

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 13 • Issue 8

## THE ELEVATOR

How I kept panic at bay

## When It Seems God Isn't Answering

7 questions to help you find out why

## PRAYER GAINS

Four top perks





## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

My friend Michael has a favorite saying for when God does something inexplicable in answer to prayer: It's not odd, it's God.

For some months, Michael and a few others of us have been working on a major new endeavor.

One of the first things Michael and another partner did was map out the entire project. The plan looked terrific on paper—so simple, so straightforward, so sure. We soon found out, however, that God had a somewhat different plan and timetable. And part of His plan seems to be to teach us to depend more on Him as our all-wise CEO.

Each partner brings something to the project. When none of us has what's needed next, we have to find someone else who does. Or more precisely, we have to pray for God to send us just the right person to fill that need. He has done exactly that several times already, working in unexpected ways to help us meet someone we didn't even know existed, but who He knew would be the perfect person to help us over the next hurdle.

Those "It's not odd, it's God" moments have set a different tone for the project, a more prayerful, patient, positive, and trusting one. When we come to an impasse, when we have done all we can but need something more, when all we can do is wait for God to work, we are now more likely to get excited than discouraged, knowing that He must have something better in mind than we could ever figure out or try to push through ourselves.

A surprise bonus for me has been how this new attitude is carrying over to other areas of my life. I find it easier to trust God when problems arise, and that helps me stay calmer, be more positive, and think more clearly. God's plans, I'm learning, are much broader and better than mine. He's one smart CEO!

Keith Phillips  
For *Activated*

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# THE ELEVATOR

BY IRIS RICHARD

“WE HAVEN’T DONE EVEN HALF OF WHAT WE HAD PLANNED FOR THIS MORNING,” I mumbled as I stepped impatiently into the elevator that was to speed my husband Franz and me to an appointment on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor of a downtown high-rise. A few moments later, the elevator jolted to a halt and we were enveloped in darkness.

“Not again! Not now!” I groaned, glancing at my watch.

“We’ll be up and running in no time, once the generator switches on,” Franz said in his usual upbeat manner. He was probably right. Power cuts are common occurrences here in Nairobi, but most are short.

We heard distant banging and faint voices in the elevator shaft, and I tried to relax and be patient until the electricity came back on.

As the minutes ticked by, however, I could tell that our three fellow passengers were getting worried. At first there had been some joking and light conversation to kill time, but now we were all beginning to struggle with the heat and increasingly stuffy air in our small, nearly airtight box.

“I think the air conditioning has stopped,” the middle-aged woman said. One of the two smartly dressed Asian businessmen suggested that in order to conserve oxygen we sit on the floor of

the elevator. He and his colleague took off their suit coats and loosened their ties.

Thirty minutes passed. It seemed like an eternity. We could no longer hear any sounds of banging or calling. I began to consider worst-case scenarios and felt a faint panic creep under my skin. The atmosphere in the elevator grew tenser.

“Let’s pray,” Franz said. That simple suggestion instantly brought hope. We all bowed our heads as we prayed and felt God’s presence fill our tiny, black, confined space. As we recited passages from God’s Word, hope was restored for our eventual rescue.

We had been trapped for over an hour when finally we heard commotion outside. The door was pried open, and we stumbled out in a daze, shielding our eyes from the bright light, gulping the fresh air, and thanking God.

Time had stood still for five people from different cultures and backgrounds in the midst of downtown Nairobi’s hectic activity. Trusting that God was hearing and answering our prayers is what kept me from succumbing to panic.

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK SINCE 1994. SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

# FIXED DETERMINATION

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

FOR YEARS I NEARLY ALWAYS CLOSED MY *MEDITATION MOMENTS* RADIO SHOW WITH THE WORDS “God is still on the throne, and prayer changes things!” Someone once wrote in and said, “I don’t find those words in the Bible.”

No, they’re not in the Bible, but they’re certainly scriptural and express an important truth.

If prayer doesn’t change things, then let’s quit praying. But if prayer does change things, then we ought to devote more time to prayer, for all around us there are many things that need changing. If prayer does change things, then let’s get busy praying and changing the things that need changing. Just think what could happen if you really believed that! Jesus said, “If you can believe, all things are possible.”<sup>1</sup> If you’ve prayed and things *haven’t* changed, then this little talk is for you.

