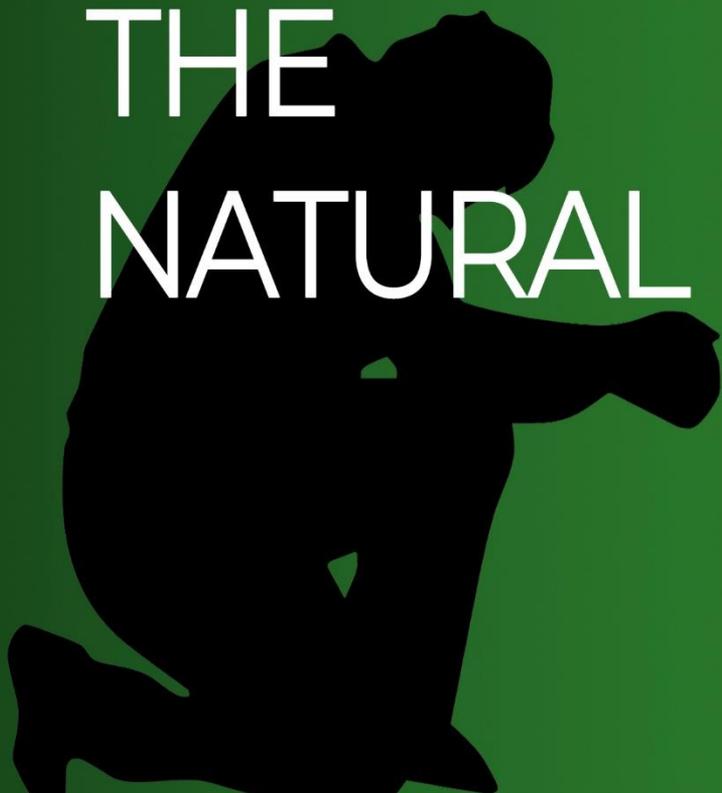




MOVING  
BEYOND  
THE  
NATURAL





## Moving Beyond the Natural

Of all the seasons in the church calendar none is more significant than 21 Days of Prayer in both January and August. Prayer is the engine that drives everything we do at Life Church. Each cycle of prayer has propelled our church forward in our mission to reach and rescue those who are far from God. In addition, praying together creates an atmosphere in which transformation can happen.

Prayer, however, not only changes the atmosphere, it changes us. The Apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthian church not to act like other “worldly” people. In other words, he was encouraging them to rise above the surly bonds of human existence in order to tap into supernatural living. When Paul observed the church acting like the rest of the world he asked, “Are you not acting like mere humans?” (1 Corinthians 3:3) Prayer is a portal that opens us up to the supernatural. We become more than flesh and blood. We are filled with the power of God.

In this devotional, Susan and Roger Sumner along with other contributors from our church will guide us in our quest in *“Moving Beyond the Natural.”* There is a devotion for each day. I hope you will read them, mediate on them and allow God to use these words to instruct, inspire, and infuse you with the Presence of Jesus.

**Pastor Phil Nordstrom**

# DAY 1 -- THE STRUGGLE

By Susan Sumner

What comes to mind when you hear someone say *Twenty-One Days of Prayer*?

Does it elicit a sigh? A sense of dread?

It's no secret that in today's world, prayer is a dull prospect for many people. If you're one of them, you might picture yourself sitting in the closet floor, trying to fill thirty minutes in a one-way conversation with someone you can't even see. So, after submitting to God the names of family and friends and the President, you start listing your kindergarten classmates. By the thirtieth minute, you're asking God to bless all the people whose last names begin with *Y*. You're so glad when the thirty minutes are up.

The reason prayer is so boring is that you're doing it wrong. Prayer is meaningless if you're only doing it to fill a quota of time or speak an abundance of words. The Lord told us not to think that the amount of speaking makes any difference in whether we're heard (Matthew 6:7). Prayer should flow out of relationship with God. It is simply talking with our Father. And when you really know Him and realize the Creator can have a two-way conversation with you, prayer times will no longer be boring.

Religious formats have caused us to lose the intimacy and reality of prayer. God the Father is not interested in impressive invocations—in fact, He's sickened with that kind of pretentiousness (Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47). God is real; and He is very interested in YOU, to help you overcome every obstacle in this life, with your faith and integrity intact. He longs for an invitation to work in your turf—the earth realm. It is our dominion and He will not usurp our God-given authority. This is why we pray for His help.

Regardless of your personal prayer style, your heart must be in it, and that starts with basic faith. *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”* Hebrews 11:6.

The Bible says we all have a measure of faith. Those who seek God with that measure will find Him. If we do not search for truth ourselves, we might wind up following modern religious ideas that are becoming more antichrist by the day.

If the zeal of your initial salvation experience has grown stale, you must go back to the beginning. God is near to the broken and contrite heart (Psalm 34:18; Psalm 51:17). Like David, ask God to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit in you. In other words, repent of being carnally minded, filled with the cares of this life that cause you to undervalue prayer. Then, why not just sit in His Presence and wait for Him to move in your thoughts and teach you what it is to hear with spiritual ears?

This life is fleeting and caters to the senses. But you can develop a spiritual sensitivity as you let yourself explore the Kingdom of God. It is here, but it is not perceived by flesh and blood. It is not perceived by how you feel. It is spiritually discerned. And being spiritual starts with believing God’s Word above all else. Doesn’t it make sense, then, to know what the Bible says, and what it means?

*“Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near...”*  
Isaiah 55:6

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## DAY 2 – NOT MY WILL

By Roger Sumner

Years ago, a church of well-meaning folk purchased a large piece of property on which to build a new sanctuary. The only hindrance to their vision was the convenience store across the street, where beer and wine was sold. This small thing was so abhorrent to the church vision that the members put off all building plans as long as that store was in operation. They wanted a sanctified neighborhood for their “ministry” pursuits. They wanted the environs cleared of the devil’s business, and they began to pray for God to do it.

Well, that was forty years ago, and that store is still there. The church sanctuary was never built, and the membership never grew beyond their old walls.

It would seem that God may have had a different plan that did not include closing that little convenience store. The church folk prayed, *“Lord, take it away! Bankrupt them! Convict them! Take away their license! We want a holy neighborhood for our—uh, Your—church!”* Those pleas for the Lord to destroy the “wicked” business establishment have availed nothing but discord and disillusionment. But “unanswered” prayers should not hinder our faith—they should cause us to search our hearts.

