to sulk like a child, a petulant child who

had failed to get her own way.

Now, day after day in our Florida home, I shut myself away with my Bible and notebook to work through my new discoveries, seeking a new relationship with my Lord.

Again and again I have read the crucifixion account, feeling the aloneness, the agony, the abandonment Jesus must have felt. I am there in the crowd, looking up into His face.

Flooded anew by contrition one afternoon, I burst into tears and stumbled to my knees. "Forgive me, Lord. Forgive me for my rejection of You, too."

Then came this revelation: When life hands us situations we cannot understand, we have one of two choices. We can wallow in misery, separated from God. Or we can tell Him, "I need You and Your presence in my life more than I need understanding and an answer to all my why's, only if and when You choose."

Understanding. That seems to be the key word in my difficulties. I have sought it from the Lord most of my life and in His gentle tenderness He has often provided it. So often, in fact, that I had begun to take it for granted, assumed I had a right to understanding. What arrogance! What presumption!

Then a new thought hit me like a thunderbolt. Presumption was my sin. During the prayers for Amy Catherine, I took the lead in telling God what He was to do about Amy Catherine: "Thank You, Lord, for healing this tiny, precious baby." Had I really heard Him say what His plan was for her? Or had I wanted the healing so badly I simply imagined that He must, too? Presumption. I had assumed something I had no right to assume. God will always be God. We will never fathom His ways, but I presumed to try. "O Lord, forgive me for my presumption."

Then still another thought struck me. Worse than my presumption, even, is the fact that with Amy Catherine I had really wanted to play God, to be God in her life. Appalled, I tried to detach myself from this sin. There was no detachment. I tried to usurp the power of almighty God. "O Lord, can You forgive me for this abomination?"

And He answered me. At long, long last, I heard the Voice that had been silent for so many months. *I, your God, am in everything. The baby died, but Amy Catherine is with Me. And while she lived, she ministered to everyone who prayed for her. You alone, Catherine, were too stubborn to see it.*

Excerpt from *The Best of Catherine Marshall*, edited by Leonard E. LeSourd. Used with permission.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

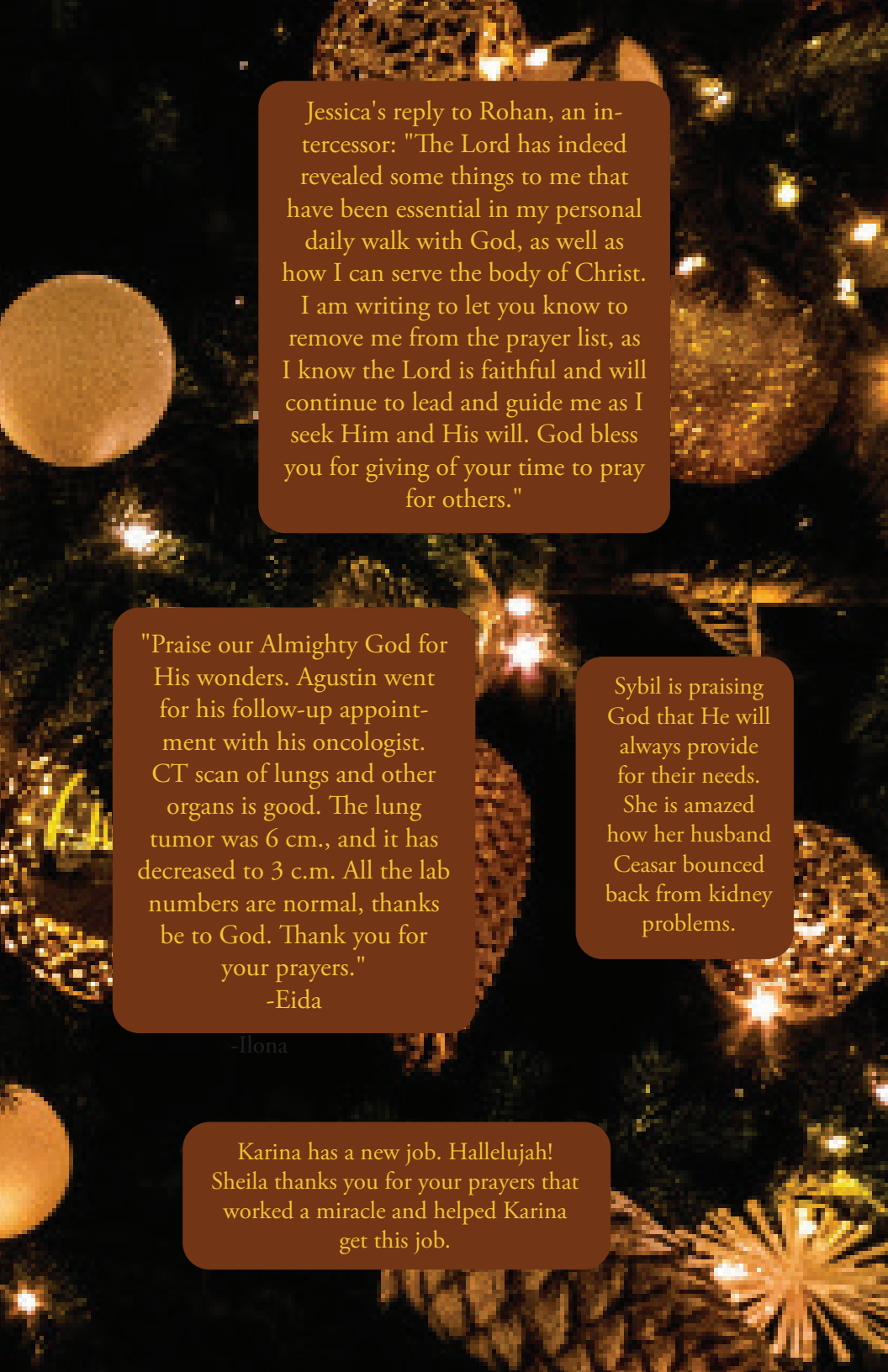
Jane's son finally got a job after 9 months. God's perfect timing! His son, 15 years of age, is receiving excellent mental health care at a full-time residential treatment center. He did file for a divorce from his physically abusive wife and has returned to church.

