

Vol. 13, Issue 1, January 2024

connect

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A FRESH START IS HERE

JAN.



2024

Can't be here in-person?

Join us live Sundays
at 9 & 10:45 am
on Facebook, Imbc.tv,
or our LMBC app.

1st

New Year's Day

- Offices/Campus Closed

3rd

LifeGroups Resume

7th

Communion

- 9 & 10:45 am, WC Auditorium

11th

Widows Luncheon

- 12:30 pm, Off-Campus

15th

PrimeTime Celebrates Winter

- 6 pm, Renaissance Room

28th

LifeGroup Training

- 6 pm, LKC Auditorium
- New Sunday Night series**
- 6 pm, WC Auditorium

Join Dr. Jeremy Shaffer
as he explores the various
“meltdowns” in the Bible.

Feb 2-4, 11, & 25

Marriage Workshop

The workshop is \$99 and is
limited to five couples. You
can register or find out more
details by calling Shawna
Bumgardner. (304-544-4303)



*We are looking for volunteers who would like to serve in our
K-3 age range once a month in the first and second services on
Sundays. If you are interested, please contact the church office
or Rebekah Shaffer at r.shaffer@lmbc.org.

Visit lmbc.org/lkc or
ask to join our
Facebook group

***Sunday Mornings**
WC lower level

7: Jesus was tempted
14: Jesus called His disciples
21: Jesus came to be the
sacrifice for sin
28: Jesus told Nicodemus
about eternal life

Weds @ 7pm
in the FLC

3,10,17: Bible Basics
24: **Glow Night**
31: Bible Basics

4th Thursday
from 4-5:15 pm
@ Ebenezer

25: Bible Club



A MORE VIBRANT PRAYER LIFE

Prayer is an incredibly powerful privilege that allows us to communicate with God, the Almighty Creator of our vast universe. It is a privilege that we should wholeheartedly embrace and take full advantage of as believers in Christ. Through prayer, we have the amazing opportunity to pour out our hearts, express our deepest desires, seek divine guidance, find solace and comfort, and tangibly experience the presence of God in every aspect of our lives.

However, I too often catch myself offering prayers that are more self-centered or focused mostly on temporary matters. I tend to spend more time asking for things that are important in the present moment rather than seeking the things that hold eternal significance. I believe many of us fall into this pattern, where our prayers revolve around our immediate needs and desires rather than eternal ones.

To help us cultivate and nurture a more vibrant prayer life and align our hearts more fully with God's perfect will, I am thrilled to invite you to embark on a transformative journey of reading and engaging in heartfelt prayers based on the biblical insights shared in Dr. Dave Earley's book, "The 21 Most Effective Prayers of the Bible." We are joining with thousands of other churches and Christians worldwide who are reading this book together and seeking to pray more powerful prayers to God during the first twenty-one days of the New Year. This exceptional book not only provides invaluable insights into the prayers of significant biblical characters but also offers practical guidance on how we can enhance the effectiveness of our prayers, with an emphasis on seeking and pursuing matters of eternal consequence.

As we embark on this transformative journey of exploring the profound power of prayer through our collective reading of Dr. Earley's book, it may also be helpful for us to take a moment to reflect deeply on the timeless and inspiring words found in Ephesians 3:14-19.

Paul, known for his godly wisdom, beautifully writes about the unifying and reconciling work of Jesus Christ. It is through His boundless grace and love that Jews and Gentiles are brought together as one unified body, known as the Church, a testament to the remarkable power of His redemptive work. This noteworthy unity not only serves as a testament to God's limitless grace but also as a reminder that our relationship with Him has the potential to bring us blessings that exceed our human understanding. Let us, therefore, immerse ourselves in the richness of this transformative relationship and continue to explore the profound power of prayer in our lives. (Pause a moment here and read for yourself, Ephesians 3:14-19.)

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers contains three key requests. Each request builds upon the previous one, creating a magnificent progression towards the ultimate goal. The fulfillment of Paul's third request is closely tied to the fulfillment of his second request, and the fulfillment of his second request is dependent on the fulfillment of his first request. Therefore, the most profound and significant aspect that Paul desires for these believers, as stated in his first prayer request, is to be "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."