Most of us have encountered similar situations, where God does not remove what we consider hindrances to our walk with Him. And during the long waits, we turn up our noses at our “enemies” in our way, take on self-righteous personas, repel the lost, and generally reflect nothing of the holiness of Christ we think we’re out to preserve.

We should look at our situations humbly, wondering whether our visions and prayers might be rooted in our own desires for ease and beauty, fame

and glory, or in our false presumptions that God cannot work so near to the devil's territory.

In Luke 11, Jesus prayed, *"Not my will, but Yours be done."* What might have happened on that wasted acreage if God's will had been desired and pursued? What might have happened if silly religious fears had been exchanged for the truth that God's power is not threatened by a few cases of beer across the street. Who knows but that the presence of God growing in a non-judgmental membership might have even lessened the community's demand for strong drink?

Sometimes we wrongly pray for God to take away people and things in our lives that we assume are problems, and we notice that God just keeps saying, "No." We wonder why. Perhaps he wants us to pray for grace and godly character to be developed in us as we endure hardness as good soldiers.

Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done here on earth, just as it is done in the heavenly realm." When we pray, we must ask God to override our authority on earth. Mankind has ideas, traditions, misconceptions. In prayer, we can give it all to Him and let Him work around our mistakes and our limitations. God's ways are not man's ways. God's ways are right and perfect and lead to peace. Knowing this, shouldn't it be easy to pray, *Not my will, but Yours be done?*

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# DAY 3—POWER AND RELEVANCE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, part 1

By Jana Vaughn Salley

*Days 3 and 4 take a brief look at the pattern in **Matthew 6:9-13** that Jesus offered to the disciples when they asked how to pray. His prayer is not meant to be parroted and impersonal; rather it provides an outline for your own thoughts and words.*

***“Our Father in Heaven”*** Take a moment to contemplate that the God of the universe, who sits on the throne of Heaven has chosen to make you His child with all the love, benefits and authority that comes with that. We may call Him “Father”, and even “Abba—Daddy” because He has grafted us into His family tree!

***“Hallowed be Thy Name”*** By saying that God’s name is hallowed, we are declaring that it is sacred (pure)—to be revered and set apart. When we hallow the name of God, we are expressing an inward attitude and an outward action of profound reverence and active praise which reveals to others the presence of God in us. Meditate on the sacredness of His name.

***“Thy Kingdom Come”*** What was Jesus saying here? Was He saying that we should ask the Father to put an end to all this and set up heaven on earth now? Consider that Jesus meant something more—that He was saying to us, “Invite the Father to establish the Kingdom of God *in your life!*” This is Kingdom reign as opposed to the Kingdom realm of Heaven. The Kingdom of God is within you, and gives *righteousness, peace and joy* in the Holy Spirit: *“Righteousness”* is that state of being in right standing with God and with man; the conviction that by grace, The Bible says I am the Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, so I can extend that same grace to others. *“Peace”* is to be complete, to live well. It is a byproduct or “fruit” of Righteousness, which means that when we know who we are in Jesus

and we extend that same grace to others, it brings peace to our lives. It doesn't mean exemption from trouble and life's storms. But it does give us the ability to say, in the words of hymn writer Horatio Spafford, "Whatever my lot... It is well with my soul!" "Joy"—that supernatural, abiding feeling of inner gladness and delight that flows to us through the Holy Spirit and causes us to rejoice. Now, as you say, "*Thy Kingdom Come!*" you can take some time to pray that the Kingdom of God would come and reign in your life, church, family and all those you know and love.

*"Thy Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven"* Just as God's will is done in heaven, perfectly and completely and without resistance, His will should be carried out here on earth. So, what is His will? Scripture tells us that we must have no other gods before Him. He is Sovereign, and His will is that we submit to Him in all things for the best outcome, just as Jesus did, saying, "*Not my will but yours.*" Once, as I was meditating on this, I asked the Lord to bring all my children into His will, whatever it takes. Then I became frightened, imagining what might be necessary to bring them to submission. I wanted to take it back! But I was reminded that God's His loving plan is to save the lost and give them a hope and a future. I can trust God with those I love.

Jesus also said that His sustenance was doing the Father's will and accomplishing His work. So, we must be sustained by surrendering to His sovereignty and doing the work He's called us to—to share the good news and to train followers of Jesus; to heal the sick, care for the needy and restore life.

*"God, we declare that You are the Sovereign Lord; that Your will is perfect, and Your plan is good! We put our trust in You. Let Your will be done in us, our families, church, city, nation and the world—perfectly, completely and without resistance. So be it, Lord."*

# DAY 4 – POWER AND RELEVANCE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, part 2

By Jana Vaughn Salley

*Part 2 of a mini-study of Jesus' example of prayer for His disciples.*

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” (Matthew 6:9-13)*

*“Give us this day our daily bread”* We often think of this as the request for provision, and it is. We are confessing that God is our Provision, yet, there is one word in this request that makes this such a statement of faith. *“Daily.”* When we pray this, we aren't asking God to fill our coffers so that we don't ever have to worry about money again. We are asking God to provide for us today, and today alone. In essence, we're saying, *“I'm not going to worry about tomorrow because I know You hold my future in Your hands. I only ask that You meet the needs that I have today. I trust You, God, with all my tomorrows.”* Take a few minutes to think about specific areas in your life where you find it difficult to trust God and make this prayer a declaration of faith.

*“And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”* Forgive. One of the most difficult things to do. In my younger days I wasn't certain that I was fully forgiven by God, but now I understand that my debt—the cost of my sin—is **fully** paid. It was paid before I ever drew a breath and the more my heart and soul take hold of this truth, the more I am able to forgive others. Or better yet, to come to a place where there's no need for me to forgive because I no longer take offense! Take a few minutes to consider this prayer: *“Lord, immerse me in the knowledge of Your forgiveness. Anoint me with the freedom to forgive the offenses of others just as You have forgiven mine.”*

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”* Another way to understand this part is to say, *“And don’t lead us into the tribulation, but deliver us from that time of evil.”* As believers, we know that a terrible day is coming. We can see it in the world even now as it waxes worse and worse. We can hear the groaning of God’s creation longing for the redemption of all things and it can be frightening! But as I’m considering this, I’m reminded of the scripture in Isaiah 54 that says, *“I create the blacksmith who fires up his forge and makes a weapon designed to kill. I also create the destroyer—but no weapon that can hurt you has ever been forged.”* And in Romans 8 that says, *“What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”* So, take heart! Is there trouble brewing? Yes. Is the tribulation coming or even here already? Yes. Is there evil? Yes. But the God of all creation—the One, True God—is your Father. He forgives, He provides, He protects. If evil is here, how much more is the Kingdom of our God and of our Christ present with us now and forever? Take a few moments to consider the times He has delivered you.