Shelley is very hopeful as she shares a good report that her daughter is growing in her relationship with the Lord and trying to find His will for her life.

Linda is testifying that your powerful prayers have made a difference and her daughter Stephanie is much better. Hallelujah!

"Yesterday, August 9th, Alenea turned 25 years old. Thank you for a year-long prayer. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia psychosis and was an active cannabis user for 8 years. Today is 3 months of being free from cannabis use. Thank you, Lord, for answering prayers. She now resides with me (mom and older sister Chelsea). The psychiatrist and family doctor are pleased with her progress. She is only taking one prescribed medication and a monthly injection to stabilize her mood swings. I am so thankful for each and every one of you that prayed for me and Alenea."

-Selena




Jessica's reply to Rohan, an intercessor: "The Lord has indeed revealed some things to me that have been essential in my personal daily walk with God, as well as how I can serve the body of Christ. I am writing to let you know to remove me from the prayer list, as I know the Lord is faithful and will continue to lead and guide me as I seek Him and His will. God bless you for giving of your time to pray for others."

"Praise our Almighty God for His wonders. Agustin went for his follow-up appointment with his oncologist. CT scan of lungs and other organs is good. The lung tumor was 6 cm., and it has decreased to 3 c.m. All the lab numbers are normal, thanks be to God. Thank you for your prayers."
-Eida

Sybil is praising God that He will always provide for their needs. She is amazed how her husband Ceasar bounced back from kidney problems.

Karina has a new job. Hallelujah! Sheila thanks you for your prayers that worked a miracle and helped Karina get this job.




Jerry wanted to let you know that the Lord really worked during the week of Vacation Bible School. Many children accepted Jesus. There was also a high attendance compared with other years, and the program ran smoothly. Thanks for your prayers.

Grandmother Cathy is joyful in Zion. She is thanking you for praying for her grandson Carmen. He has gotten off drugs and is walking with the Lord. In one week he got a girlfriend, got his driver's license, bought a car, and got two part-time jobs. Praise God!

Elaine is praising God that diabetes reversed in her body. Wow, thank You, Jesus! All glory to God!

Pamilla is praising God for blessing her with His wisdom to take the small amounts of money given and steward it well. She hasn't missed a bill payment yet. Praise God, and glory to Him for blessing her with the help she needs!



During her bone marrow test, Cathy had peace like she's never had before. She was able to sleep well and had peace during the procedure. The results are back now and showed no conclusive reason for her ongoing anemia. Her body is acting like it has an autoimmune disorder. She is grateful that there is no medical treatment needed. The doctors will continue to monitor her condition. She is praising God! He has answered her in the midst of the issues.

Helen's eye surgery has gone well, and she is now hopeful her sight will improve. She is thanking God and all those who prayed for her.

Maria joyfully shares Elizabetta, Alessio, and Joshua got their permanent residence in Australia after 10 years. This is a breakthrough. God certainly favored a place for their blessing. All glory to God! Elizabetta is healing well from her broken ribs.

Cynthia is testifying of what God did! Sales of paintings finally happened. She is thanking the Lord!

Cathy is thankful to the Lord for her husband not needing surgery at this time in the midst of health issues. This is how God has recently answered thus far, and she is grateful. She speaks rich blessing to each of you and to the ministry.

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