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1. Mark 9:23

2. Psalm 28:6–7

3. Psalm 6:8–9

4. Psalm 66:19

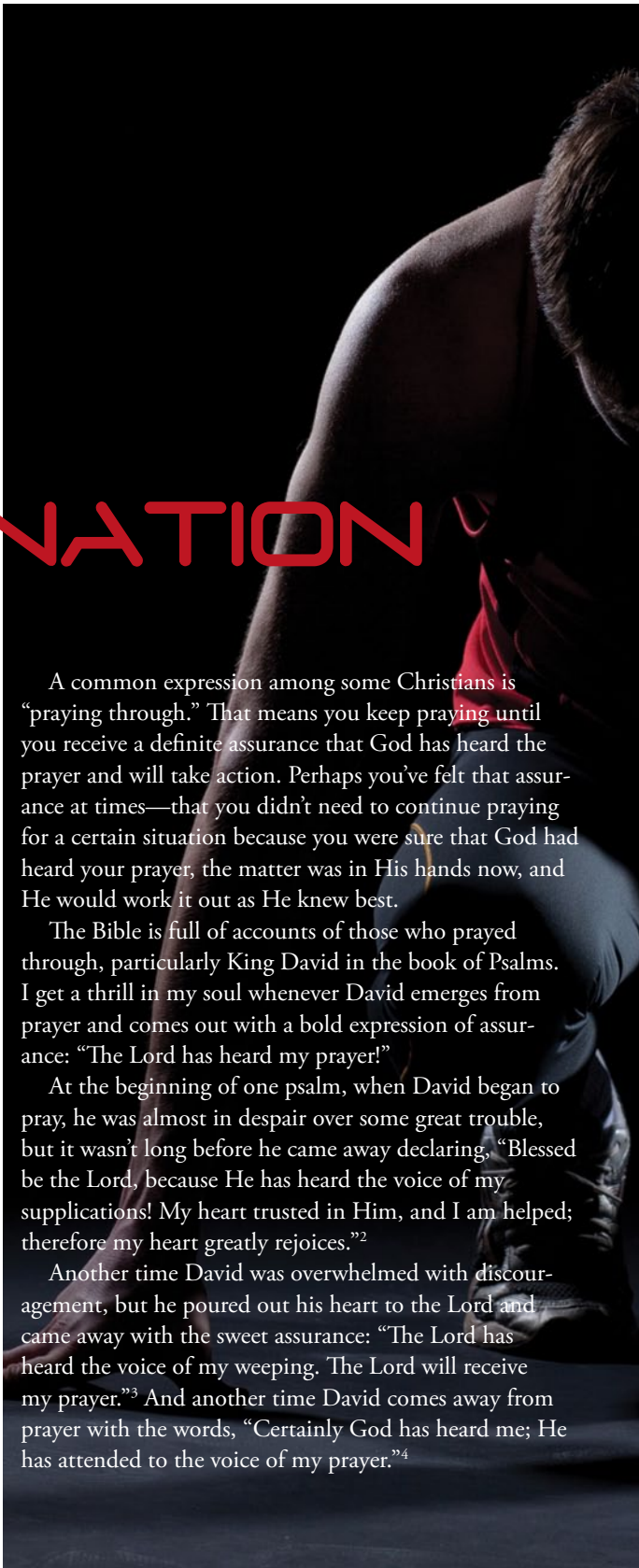
5. Psalm 116:1–2

6. John 14:14

7. John 16:23

8. Galatians 6:9

9. See Hebrews chapter 11.

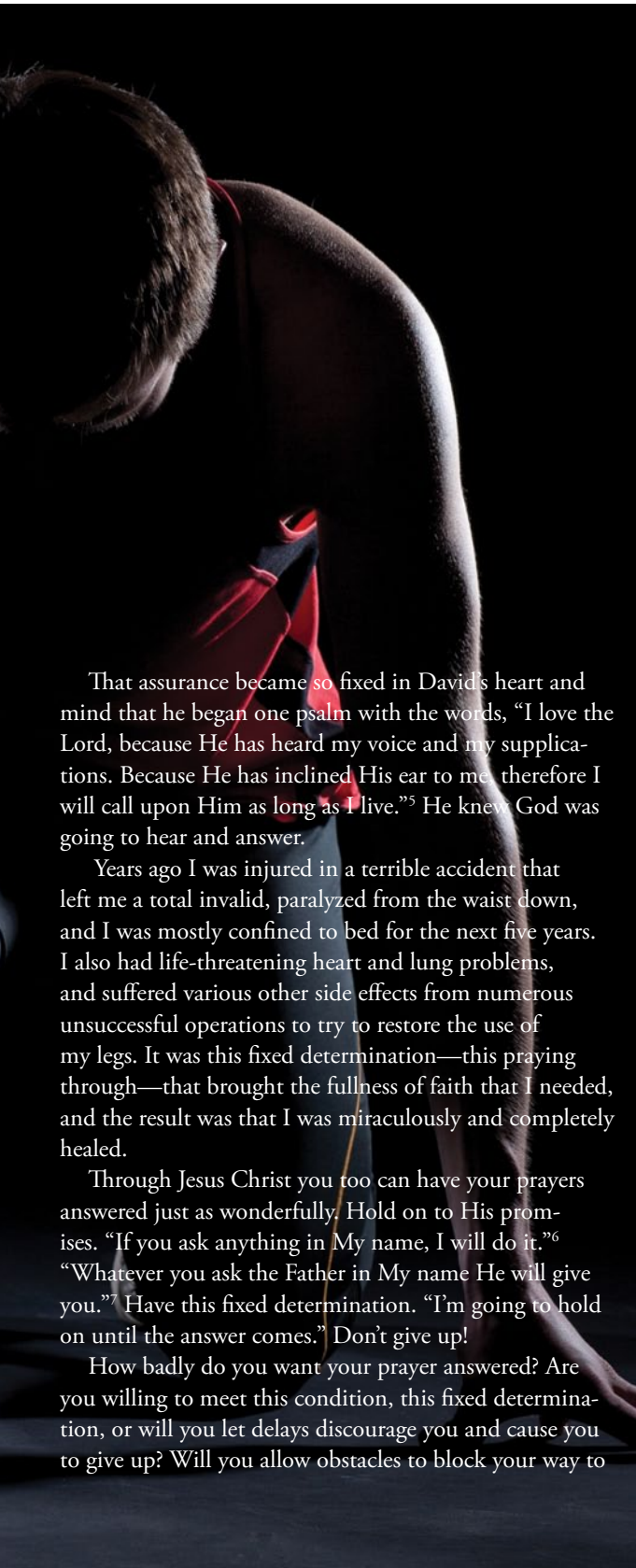


A common expression among some Christians is “praying through.” That means you keep praying until you receive a definite assurance that God has heard the prayer and will take action. Perhaps you’ve felt that assurance at times—that you didn’t need to continue praying for a certain situation because you were sure that God had heard your prayer, the matter was in His hands now, and He would work it out as He knew best.

The Bible is full of accounts of those who prayed through, particularly King David in the book of Psalms. I get a thrill in my soul whenever David emerges from prayer and comes out with a bold expression of assurance: “The Lord has heard my prayer!”

At the beginning of one psalm, when David began to pray, he was almost in despair over some great trouble, but it wasn’t long before he came away declaring, “Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplications! My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices.”<sup>2</sup>

Another time David was overwhelmed with discouragement, but he poured out his heart to the Lord and came away with the sweet assurance: “The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord will receive my prayer.”<sup>3</sup> And another time David comes away from prayer with the words, “Certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.”<sup>4</sup>



That assurance became so fixed in David's heart and mind that he began one psalm with the words, "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live."<sup>5</sup> He knew God was going to hear and answer.

Years ago I was injured in a terrible accident that left me a total invalid, paralyzed from the waist down, and I was mostly confined to bed for the next five years. I also had life-threatening heart and lung problems, and suffered various other side effects from numerous unsuccessful operations to try to restore the use of my legs. It was this fixed determination—this praying through—that brought the fullness of faith that I needed, and the result was that I was miraculously and completely healed.