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*

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# DAY 5 – FEAR

By Susan Sumner

Freedom from fear is at the top of many a prayer list, as fear is one of the most challenging emotions a Christian can face. Those who struggle with anxiety on a regular basis not only fight the debilitating symptoms of anxiety, but also the idea that they're failing in basic Christian faith. If that is you, take heart—you are not a failure! Your fear is an opportunity to prove the reliability of God!

It may surprise you to know that King David, a man after God's own heart, was acquainted with fear. He wrote these words as a prayer to the Lord, "*What time I am afraid, I will trust in you,*" (Psalm 56:3). David expected to encounter fear. But he declared that he would trust God when *he did*.

I struggled with anxiety since I was six years old. It came and went throughout my life, but reared its ugly head while my husband and I were living temporarily in a remote mountain cabin, six miles from the nearest traffic light. Phones only worked near the woods, but we did have (slow) internet. As autumn days grew shorter, darkness fell upon the mountains early. No light could be seen except the light in a house down in the valley below. Bears, wildcats and snakes lived around us.

My husband worked at a college about an hour away and got home around 8:15 p.m. As that first summer ended, I was doing dishes at the window, when I noticed the grey of night coming upon the hills earlier than usual. Days were shortening. I realized I would soon be engulfed by blackness, alone, and I began to panic. My dog and I got into the car and I drove to town, where we waited under the light of a pharmacy parking lot for two hours until my husband could come through the town and let me follow him home through the curving mountain roads.

This, we did for weeks. Until I felt ashamed that I was being held hostage by fear. But I reasoned that if death was the worst that could happen, I would be with Jesus, so...

Ah, there's the rub! Could I, like the martyrs, choose to "love not my life unto death?" Was my faith real enough that I could trust God to such an end? I decided to try. I recruited a dozen online friends whom I knew would take time to pray for me if I asked. I explained my situation and asked them to pray. When darkness fell, we would be committed to warfare for at least two hours.

When darkness had fully come, so came the devil. My mind swirled with ideas—*you're going to panic! You'll have a heart attack and you have no phone unless you go out into the dark! This was a stupid idea!* At that point, I was indignant. I said out loud. "Go ahead! Kill me! I'm sick of this! I'm sick of being an emotional cripple! I have believers praying right this moment, and if I die, it's because God is taking me home." But I didn't die. Nothing happened. There was no feeling of unreality, no panic. And I laughed out loud! I found total peace that evening and sat down with my dog and watched lighthearted reruns on TV, in the presence of my faithful Lord. If you fear, don't condemn yourself. Pray like David did, *"What time I am afraid, I will trust in you!"* and just keep building upon your faith that Jesus really will never forsake you. One day faith will be stronger than your fear and you will run to the battle armed with confidence!

*[Jesus came to] "...free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death."* (Hebrews 2:15)

*"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more."* (Luke 12:4)

*"Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."* (Isaiah 41:10)

*"Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you."* (Deuteronomy 3:22)

# DAY 6 -- PERCEIVING THE SUPERNATURAL

By Tanner Rutherford

*“Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I flee from Your presence?  
If I ascend into heaven, You are there;  
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.” (Psalm 139:7-8)*

In our western culture, many live with the idea of a sharp divide between natural and supernatural. We often feel trapped in the natural and yearn for fleeting encounters with the supernatural. We often forget the miraculous nature of our own existence and experience.

As living beings, we all wade through an ocean of atoms that our sensory experiences illuminate. The atoms in our feet repel the atoms in the ground to prevent us from sinking through like we sink in water. Light reflects off these atoms through our eyes, and our brains translate the signals into trees, rainbows, and mountain ranges. Vibrations in these atoms rattle through our delicate ears and we process them as meaning. The things we smell trigger more memory than our sight or hearing. Everything we experience is a delicate miracle.

Our organs breathe, beat, and sustain us without our control. If just one of these systems fail, we could cease to live. Processes that many of us do not understand work without our knowledge to keep us alive. Our very existence is an unfathomable miracle. We so often take for granted that anything is anything at all. We see great evils in the world and often suffer deeply in our own lives which encourages us to solidify our worlds and call for something distant and foreign to rescue us.

Beloved, I see you. I know how hard your life can feel. I know you can feel trapped in your suffering. I know you often want to shed the skin of this

world like dirty clothes and be lifted to paradise. I have felt the same way so often, but I bring you good news: you have no reason to worry or let your heart be troubled. When you surrender to Christ, you are no longer carnal; you are quickened in spirit and made alive; you now have the ability to see that the supernatural is in everything you experience. It is not so with those who are still dead in their sins, conformed to the culture of a temporal world. *“Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Christ tells us not to worry about anything, and He showed us the reason in his death and resurrection. He showed us that resurrection always follows suffering and death. We see this same pattern in nature. Everything always turns over; the tree rots and another tree takes its place. When you truly see the love and glory of God in the world around you, you can experience peace knowing that your suffering echoes Christ's and exists as a part of the cosmic pattern that Christ enacted. You will experience resurrection and relief from your suffering.

Experience God in everything. God is not absent in your suffering. God is everywhere, sustaining the world on an atomic level. Rest and know that truth. I could put it this way: *“If I ascend into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.”* — Psalm 139:8

He, being *there*, is constantly working all things together, supernaturally, for your good.

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## DAY 7 -- JUST ASK

by Susan Sumner

I got married later in life than most women. And I had already adopted a daughter as a single mom. My husband-to be- was a pastor, and a widower with grown sons, and our daughters were 12 hours apart in age! My husband and his late wife had a lovely home. But as a new bride and the second wife, I wanted my own house, in part for the sake of his children, whose mother had raised them there and who might find it difficult to see another woman moving her things around.

I searched literally every affordable house listed online in our city, and there was only one that stood out as perfect for us. But, of course, it was no longer available. "**Under Contract**," it read.

While I continued to look at listings, I always held them in light of the one I could not have.

One day I started driving down every street near our city, looking at homes for sale, when I came to the very house I had seen online. And I also saw, in person, the dreaded sign: "**Under Contract**."

I drove into the driveway and got out of the car. The house was even more lovely than the photos. The stately brick ranch and the yard with the tall Georgia pines and iron gate beckoned me.

"God, why couldn't this have been the one?"