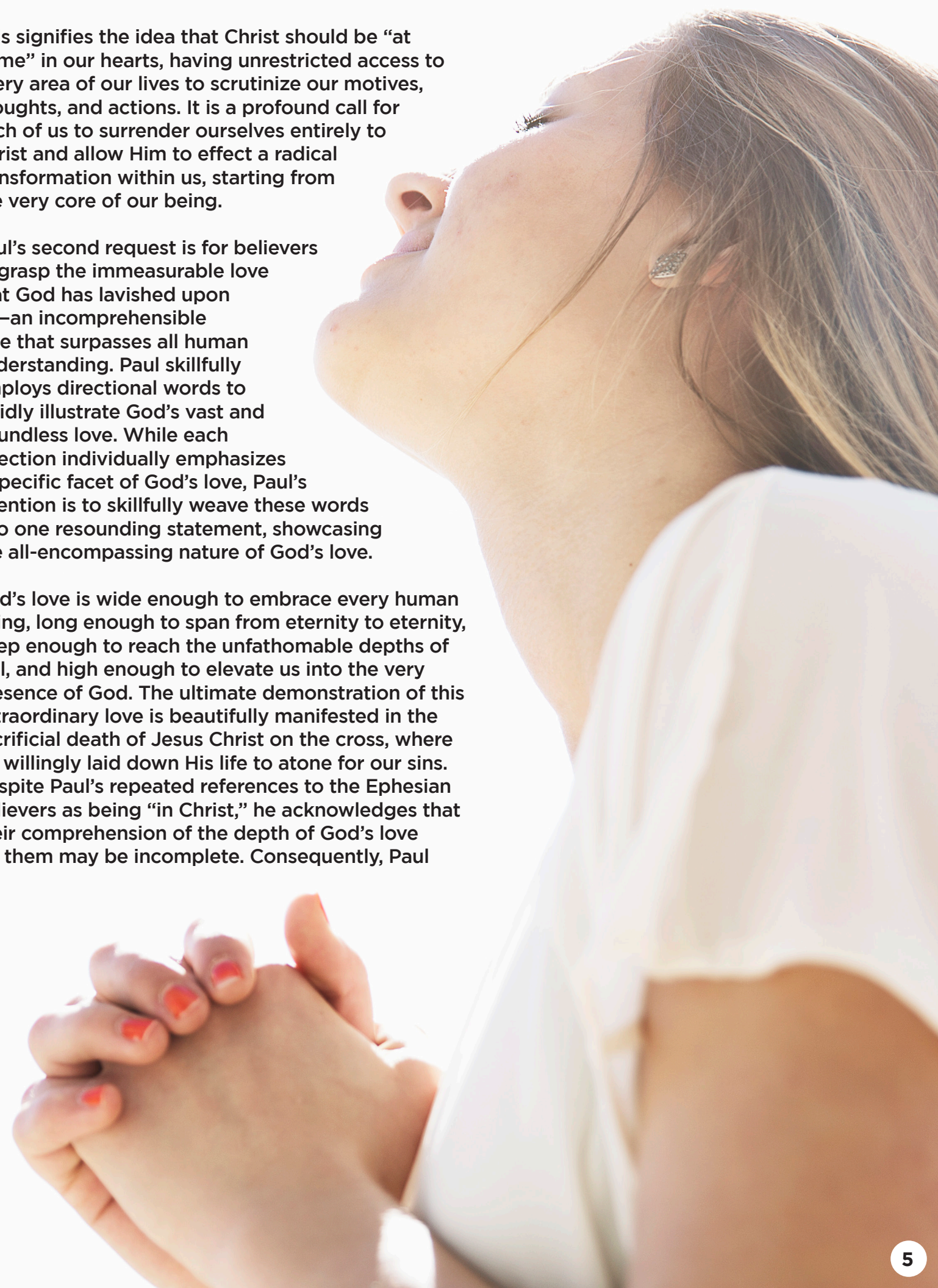
By referring to the "inner man," Paul is alluding to the part of our being that is spiritually awakened and intimately connected to God. It represents our regenerated nature, which we receive as a glorious gift when we place our faith in Christ, thus experiencing the miracle of salvation. This inner man delights in God's commandments and undergoes continuous renewal day by day. The strengthening that Paul fervently desires for the Ephesians is a direct result of the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit within us, and it is in complete harmony with the immeasurable richness of God's glory.

When believers are fortified and empowered by the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ Himself is resident in their hearts.

This signifies the idea that Christ should be "at home" in our hearts, having unrestricted access to every area of our lives to scrutinize our motives, thoughts, and actions. It is a profound call for each of us to surrender ourselves entirely to Christ and allow Him to effect a radical transformation within us, starting from the very core of our being.

Paul's second request is for believers to grasp the immeasurable love that God has lavished upon us—an incomprehensible love that surpasses all human understanding. Paul skillfully employs directional words to vividly illustrate God's vast and boundless love. While each direction individually emphasizes a specific facet of God's love, Paul's intention is to skillfully weave these words into one resounding statement, showcasing the all-encompassing nature of God's love.

God's love is wide enough to embrace every human being, long enough to span from eternity to eternity, deep enough to reach the unfathomable depths of hell, and high enough to elevate us into the very presence of God. The ultimate demonstration of this extraordinary love is beautifully manifested in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, where He willingly laid down His life to atone for our sins. Despite Paul's repeated references to the Ephesian believers as being "in Christ," he acknowledges that their comprehension of the depth of God's love for them may be incomplete. Consequently, Paul



ardently desires for them to fully grasp and comprehend the magnitude of the love that the Creator of the universe has lavished upon them.

Before concluding his majestic prayer with a resounding doxology of praise to God, Paul presents one final request. He fervently prays that these believers may be filled with the “fullness of God.” While only Jesus Himself is capable of being filled with the complete fullness of God, Paul’s prayer is an impassioned plea for these believers to walk in an increasingly spiritual maturity and experience a deeper intimacy with God. It is a profound call for us to relentlessly pursue a heightened understanding and encounter of God’s tangible presence in every facet of our lives.