Through Jesus Christ you too can have your prayers answered just as wonderfully. Hold on to His promises. "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."<sup>6</sup> "Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you."<sup>7</sup> Have this fixed determination. "I'm going to hold on until the answer comes." Don't give up!

How badly do you want your prayer answered? Are you willing to meet this condition, this fixed determination, or will you let delays discourage you and cause you to give up? Will you allow obstacles to block your way to

victory? Will you let others' doubts frustrate and foil your faith? There are many ways of meeting a crisis, but only one way guarantees victory, and that is to pray straight through it.

The Bible says, "Let us not grow weary while doing good"—in this case, praying—"for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."<sup>8</sup>

May your faith be strengthened as you think of King David and others in the Bible who through this fixed determination brought down the walls of Jericho, marched through the Red Sea on dry ground, and wrought many other miracles.<sup>9</sup>

Take God's promises and march straight through any difficulty, saying like the saints of old, "I'm determined that nothing shall cheat me out of what God has promised me in His Word!"

There are many reasons why God does not always answer immediately or in the way we expect, but He does eventually answer every prayer. Do you want your prayers answered badly enough to keep praying until God assures you He's going to answer? Then you won't be disappointed, because God is still on the throne, and prayer *does* change things!

VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG (1886–1968) WAS AN EVANGELIST AND PASTOR. ■

# ON THE SPOT

BY NYX MARTINEZ

MY FLIGHT TO UGANDA WAS BOOKED FOR LESS THAN TWO WEEKS AWAY. I sat in my room and counted the money in my wallet.

I was trying to get from Thailand to East Africa to continue my Christian volunteer work there. God had told me He would provide the money, but my present work didn't bring in the kind of cash I needed for plane fare to the other side of the planet.