I distinctly heard a voice in my spirit, "*You have not because you ask not.*"

I actually spoke aloud with the Lord. "But it's under contract!" (As if He didn't know.)

The words persisted, "*You have not because you ask not.*" I didn't know whether I was just thinking those words or what, so I probably rolled my eyes and sighed for my obsessive-compulsive urge to check on the house, just in case. I took out my phone and called the number and asked the



# DAY 8-- SPEAK TO THE MOUNTAIN

By Roger Sumner

I remember when my son and his wife had given up hope that they would have a child after eight years of marriage and years of fertility treatments. The doctors told them it was hopeless, and they had already ceased all treatments two months prior. They were too full of sorrow to consider adoption. But they were certain they were done with hoping to conceive.

My wife Susan's heart was so moved for them that she wouldn't give up. She determined to get before the Lord herself with her petition. She asked them what they had planned to name their baby. A name would help add some reality to her request, she thought—like putting a real person before the Lord in prayer. The couple responded rather wearily that they liked the name "Liam." They had not yet agreed on any names for a girl. So, Susan said she was going to start asking the Lord for Liam to come forth. A son.

That first Sunday after getting the name, she wrote a prayer request on her offering envelope at church: "For our grandson Liam to be conceived!" And she would cry out of the car window as she drove on long stretches shielded by cornfields on either side, "Liam! Come forth in the name of Jesus! Lord, give my husband a grandson! Why should so many conceive and abort while your faithful go childless?"

Knowing we are to pray "Your will be done," she continued to plead her case humbly, citing His own promises concerning the things we ask, and reminding Him that our children would be faithful, godly parents. And one day, the peace came—she knew in her spirit that the Lord approved her case. Now, she could declare it. I came home for lunch one day and she told me with absolute confidence and excitement, "You are going to have a grandson," she said. "It's a done deal."

That was August. In November we drove to Tennessee to visit my sons. Susan actually wondered whether there would be an announcement already. At dinner on the second night, my childless son and his wife set a cake on the table after dinner with the words, "We're Having a Baby!" "

"It's Liam!" she exclaimed. "He's here!" And when we did the math, we found he was conceived less than a week after that first prayer. She added confidently, "He will not be an only child!" A month later a test confirmed that it was indeed a boy! And our Liam was born the following May. His little brother Logan came along three years later!

Susan says she has no formula to promote, but she says that faith and peace came to her like a gift, and when it did, she declared aloud often that the thing was done—like adding "works" to the silence of faith. Praying for the "big mountains" to move also involves a God-given sense that the thing is a prudent request. In our case, my son and his wife were not reckless in life. They were a stable, moral couple with a steadfast and reverent relationship with God. Anything less would have been a hindrance to faith. But the request was right and good.

You have the same mountain-moving power. Do not fret. *"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:6 & 7) And when your mountain moves, know that it was not your own power that moved it, not even your "great faith." Because even faith is a *gift* that comes from the Father. It *all* comes from Him. Our job is to act on it when the peace comes. Declare it done!

*"Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you." (Mark 11:23) "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead."—James 2:26*



# DAY 9 -- WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT?

By Melanie Nordstrom

People who have lost sight....I meet them every day. I notice them in gas stations, at grocery stores, in lines of traffic, and anywhere that people gather. They are rich. They are poor. They are well educated. They are illiterate. They are God followers. They are God haters. They are old. They are young. They are political. They are apolitical. They are from every strata of life.

As a professional counselor and pastor, I often meet with people throughout the week. Usually when individuals first enter my office, they have a long list of hurts, pains, stresses and injustices. I try my best to listen well because feeling heard and understood often eases the loneliness of life's journey. Their words usually flow freely at this juncture. But the conversation becomes more halting when I ask a simple question, "What do you want life to be like when it is better?" People are frequently stumped by this query. Their problems are well rehearsed, but they have no vision of a better day.

There is a simple but profound truth that can provide guidance for those who wander aimlessly: When you decide where you are going it is easier to get there! For example, if I tell you that we are going together on a trip, you would most likely ask me where we are going. Once the destination has been established, we can decide how we will get there, what equipment we will need, how long it will take and what costs will be incurred. But until we know where we're going, we're going to have trouble getting there.

And just as we must gain knowledge of where we are going for a natural trip, we must also have a vision to experience a supernatural life. With vision, our lives become pointed in a particular direction and we begin to recognize that each decision will affect our progress on the path. We limit



# DAY 10 -- PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

By Susan Sumner

*"...The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*

James 5:16, KJV

What does the prayer of a righteous man sound like?

Is it eloquent, with mastery of words? Does it flow like poetry? Is it suitable for publication?

Is the prayer of a righteous man lengthy? Does God pay more attention to it because of impressive time spent to craft or deliver it?

No. Although, coincidentally, it may indeed be eloquent or lengthy, the power of a prayer is determined by a righteous heart. And that would seem to pose a problem at first blush. As Paul quoted the Old Testament in Romans 3:10, *"There is none righteous. No, not one."*

But there is good news! The righteousness of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, and upon all who believe in Him and what He has done. (see Romans 3:21-23)

So, when I approach our Father, I don't have to put on airs. I approach Him in the authority of Jesus Christ. He covers me; he has made me acceptable in the sight of God. He has made me righteous.

But there's still the matter of the "effectual, fervent prayer" as described in the King James Version of the Bible. I prefer that translation for this verse, because it doesn't omit "fervent." So, what is an effectual, fervent prayer anyway?

The Greek word that translates into "effectual and fervent" is *energeo*. It sounds familiar, doesn't it? It sounds like the English word, "energy."

I know from experience that the most miraculous answers to prayer have come from prayers that were deeply passionate—I poured my entire being into those prayers. They included times of weeping, and groanings that couldn't be uttered. At times there were no words. No eloquent anything. Just deep calling unto deep—the sincerest part of the soul, calling out to the Creator in the most humble, sometimes unattractive way.

An effectual, fervent prayer requires a clear channel to God—no distractions; no self-consciousness; no putting on airs or spiritual affectations; no false emotion; no hypocrisy. It is like being as honest as a child, not afraid to weep before the Father. It is a time of pleading for the Almighty to intervene in the most complex of life situations, according to His will. And HE WILL MOVE!

Find a place to get alone with God and pour out your complaint aloud; empty your soul before Him into the elements. I promise you; He will meet you there.