I needed \$500 for three final things: the rest of my airfare, a visa for Uganda, and a suitcase. I had already spent a good part of the day worrying about where the money for those things was going to come from. Had I been completely crazy to book an airline ticket before I could pay for it?

1. Matthew 9:29
2. Isaiah 65:24
3. Ephesians 3:20
4. Andrew Murray (1828–1917) South African writer, teacher, and pastor



On a coffee break a friend handed me an *Activated* magazine. “Need something to read?”

“Sure,” I mumbled as I took the magazine from her. I skimmed its cover, and these words grabbed my attention: “Put God on the spot. Believe it or not, He likes it.”

Intrigued, I flipped through the magazine until I came to “Proceed as if Possessing,” by Virginia Brandt Berg, and began to read. It was the story of a young woman named Etta who acted on her faith and put God to the test. Etta had believed so strongly that He would provide the travel funds she needed that she had booked a ticket and gathered her belongings even before she had a suitcase. And God had not failed her. At the last minute, she was given a suitcase and money for her ticket and she was on her way, aboard God’s unfailing promises.

The article could have been written for me! The answer to my problem was right there. “Proceed as if possessing! When you have asked God for something, take action. Act on your faith.”

As I reread those words aloud, I asked myself, *How should I “act out my faith”?*

The answer I got was straightforward. *Pack your things and put Me on the spot.*

It was worth a try. I grabbed my journal and began to write:

*Dear God, I want to proceed as if possessing. I want to have faith that You will provide, but my deadline is coming up soon and I still need a few more miracles:*



BEWARE IN YOUR PRAYERS, ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE,

OF LIMITING GOD, NOT ONLY BY UNBELIEF, BUT BY FANCYING

THAT YOU KNOW WHAT HE CAN DO. EXPECT UNEXPECTED THINGS

"ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK."<sup>3</sup>—ANDREW MURRAY<sup>4</sup>

1. *The rest of my airfare to Uganda.*

2. *Money for a visa.*

3. *A suitcase.*

*Your Word promises, "According to your faith let it be to you."<sup>1</sup> I believe, so please give me the \$500 I need to cover those expenses. Thank You.*

Done. I closed my journal, satisfied that my Father above had heard and would answer. It was as simple as sending an email. I spent the rest of the day on travel plans and setting aside everything I planned to take to Africa.

*It's been a good day,* I thought as I sat down to dinner. It was about to get better.

"Something came in the mail for you today," a friend said.

I took the letter, opened it quickly, and swallowed hard. *I'm sending \$500.* For a moment I couldn't think straight. My friends looked at me quizzically. "What is it?"

"God ... just gave me ... \$500! Just this morning I prayed for that exact amount!" Someone in another country had heard that I needed funds to get to Africa, and had written days earlier to say that they were giving me \$500.

I was ecstatic. That night I looked at the prayer in my journal, and sat in awe at how God, through my benefactor, had provided.

Then I grabbed my pen.

1. *The rest of my airfare to Uganda.* Check!

2. *Money for a visa.* Check!

3. *A suitcase.* Check!

Was it a coincidence that I had prayed for that sum the very morning the letter arrived? Was this a case of "Before they call, I will answer"?<sup>2</sup>

I'm convinced that God had set things in motion days earlier because He knew I was going to put Him on the spot. In fact, I'm sure that He engineered the whole thing—that He caused me to be desperate for His help, pointed me to His unfailing promises through that *Activated* article, got me to "proceed as if possessing," and then came through with just what I needed, right on time!

When my departure date came I was on a plane bound for Uganda. That ticket in my hand was real. And so are His promises.

NYX MARTINEZ IS A TRAVEL WRITER AND TV HOST FOR LIVING ASIA CHANNEL. FOLLOW HER JOURNEYS ON [WWW.NYXMARTINEZ.COM](http://WWW.NYXMARTINEZ.COM). ■

# WHEN IT SEEMS GOD ISN'T ANSWERING



BY JULIE VASQUEZ

WHY DO SOME PRAYERS TAKE LONGER TO BE ANSWERED THAN OTHERS, and why do some seem to go unanswered?

It's impossible for us to know for sure, and there are probably a number of factors that come into play. One thing we can be sure of is that God *always* hears our prayers, even though He doesn't always answer them right away and not always in just the way we expect Him to. Sometimes He says "yes," sometimes He says "no," and sometimes He says "wait."

When it seems your prayers aren't being answered, try asking yourself these questions:

## AM I SURE THAT WHAT I'M PRAYING FOR IS WHAT GOD ALSO WANTS?

Our requests are often short-sighted, whereas God is able to see the big picture. He doesn't answer some prayers the way we would like or expect Him to because He knows that what we're praying for isn't really good for us or someone else. Or He may know that something else will prove better for us and others in the long run. Not giving us what we want, when we want it, is sometimes God's way of getting us to consider other options or take actions that we probably wouldn't have otherwise, to positive ends.

## ARE MY MOTIVES RIGHT?

If our motives are selfish or misguided, we can't expect God to give us what we ask for.<sup>1</sup>

## HAVE I DONE MY PART?

If you are fulfilling your part of the deal by living as God would have you, as best you can, and if you are doing what you can in practical terms to help bring about the desired result of your prayers, then you can be confident that He will answer, perhaps not exactly as you had hoped, but in the way He knows is best for you and the situation.<sup>2</sup>

1. See Psalm 66:18; James 4:3.

2. 1 John 3:21–22

3. Exodus 32:13

4. Romans 4:19–21 NIV

5. Ecclesiastes 3:1



## IS GOD PERHAPS TESTING MY FAITH?

Sometimes God wants to see how serious you are about getting the answer you desire. He likes the kind of faith that refuses to quit, the kind that will keep on believing in spite of obstacles. He appreciates the faith of those who keep believing it will be so simply because He said so.

A good example of this is the Old Testament patriarch Abraham. Although God had promised Abraham that he would have descendants “as [numerous as] the stars of heaven,”<sup>3</sup> by the time he was 75 and his wife Sarah was 66, they had no children. But Abraham believed God’s promise, and God came through. Sarah conceived and gave birth to a son, Isaac, when she was 90 years old, long past child-bearing age.

The Apostle Paul wrote of Abraham’s stand of faith: “Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.”<sup>4</sup>

Faith will say, “I claimed God’s promise and I’m going forward, even though I cannot see the way

ahead!” That’s the kind of faith that pleases God and gets results.

## IS THE LORD PERHAPS TRYING TO TEACH ME PATIENCE OR SOME OTHER LESSON?

God often uses those times when He has our attention to teach us lessons that will bring us closer to Him and make us better people. Patience seems to be one of His most frequent lessons, but He may also be trying to teach you to be more loving, more humble, more prayerful, or any one of the other important life lessons. If that’s the case, when you have learned whatever He’s trying to teach you, He will answer.

## IS HIS ANSWER BEING AFFECTED BY THE DECISIONS OR ACTIONS OF OTHERS?

The outcome of prayer depends on three principal factors: God’s will (what He wants), your will (what you want), and the decisions and actions of everyone involved. Even when your will and God’s will are in agreement, things may not play out exactly as you hoped because He has given everyone the majesty of choice.

## IS IT GOD’S TIME?

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.”<sup>5</sup> You can’t rush God. Sometimes prayer is like planting

a seed: it takes time for the seed to sprout, break ground, mature, and bear fruit. Some types of seeds take longer than others; some flowers spring up overnight, but trees take years before they bear fruit.

JULIE VASQUEZ IS A FREELANCE WRITER LIVING IN AUSTIN, USA. THIS ARTICLE IS ADAPTED FROM THE *GET ACTIVATED* BOOKLET *PRAYER POWER*. ■

## ON THE WINGS OF PRAYER

On wings of prayer our burdens  
take flight  
And our load of care becomes  
bearably light  
And our heavy hearts are lifted  
above  
To be healed by the balm of  
God’s wonderful love!  
And the tears in our eyes are  
dried by the hands  
Of a loving Father who  
understands  
All of our problems, our fears  
and despair,  
When we take them to Him on  
the wings of prayer.  
—Helen Steiner Rice ■

# two lists

BY JESSIE RICHARDS

I BELIEVE IN PRAYER. I believe that it works, that it changes things for the better. But more than that, I believe that praying works in *me*, that it changes me for the better.

I'm a list person. I keep lists of all kinds of things, and two are related to prayer. One is a list of things I'm currently praying for. Some of those things are so much on my mind that I don't even have to write them down, while others are needs that friends have asked me to pray for or situations that I have read about or seen on the news and felt moved to pray for. When anything seems to warrant more than a one-time prayer in passing, onto my list it goes.

The other list is a much longer one—my list of answered prayers. I started keeping this list about five years ago, and I wish I had started

much sooner because then it would be that much longer. Reviewing it makes for a wonderful and inspiring reminder of God's goodness. It also gives my faith a tremendous boost each time. An added benefit to keeping the "to pray for" list, besides reminding myself to pray, is being able to look back and see how God met the various needs listed there.

Take a look with me now at a few of the specifics from my prayer lists.

The first item on my "to pray for" list is prayer for a friend in England who became suddenly ill shortly before last Christmas. He was in and out of hospitals for months, followed by a prolonged recovery period. I believe it was the prayers of his family and friends that brought him through the ordeal. It's a wonder that he is alive, and more than that, doing

as well as he is now. That much is on my answered prayer list, but now I'm praying that he will continue to get stronger and recover completely. I am also praying specifically that he will be well enough to spend Christmas at home this year.