*“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.” (Psalm 34:5)*

*“When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and rescues them from all their troubles.” (Psalm 34:17)*

*“Lord, all my longing is known to you; my sighing is not hidden from you.” (Psalm 38:9)*

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# DAY 11 -- OUT OF THE NATURAL

By Susan Sumner

The supernatural power of God has too often been classified with the stuff of fairy tales. People seem to think that praying with faith means concentrating as hard as you can, or by wishing upon a star so your heart's desires will come to you, or by thinking happy thoughts to magically manifest a miracle of healing.

It's amazing how many people seem to think that prayer is on the same plane as good wishes or positive thoughts. But prayer to God Almighty is not interchangeable with "sending positive vibes" to the sick, or replying to a prayer request with, "positive energies sent your way."

Thoughts, vibes and energies are not prayers. Even though thoughts and attitudes may be scientifically proven to affect the atmosphere with endorphins and such, they are still created things connected to our physiologies; they are not supernatural, They are of this earth realm. But true prayer is supernatural—it is speaking directly to God the Father, our Creator, who is greater than the things of earth. God is not an earthly concept; He is not even an invisible idea. He is the Creator of the Universe, who has counted every hair on your head and knows you better than you know yourself. He is not limited like creation, not even to time and space. *"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24). He is holy—perfect and worthy of awe and wonder. But because of Jesus, He is not unapproachable! We have access to Him personally because of what Jesus did on the cross. We have total access to Him, any time of day or night!

So why would anyone rather send a "positive vibe" than have a conversation with God Almighty on behalf of a friend?

If the problem is not plain old awkward embarrassment because God seems silly to the mainstream, it may be that we don't reckon ourselves as spiritual beings as comfortably as we consider ourselves earthly beings. In these earthly, corruptible shells, it is hard for some people to believe that we have a spiritual potential within us from our very beginning. The Greek word for the spirit of man is *pneuma*. When we are ignited to spiritual life by repentance and faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit of God enters us we are no longer earthbound. Superheroes of the cinema have nothing over a Blood-bought "Pneuma Man!" And I am not being irreverent to say that through Christ, we have very real superpowers! For we can touch the realm of heaven through prayer and live our best life, guided by the wisdom of God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome the deep emotional issues no TV superhero has ever been able to touch. We can find healing, or power of endurance through any trial. We are citizens of another kingdom--the invisible Kingdom of God! Not only that, but we are His sons and daughters, and joint heirs with Jesus! And we have eternal life to look forward to! Who could be ashamed of that?

Pray for God's will to be soon accomplished in others for whom you pray. You release power upon them, greater than that of any vibe, sentiment, positive thought or media superhero!

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*—Acts 1:8

*"See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you."*—Luke 10:19

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# DAY 12 -- PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

By Mary Wood

Growing up as a preacher's kid offered me a wealth of spiritual insights and knowledge, and I didn't know it at the time. I was very blessed with parents who loved me and who constantly tried to help me develop my walk as a Christian. I remember whenever my Dad would pray over his children he would almost always end the prayer with, *"That they might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That they would walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work,"* (Colossians 1:9). I sometimes thought it was a little strange the way he was reciting Scripture over us during a prayer. I knew it was Scripture simply because he almost always used the King James when he said it and that wasn't the way he normally spoke, but as I grew, I just took it for granted. That's just what Dad did.

Recently, I was challenged to look at the prayers of the Apostle Paul and to choose a few of them to use as prayers when praying for my spouse. The New Testament epistles are full of Paul's prayers for individuals and groups of people, and as I sought to find inspirational entreaties to agree with in prayer for my husband, I studied the way Paul prayed. His prayers usually reflected thankfulness for something about the person or group he was praying for and included some type of specific encouragement for their specific needs. I remembered how my dad had prayed just like that, and even prayed with Scripture over us for so many years. In fact, he still does today!

I wondered why such a powerful spiritual practice was engrained in my family memories but not in my own prayer life. I have often taken my spiritual heritage for granted. In my prayer life, I can often be selfish and focused only on my own needs. It took some time, but now I see that everyone really has to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling

(Philippians 2:12), and to know why we do the “religious” things we do, lest they become empty rituals. So, I’m grateful that God awakened this in me and in a such a personal way, to enrich my prayer life by taking some cues from Dad—and the apostle Paul.

The reason that I love Paul’s prayers is that he is so often filled with praise for the work that God is doing in people’s lives. His prayers are also filled with encouragement that God will continue to keep working in them. And his prayers are filled with hope and completely focused on others.

It is my challenge to begin praying these prayers not only for my husband but for my family and friends and for Life Church. I hope that you will look at these verses and let the Holy Spirit help you pick out a few that would be beneficial for you to begin praying over your family and for yourself! We know that Scripture is powerful and Jesus himself would often quote Scripture during his prayers. The following page is a list of the prayers of the apostle Paul.

Romans 1:8-10  
Romans 10:1  
Romans 12:12  
Romans 15:5-6  
Romans 15:13  
Romans 15:30-33  
1Corinthians 1:4-9  
1Corinthians 16:23  
2Corinthians 1:3-7  
2Corinthians 2:14-16  
2Corinthians 9:12-15  
2Corinthians 12:7-9  
2Corinthians 13:7-9  
Galatians 6:18

Ephesians 1:3  
Ephesians 1:15-23  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
Ephesians 6:19-20  
Philippians 1:3-6  
Philippians 1:9-11  
Philippians 4:6-7  
Philippians 4:23  
Colossians 1:3-14  
Colossians 4:2-4  
1Thessalonians 1:2-3  
1Thessalonians 2:13-16  
1Thessalonians 3:9-13  
1Thessalonians 5:23-24

1Thessalonians 5:28  
2Thessalonians 1:3  
2Thessalonians 1:11-12  
2Thessalonians 2:16-17  
2Thessalonians 3:2-5  
2Thessalonians 3:16  
1 Timothy 1:12  
1 Timothy 2:1  
2 Timothy 1:3-7  
2 Timothy 1:16-18  
2 Timothy 4:22  
Titus 3:15  
Philemon 1:4-7  
Philemon 1:25

Meanwhile, I pray, with Paul, that *"...the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."* Romans 15:13.

# DAY 13 – PILOT OR PASSENGER?

By Wesley Wood

This past Spring, I was watching a reality TV show where contestants eliminate each other one at a time, week by week. In the show, people referred to each other as either “pilots” or “passengers.” Pilots were defined as the ones who took control of the game and were given the credit for eliminating a contestant while everyone else was viewed as a passenger. Most of the time the show focused on two “pilots,” each trying to strategically eliminate the other. Week by week went by, as pilot after pilot would promisingly sprout up but would be eliminated rather quickly—until the season finale when only “passengers” were left. These passengers never controlled the game. In fact, they were rather overlooked and understated, but at the end of the game, only they remained. One of them stated how he saw the pilots constantly going after each other, and that his personal strategy was to *not* be a pilot.