The next item is prayer for myself. It's one of those that I wouldn't forget, but I wanted to list some specifics for the record. I'm presently looking for another apartment, as I need to move from my current one within the next three months. Of course, it's going to take some effort on my part to find a new place, but I would like to let the Lord do some of the work too. Putting the specifics of what I need and want in writing is my way of bringing those things before God, as well as showing that I trust Him to work on my behalf.





Now to the second list, which I keep as a computer file titled “My Answered Prayers.”

It stands out to me that a number of items on this list have to do either with people I work with, the work itself, or my work relationships with others. When I have an important meeting coming up, I like to start praying a couple of days beforehand, as I believe that way God can not only prepare me to act and speak wisely, but that He can also put thoughts and ideas in the minds of the other people who will be participating, to prepare them for a productive meeting as well. There are quite a few entries on my list of meetings that went more smoothly than I had expected, or discussions where the other person figured something out before it became a major issue.

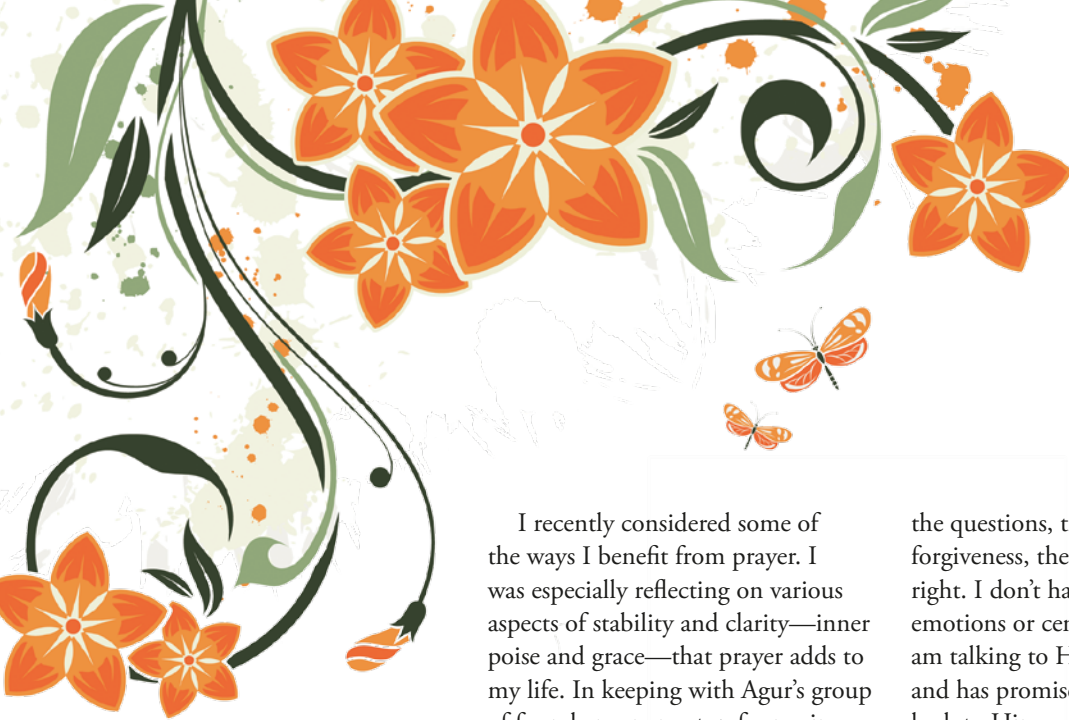
There are a number of other work-related prayers too: times when we were seeking more personnel for our team, times when we practically needed a miracle to make a deadline, times when we needed the financial tide to turn, and so forth.

On the more dramatic side, there was the day three years ago, when I was living in Mexico, that our gardener fell from a two-story ladder. I saw him through the glass doors of the living room seconds after it happened, and thought he must be dead or critically injured. Several others had seen it happen, so while one person called for an ambulance, the rest of us prayed. As it turned out, he was perfectly whole—no concussion, no broken bones, barely even a scratch.

Then there were the two missionaries in Nigeria I heard about through a mutual friend, who were kidnapped for four days in early 2010. On the last day of their captivity I recorded that my prayer group had prayed specifically that they would be released “today”—and they were. (Theirs is an amazing story that should probably be in this magazine sometime, so I won’t try to tell it here.)

Instead I’ll wrap this up so I can take a few minutes before I get to work for the day to praise God for the many answers to prayer I’ve already seen, as well as for those that I believe I will yet see.

JESSIE RICHARDS IS AN *ACTIVATED* STAFF WRITER. SHE LIVES IN THE WASHINGTON DC AREA OF THE U.S. ■



I recently considered some of the ways I benefit from prayer. I was especially reflecting on various aspects of stability and clarity—inner poise and grace—that prayer adds to my life. In keeping with Agur’s group of four, here are my top four gains.

the questions, the pain, the need for forgiveness, the desire to make things right. I don’t have to restrain my emotions or censor myself when I am talking to Him. He sees my heart and has promised to guide me as I look to Him.

## PRAYER GAINS

BY OLIVIA BAUER

ABOUT THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO, a wise man named Agur said, “There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I do not understand.”

*Really?* I used to think. *Only four?* Of course, he did pick four good ones.<sup>1</sup>

*Peace.* Sometimes I face circumstances over which I have no control. There is nothing I can do tangibly to fix the problem, but I desperately want to do something. When I have committed the situation to prayer, I have confidence that I have taken the most effective action I could. This helps me to focus not on my inabilities or on the complexities of the difficult situation, but on God, who is able to do above and beyond what I could ask or think.<sup>2</sup> Knowing that I have placed a matter in His loving and capable hands brings peace.

*Perspective.* Prayer helps me to think about my problems against the backdrop of God’s power. I am “under the shadow of the Almighty.”<sup>3</sup> I am asking “the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth”<sup>4</sup> for assistance. His power and understanding are infinite; my problems and needs are minuscule in the face of His greatness. Prayer also causes me to reflect on the needs of others who face hardships far greater than mine, which helps me to realign my position toward God and others.

1. There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a virgin (Proverbs 30:18–19).

2. Ephesians 3:20

3. Psalm 91:1

4. Isaiah 40:28

*Freedom.* No one knows me better than God. There is nothing about my thoughts or actions or motives that is hidden from Him. He knows the best of me and the worst of me, and He still showers His love on me in abundance. Especially when I am hurting, it’s both liberating and healing to be able to blurt it all out to God—the good, the bad, the ugly,

*Completeness.* There’s a kind of holistic sense of well-being that comes from responding to a problem with both practical and spiritual action. It can be a rewarding experience to support someone else in prayer.

OLIVIA BAUER IS A COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT IN WINNIPEG, CANADA. ■

## FEEDING READING

# The Model Prayer

BY SAMUEL KEATING

### THE BIBLE RECORDS MANY INSTANCES OF JESUS PRAYING.

Sometimes He prayed all night.<sup>1</sup> Other times He got up before dawn to pray alone.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally He prayed in front of His followers as an example to them.<sup>3</sup>

He prayed for His disciples and for all of us who would come to know Him throughout the ages.<sup>4</sup> He offered prayers of praise and thanksgiving to His Father.<sup>5</sup> He also prayed in times of anguish and personal difficulty.<sup>6</sup>

One day, Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, so He taught them this simple prayer<sup>7</sup> that has been a model for countless Christians since.

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come.

1. Luke 6:12
2. Mark 1:35
3. John 11:41–42
4. John 17:21–22
5. Luke 10:21
6. Luke 22:41–44
7. Matthew 6:9–13

Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
And do not lead us into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and the  
power and the glory forever. Amen.

SAMUEL KEATING IS *ACTIVATED'S* PRODUCTION COORDINATOR AND LIVES IN MILAN, ITALY. ■

### POINTS TO PONDER What prayer can do

Prayer—secret, fervent, believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness.—*William Carey (1761–1834), English missionary*

Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty.—*E.M. Bounds (1835–1913), American minister and author*

You can do more than pray after you have prayed; but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.—*A.J. Gordon (1836–1895), American writer and composer*

No one is a firmer believer in the power of prayer than the devil; not that he practices it, but he suffers from it.—*Guy H. King (1885–1956), English clergyman and author*

There come times when I have nothing more to tell God. If I were to continue to pray in words, I would have to repeat what I have already said. At such times it is wonderful to say to God, "May I be in Thy presence, Lord? I have nothing more to say to Thee, but I do love to be in Thy presence."  
—*O. Hallesby (1879–1961), Norwegian theologian*

Before we can pray, "Lord, Thy Kingdom come," we must be willing to pray, "My kingdom go."—*Alan Redpath (1907–1989), British evangelist and author* ■



# A Part of My Life

BY LILY NEVE

WHEN I SAT DOWN TO WRITE AN ARTICLE ABOUT PRAYER FOR THIS MAGAZINE, I heard a little inner voice say, “You can’t do that. You don’t pray enough!”

That set me back a bit, and I had to think about it. It’s certainly true that I don’t pray as much as I could and probably should. So instead of writing, I closed my laptop and went to the kitchen to prepare the dough and start slicing toppings for a pizza dinner. Meanwhile, I couldn’t shake that thought. *Do I pray enough?*

As seems to be the case with most people these days, my life has gotten steadily busier until I don’t have time for a lot of things I know I should do.