After the season played out and concluded, I realized that it was a lot like our lives with God. When we try to pilot our own lives, it won't work. We are not strong enough to do this. Can you visually imagine God being relegated to sit back in your plane and just be a passenger eating peanuts and drinking mini sodas while you tried to navigate air currents that HE created? God knows exactly where you need to go with your life and will guide you to a place you cannot imagine!

When I first realized this eight years ago, it changed my world. *“You mean I can have God tell me what to do and if I do it, it will work out?”*

Despite having been very familiar with Romans 8:28, *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”*. I had never taken it to heart. I was always under the impression that if something needed to happen, then I had to make it happen. I could only trust myself. That kind of anxious mindset torments a person into taking the controls. But Philippians 4:6 says, *“Do not*



# DAY 14 -- A PLACE APART

By Roger Sumner

Several years ago, when I was still living in Georgia, I was headed to town and while I was driving, I happened to notice a large bird soaring in the sky. So, I slowed down and took a good look at the bird, and quickly discovered that it was an eagle.

I pulled my car over and just watched this bird circling, ascending higher and higher, following his God-given instinct to find rising air currents. He had an instinct to seek the higher elevations. Scientists don't fully understand it and don't really have a good explanation for this behavior. But we know that he was designed for the heights, having been equipped with a second set of eyelids that are nearly transparent, and which serve to protect his keen eyes from the glaring brilliance of the sun.

Isaiah 40:31 paints a beautiful picture that parallels our spirit-journey in the heavenly realm to the flight of this noble bird. *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."*

I have wondered many times about the eagle. Why does he fly so high? In fact, he rises on the air currents until he is out of site. The condor understands air currents, but the condor only soars to gain a vantage from which to find a carcass on which to feed. The eagle certainly has to find his food too, but he doesn't eat carrion. Food was not on the mind of the eagle I was looking at. He circled round and round until he was less than a speck against the azure sky then he disappeared completely.

This picture is such a perfect metaphor for the Christian who finds himself compelled to find the place where he can be alone in the presence of his

heavenly Father, to worship with abandon and to exult in the brilliant glory of God's very presence.

It is interesting to note that, while the eagle mates for life, he seeks those ascending currents alone. Likewise, the spiritual journey of every man and woman is very personal. Each of us must find that spiritual current alone and must learn the joy and freedom of surrender in the presence of our creator. Jesus, being fully human, often went to "a place apart" to be alone with the Father, and in those times, He was reenergized, renewed, and strengthened.

If Jesus, "God with us," and the "Word made flesh," had the need to be alone with His Father, the same is true for us, for He is our example. Look for "a place apart" to be alone in the presence of your Heavenly Father. You might just be surprised at how bright and glorious it is in His presence while you gambol there, being lifted into His presence by the rising current of the Holy Spirit. There in His presence you will be renewed in your calling, strengthened in your commitment, your zeal rekindled, while you pray without speaking, without even thinking, just being in His presence.

I suggest you make it a priority to pray and ask the Father to help you find a place apart where you can be alone in His presence. Once you've found it, don't be surprised if some morning, you awake with a burning hunger to go there and you find yourself changing what you thought were important appointments in order to go there so that you can be lifted into His presence on the spiraling up-draft of the Holy Spirit.

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# DAY 15 -- FEELING NOTHING

By Susan Sumner

When our children hurt, when they're in crisis, when our spouse has a serious health issue, we're sure to cry out to God. But to ask God to move on behalf of the people in a country we've never seen before is far more difficult. Sometimes we can't envision their problems enough to formulate the words. And their realities have been so dramatized by the media that it doesn't even seem real. We may be immune to compassion, without the feelings that make prayer seem effective. We don't "feel the love" that creates the sense of urgency to pray.

Do not feel condemned because you don't sense an emotional connection when praying for strangers. Surely, love is required for effective and fervent prayer, because that love requires us to get out of ourselves and into the needs of someone else. But that love has nothing to do with "feelings" of pleasure and likeability toward the person. It is rather a matter of spiritual warfare on behalf of someone for whom Christ died.

**The love that the Bible tells us to have for our enemies, for our neighbors and our brothers and sisters is not a feeling; it is a choice to put someone else's welfare above our own.**

That is selfless love—unconditional love. It is often inconvenient, and sometimes even unpleasant. Selfless love will carry a cripple to safety at great personal risk; love will forego dinner so that another can eat; love will wait in the back of the line so the mother with children can go first. Likewise, love will spend time in prayer for others. We must not wait for feelings—we must simply do it because they need help and we know the One who can help them. That kind of love is a decision, not an emotion. John the disciple of Jesus said, *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has*

*been born of God and knows God,"* (I John 4:7). Those imperative words, "**let us,**" show us that love is something that is within our power to do. It's not a feeling over which we have no control.

Knowing this makes it much easier to understand how Jesus could think we can love our enemies even while they mean us harm: "...*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...*" (Matthew 5:44); "...*do good to those who hate you...*" (Luke 6:27); "...*Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked,*" (Luke 6:35).

Yes, this is how we love! We put aside our feelings and do to others as we'd like others to do to us (see Luke 6:31). And all this is to be done humbly and without hypocrisy (see James 3:17).

Pray for others with the love that presses past inconvenience and weariness. Eventually, as you grow in this love, you will find yourself coming to a settled place of understanding that is part of a lifestyle of faith, a place where you know prayer is right and holy and necessary, and where distractions from boredom have no power. When faith is a mindset and not something to wearily strive for, you may even come to weep for the lost with compassion that is not a fickle emotion, but a spiritual burden that will pray in a revival for one, or even help empower a nation in spirit. And you will be changed as you pray, because you will have put on the mind of Christ.

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## DAY 16 – FORGIVE

By Susan Sumner

We have all heard how important faith is when it comes to getting answers to prayer.

But know this—faith is not a mere moment of fervency! You can't conjure it up by concentrating or grunting or wishing on a star. Faith is more like a way of perceiving our relationship with God. The Bible says that faith is the evidence of things we don't see; the substance of things that we trust are coming. If you are living in the Kingdom of God, you are living by faith, and see life differently. You know the Lord is with you; you perceive many ordinary things to be ordered by the hand of God—finding a \$20 bill in your coat pocket right when your family needs it most (Carnal-realm residents would say you simply found what you misplaced last fall); or avoiding a snake bite because you just “happened” to buy a pair of leather boots that day. Carnal folk would say it was coincidental, but you know the Lord has prepared the way for you.