*Lord, what do You think?* I asked as I rolled the dough.

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1. Matthew 6:6 KJV

*Well, aren’t you talking to Me right now? That’s a form of prayer too. I recognized that inner voice as Jesus’.*

I thought about it some more. It’s true that I don’t seem to find much time nowadays to stop everything else and “enter into my closet to pray,” as Jesus taught in one instance.<sup>1</sup> But on the other hand, it’s also true that I try to pray about each thing I do, whether it’s my work or routine activities like running errands, doing housework, or cooking. I also sometimes talk to Jesus about a situation I’ve encountered, or a book I’ve read, or a movie I’ve seen, to ask for His perspective on it. I hadn’t really thought of all this as prayer before, but more like talking with a friend.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that this

communication is something that was ongoing throughout my day. Perhaps this is what the apostle Paul meant when he said we should “pray without ceasing.” It may not be prayer in the formal sense, but it’s me talking with Jesus, passing on my requests, my thanks, or whatever is on my mind at the time, and receiving His guidance, all of which are elements of prayer.

Of course there are times when we can and should spend time in focused prayer, but I believe it’s also important to Jesus that we allow Him to be a part of our daily lives. He understands the modern age and our busy schedules, and I don’t think He minds if we sometimes do a little spiritual multitasking.

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# THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

## A Spiritual Exercise

BY ABI F. MAY

PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE RANGE FROM LENGTHY SUPPLICATIONS, such as Solomon's 1,000-word prayer of dedication<sup>1</sup> and the 1,200-word prayer found in the book of Nehemiah<sup>2</sup> (the longest prayer in the Bible), to the succinct "Lord, save me" prayer of Peter when he was at risk of drowning.<sup>3</sup> The brevity of Peter's plea was evidently no barrier to his receiving an answer, because Jesus did rescue Peter. Many prayers in the Bible, while not as short as Peter's, are still quite brief. Even the Lord's Prayer has only about 70 words, depending on the translation.<sup>4</sup>

It's quite clear from the Bible, as well as the experience of Christians through the ages, that the length of our prayers is not what matters most; rather, it's the sincerity and resolve of the one praying that makes the

difference. Jesus admonished, "When you pray, do not use vain repetitions."<sup>5</sup> It is when we are about to drown in troubles, as Peter was about to drown in the Sea of Galilee, that we spontaneously pray some of our most genuine and fervent prayers. Maintaining that zeal and heartfelt meaning in our everyday prayer life is more of a challenge. If you feel your prayers have become mechanical, this spiritual exercise should help.

Over the coming days, when you come to times when you usually pray, such as at the start of the day or before falling asleep at night, think about your typical prayers in those moments and consider varying the way you pray.

Do you usually start your day with a lengthy list of prayer requests? Try reading a prayer of thanksgiving from the Psalms instead.

Do you usually end your day with a silent prayer? Tonight try lighting a candle and praying out loud.

Remember, the manner and length of our prayers do not matter as much as the fervor with which we

pray them. Having a conversation with the God of the universe isn't something to be done by rote.

ABI F. MAY IS AN EDUCATOR AND AUTHOR IN GREAT BRITAIN, AND AN *ACTIVATED* STAFF WRITER. ■

[Prayer] should be free, spontaneous, vital fellowship between the created person and the personal Creator, in which life should touch life. The more that prayer becomes the untrammelled, free, and natural expression of the desires of our hearts, the more real it becomes.—*Ole Hallesby*

## A MOMENT WITH HIM

We mutter and sputter,  
We fume and we spurt;  
We mumble and grumble,  
Our feelings get hurt.  
We can't understand things;  
Our vision grows dim;  
When all that we need is  
A moment with Him.  
—*Author unknown* ■

1. 1 Kings 8:23–53
2. Nehemiah 9:5–38
3. Matthew 14:30
4. Matthew 6:9–13
5. Matthew 6:7



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# Understanding. Answers. Faith.

What may seem logical to you in a particular situation isn't necessarily right, because you're human and fallible. It also may not be the way I see it, because "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."<sup>1</sup>

You may be able to figure some things out and get some things right, but you'll do much better if you learn to ask Me for My insight and solutions.

Sometimes I will lead you to the answer in My Word. Sometimes I will give you the answer in a flash of revelation. Other times I may guide your thoughts until you reach the right conclusion. I may even give you the answer through someone else. The point is, you'll get much further by praying for My guidance than by trying to reason things out yourself. Not only am I able to give you understanding of situations and answers to your problems, but I am also able to give you the "intangibles"—love, faith, happiness, peace of mind, and the general sense of well-being that comes through living close to Me.

So come to Me with the faith of a little child. Come to Me with an open heart and an open mind, and let Me give you all that I have for you.

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1. Isaiah 55:8–9