When you are walking in the spirit, you are always aware that God has His eyes on you. And you perceive every good thing as coming from the Lord, and praise Him accordingly. That is walking in faith.

But Satan goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is out to destroy your faith. One of his favorite ways to eat up your faith is by generating unforgiveness.

Take a moment to examine your heart. Can you think of anyone who sets your teeth on edge; someone who has seriously wronged you, constantly inconveniences you, or someone who just gets under your skin? Surely, we all struggle with such relationships and acquaintances

to small degrees. They don't seem to pose much of a problem until we find ourselves expressing our disdain to others who, in turn, take on the offense and find themselves gritting their own teeth at the sight of the person. When we mark an individual as an annoyance, or build a case against them in conversation, or when our demeanor sours in their presence, we can know that we are sick with unforgiveness.

A person cannot pray in faith while nursing a grudge. Unforgiveness keeps us stagnant in the carnal realm where everything is self-serving and petty. There, a person might still believe God's power and majesty. But mere belief isn't enough to keep one in the stream of wonder-working power. Devils also believe—and tremble. (James 2:19)

Unforgiveness resists love. And we know that God is love. God loved us so much, that He made a way for us to escape eternal death. Through the Blood of His Son, He has forgiven us. Jesus said, *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matthew 18:35)

If you want to see your prayers move to new levels of effectiveness, set your heart to forgive every person who believe has wronged you. This cannot be done without a contrite heart; but a broken and contrite heart, God will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

### Verses to inspire Forgiveness:

Matthew 6:12, 14, 15

Matthew 18:35

Mark 11:25, 26

Luke 6:37

Luke 11:4

Luke 17:3, 4

Luke 23:34

1 John 1:9

# DAY 17 -- AS CLOSE AS THE MENTION OF HIS NAME

By Susan Sumner

When I was in my 30s, I wanted very badly to be a mother, but I was still unmarried. So my fury was understandable when I saw others neglecting their children.

I distinctly remember one news report—a two-year-old little girl, wandering an oceanside highway in nothing but a diaper in February, was picked up by a truck driver and taken to a police station. How a parent could not notice their toddler was missing? I uttered one of those rhetorical prayers we sometimes speak into the air at disturbing news: “Lord, give her to me if her parents care so little!” I knew the Father heard me, but I really didn’t expect Him to take any action. I just spoke my heart to him out loud as I sat there watching the evening news.

As casual as it seemed, that prayer was not offhand enough to forget. My heart was in it. I was moved by the idea that a child could be so neglected when my mother-heart was so available.

Three years later, I bought a house and went to fostering classes, hoping to adopt a child in foster care. One evening the class dismissed early because the case workers had an emergency—a five-year-old girl was removed from her placement by police. Her foster father had molested her.

I was aghast, and as the class moaned, my out-loud, knee-jerk response was this: “Jesus! Help that little girl! Restore her father-image so she can trust You! Give her a good home where she can heal!”

One year later, I received my first foster placement. She was a six-year-old girl. I just knew I would adopt her. Especially when the caseworker told me her story:

“She entered the system at age two, when a trucker found her wandering Ocean View Boulevard... Three years later, she was molested by a foster father.”

My jaw dropped. I had prayed aloud for the child, not once, but twice since her foster-care journey began! And yes, I adopted her!

I later married a widowed pastor and he adopted her, too. Today, our daughter is a registered nurse who graduated with honors. She owns her own home, has paid off her car, and has given her life to Jesus.

This story never ceases to stir my faith and joy in the Lord! It reminds me that He is near to those who call upon His name, as close as a friend in the room.

*The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.* -- Psalm 145:18

*He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.* -- Psalm 145:19

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# DAY 18 -- TRUSTING THE TREE MAKER

By Susan Sumner

I was wrestling with a very difficult situation, so I took a walk outside, wishing I could just run away from reality. I remember stopping at a tree to weep. I was asking God to change what I could not. I remember looking at that tree bark as I was talking to God, begging Him for help. "I can't do this myself!" I cried, pulling a leaf off a hanging branch. I marveled at its veins, its color, the shape. "God! I can't make a tree!" I wailed over and over, but it finally connected with something deep inside me. I realized what resignation felt like. I CAN'T MAKE A TREE! But I know Who can!

Sometimes we wonder why God doesn't just make the "tree" that we happen to need at the moment—a \$1000 check; a new liver; a way out of a difficult relationship; a change in our own hearts; freedom from a habit or mindset.

Why doesn't He? God is all-powerful. We know this. And why should we pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done," if His way is going to be done anyway?

Because it's not! Just because a thing is His will doesn't mean it will happen. People say, "God is in control." But it isn't so. When people do their own bidding, God's will isn't always done on earth as it is in heaven. He has given mankind dominion over the earth. He will not butt into the affairs of men, although He often sends reminders that He is available. We must ask for His help, and this requires humility and resignation. We must not tell Him HOW to do it. We must even give Him permission to break us, if need be; to let darkness fall before the light; to walk with us through the shadow of death instead of around it, and we must not fear, because He is with us! His Words should give us comfort, knowing He will never leave us nor forsake us, even though it looks like things are worse than before. Rather than try to tell him how to fix it, whom to cut down, whom to shut

up, whom to raise up and by what means, we must release our own hold, simplify our words and say to Him, "Not my will, but Yours be done!" as Jesus taught us. We do not see a complete picture. He can work all things together for good to them that love Him, and it sometimes takes a while for the situations to bring forth good. But He is faithful who promised! Where two or three of us agree in prayer, giving Him the reins, He will bring forth the best possible solution for today and tomorrow and for all eternity! Because He knows how to make a tree!

*"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!" --(Luke 12:28)*

*"You have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. You fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction.*

*The oppressed shall speedily be released; they shall not die and go down to the Pit, nor shall they lack bread.*

*For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name. I have put my words in your mouth, and hidden you in the shadow of my hand, stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people.' "* --(Isaiah 51:13-16)

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# DAY 19 -- MAGNETIC FAITH

By Roger Sumner

In 1971 I was 16 years old. It was important for me to have a job and I was willing to do just about anything that would provide money. I was a good mechanic, and was very happy when Mr. Carter, who owned a boat shop, wanted to hire me to work on outboard motors.

For the first couple of weeks I worked on small outboard motors, cleaning carbs, replacing points, and water pumps. One day, Mr. Carter decided to let me work on a big motor, an old seventy-horse. I spent the morning pulling the foot off the motor, replacing worn gears, clutches, bearings and seals. After lunch, I started back to work on it, I replaced the water pump and began the process of putting the foot back on the motor. Mr. Carter always took a long lunch and I was in the shop by myself. I really wanted to get the motor finished before he returned, and I was confident that I could.

My motive was to impress my boss, but not so much for a sense of pride. The truth is, I liked my job a lot, but even more than that, I *needed* it. You see, most boys my age who had jobs used their pay for extra spending money. But I was not so fortunate. As one of 13 rather underprivileged children with no mother, losing my job meant I would not be able to buy my food and clothes or gas for my old truck, which I needed for work.

I had the foot back together and the only thing left to do was to put a screw through about a one-inch square opening and fasten the shift link together. But when I put the screw in and tried to put the screwdriver into the slot, the screw fell down into the bowls of the foot. I knew that I was going to have to spend the next hour pulling that foot back off to retrieve the screw. Mr. Carter would come back and see that I hadn't made any progress.

I quickly said a desperate prayer for help. I grabbed a magnet and sent it down through the little opening. To my amazement, the screw came right



## DAY 20 -- GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS

By Roger Sumner

When my oldest son was about four years old, he came to me wanting a tricycle. While our finances were pretty tight, we could have bought the boy a tricycle, but other things were more pressing at the time. So I decided to teach him about prayer. I told him to pray and ask the Lord to give him a tricycle.

That night when he was saying his prayers, he ended them by asking God to give him a tricycle. The next night he did the same thing and I told him that he should start thanking the Lord for giving him a tricycle. Every night he thanked the Lord for his tricycle.

After a couple of weeks, I began to worry. The child was asking—and kept on asking! He didn't forget and go on to other things. And I could tell that he was getting discouraged. After praying one night, he asked me with a heart-breaking plea in his voice, "Daddy, when is God going to give me a tricycle?"

I don't even remember how I answered him. My heart was smitten with guilt. I felt that I had no faith at all and yet presumed to teach my young son about praying in faith. After hugging my sons and telling them good night, I headed to the kitchen where my wife was finishing up with the dishes. I said to her, "I'm going to go buy Jerry a tricycle tomorrow."

There it was... the end of my faith. I had failed to trust God and I was sure that I had disappointed Him greatly. But I was not going to disappoint my little boy. My father-heart was hurting for him. He'd done everything I instructed him to do and God had not come through.

My wife was about to respond but the phone rang before she could. I picked it up, since I was standing right beside it.

"Hello brother Roger, this is Dorothy Jones. How are you doing?"

"I'm doing well, sister Dorothy, and you?"

"I'm doing good, but I won't keep you. I know you're probably ready to get those boys in bed. I was just wondering; do you think Jerry would like to have a tricycle?"

I responded quickly and as calmly as I could, "Yes, Ma'am, I know for a fact he'd like to have a tricycle."

Now Dorothy and Fred Jones had sponsored a Chinese couple as immigrants and Dorothy kept their little boy while his parents were at work.

"Well, we bought Bobby a tricycle a couple of years ago and you know, he has never even ridden it. It's just like new; there's not even a scratch on it."

My wife overheard the conversation and she had a wide smile on her face, as did I. I was happy but I was also ashamed. In my arrogance, I was going to teach my son about faith, but in the end, it was he who taught me. His faith and mine had run out, but God's faithfulness had not.

In years to come, my faith and my son's faith would be challenged many times with harder things than tricycles. I recall vividly when he and his wife prayed for a baby... for three years. I remember when his faith ran out. I saw his discouragement. It was the same discouragement I'd seen in his face when he was four years old. But when his faith had run out, God's faithfulness had not. He has two sons now, Liam and Logan, whom you read about on Day 8.

Please excuse me while I give praise to the "Author and Finisher of my Faith"!

*"Great is thy faithfulness, oh God my father.  
There is no shadow of turning with thee.  
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me..."*  
(and my son.)

# DAY 21 -- PRAYER IN PERILOUS TIMES

By Susan Sumner

The present darkness of our time can be frightening. Immorality has been poured out upon our nation in a measure that should startle us from our sleep.

It parallels the wickedness and hedonisms of Babylon, the ancient city. Christians should study it, and see how the root of that evil culture has fed every nation of our present day; for when the languages were confounded at Babel, the people were scattered, and took with each of them a version of the paganism to establish throughout the earth.

In Revelation, it is written,

*"He called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast.*

*For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury." --Revelation 18:2,3*

The same cup has been offered to our nation, and the merchants are lapping it up. This is a confusing time for Christians, for some who take the name of Christ have not known the holiness of God before this cup was poured. There is a dearth of understanding of God and His ways; Love is now the unwilling scapegoat for all things permissible. Liberty is polluted; restraint and order are despised in the name of freedom.

Many Christians may not know it, because we hold the keys to change because we have the weapon of prayer. We have the ability to give God permission to change the world that He placed under our dominion. Sadly, among Christians there are various ideas as to the way things should go, the way culture should change. This is why we simply must pray, *“Not our will, but YOURS be done here!”*

This is not to say that we should just pray and sit back and do nothing. This is a time to seek the Lord like never before! Seeking is more than praying, because one of the ways God answers us is through the principles we glean from His Word. We put on the *mind* of Christ. Therefore, we must know what the mind of Christ is and how to get it.

Start with the Word of God—the Bible. Read it, study it with all you have. The internet is full of Bibles you can play on audio. You can compare translations and may find that at times you have missed a deep truth by trusting only one. There are commentaries, histories, Greek and Hebrew concordances. If we can learn an abundance of software applications for entertainment, we are without excuse when it comes to studying to hear what God is saying to us.

If we are truly born again, we also have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, thanks to the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ! We have the ability to see spiritually! We should use our discernment to recognize the difference between a wolf in sheep’s clothing and an unruly sheep. Discern what would be a godly change and what would be an ungodly change in culture. You can only know this by knowing Him intimately.

Remember also that we war not against flesh and blood human beings, but we wrestle against movements that threaten to extinguish the faith of those we love. We wrestle against principalities, powers, spiritual wickedness in high places of influence (see Ephesians 2:12). And since the warfare is spiritual, so are our weapons. Put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11). And stay close to Almighty God through prayer, not just in times of distress, but *always, without ceasing*.

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**LIFECHURCH**

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