As we deeply reflect on these three remarkable requests made by Paul, we come to the realization that he is asking for exceedingly incredible things on behalf of the Ephesian believers. But can God truly fulfill these requests? In a manner that is difficult for our finite minds to fully comprehend, Paul confidently and emphatically declares, “YES!”

- Ephesians 1:20 can be paraphrased and resoundingly proclaimed as follows:
- “Now to Him who is immeasurably capable.”
 - “Now to Him who is immeasurably capable of doing.”
 - “Now to Him who is immeasurably capable of doing exceedingly.”
 - “Now to Him who is immeasurably capable of doing exceedingly abundant.”
 - “Now to Him who is immeasurably capable of doing exceedingly abundant beyond measure.”
 - “Now to Him who is immeasurably capable of doing exceedingly abundant beyond measure, far surpassing anything we could

- ever ask or even imagine.”
- “Now to Him who is immeasurably capable of doing exceedingly abundant beyond measure, far surpassing anything we could ever ask or even imagine, and surpassing the boundaries of human imagination.”

These awe-inspiring words powerfully convey the boundless power and limitless ability of God. There are absolutely no restrictions or limitations on what God can accomplish. He is immeasurably capable of bringing to fruition far more than we could ever begin to ask or even conceive within the confines of our finite minds.

Then, Paul concludes his prayer and resounding doxology by reminding us that praise and adoration are to be offered through Christ to God by the unified body of believers known as the Church.

It is vital to acknowledge two crucial aspects of this passage in relation to the Church.

First, recognizing and comprehending God’s love are magnified and deepened through our profound connection with other believers. Paul emphasizes that through our vibrant and authentic relationships with fellow believers in the Church, we gain a deeper understanding of the immensity of God’s love. By actively participating in the Church and bearing witness to the transformative impact of God’s love on other believers’ lives, we gradually recognize the vast magnitude of God’s love for us.

Second, praise, honor, and adoration to God are to be offered collectively and harmoniously as a unified body of believers rather than solely by individual members of the Church. While individual praise and worship are undoubtedly significant, Paul’s fervent request is for both

Jews and Gentiles, who have been graciously adopted as God’s children and united in Christ, to join their voices together in corporate praise. By gathering as a vibrant community of believers, we deepen our understanding and experience of God’s boundless love and amplify our collective voices as we resoundingly offer our praises and worship to Him.

Therefore, let us wholeheartedly embrace the extraordinary privilege of prayer, diligently seeking to align our hearts with God’s perfect will and continually grow in understanding the immeasurable love that He lavishes upon us. May we consistently strive to be strengthened by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, grasp the limitless vastness of God’s love, and passionately pursue spiritual maturity. And as we do so, let us wholeheartedly and harmoniously offer our praises and worship to God as a unified body of believers, deeply acknowledging and gratefully embracing the immense blessings and love that He has so graciously bestowed upon us.

You can get your copy of Dr. Earley’s moving and thought-provoking book, “The 21 Most Effective Prayers of the Bible,” at our conveniently located resource nook in the lobby of the LMBC Worship Center.

As we step into the New Year, there is no better way to start this fresh chapter of our lives than by embracing the transformative power of prayer. Through the pages of this remarkable book, you will discover the profound impact that prayer can have on our church community and how it can ignite a powerful spiritual revival within each and every one of us.

Imagine the possibilities that await as we unite in prayer, seeking God’s will and guidance for our church’s future. Together, let us embark on a journey of spiritual growth and transformation as we open our hearts and minds to the endless possibilities that God has in store for us.

Don’t wait any longer. Grab your copy of this incredible resource today and join us in ushering in a season of renewal, blessing, and divine intervention through the power of prayer.



by David Lemming

Dr. David Lemming has been the Senior Pastor of Lewis Memorial Baptist Church in Huntington, West Virginia, since December 1982. He was saved as a teenager and became actively involved in various phases of Christian ministry. He has a heart for people and actively seeks new ways of extending Christ’s love to those in Huntington and around the world. He and his wife, Mary, have two grown children and three grandchildren.

WHAT'S YOUR SOURCE OF CONFIDENCE? PART 1

King Hezekiah, whose name means “the Lord strengthens,” pleased the Lord in most everything he did as king. He tore down high places (false places of worship), and refocused the Temple in Jerusalem as the prime location to worship God. Hezekiah was doing everything right! Finally, a king in Judah whose eyes were focused on pleasing the Lord.

Then it all started to fall apart for King Hezekiah. The great king of Assyria (an empire that spanned from modern-day Turkey into modern-day Iraq) appeared at Hezekiah’s doorstep in Jerusalem with a sizeable army and he wanted payment to not tear down Hezekiah’s little city.

Hezekiah realized the odds were against him and Jerusalem, so in an act of desperation he emptied the gold and silver from his banks, he took the gold and silver from the Temple, and he even started stripping the plated metal off the doors of the Temple—anything to get the king of Assyria to leave. Hezekiah paid his dues in fear and expected the king and his army to return from where they came.

But it wasn’t enough. The king of Assyria returned with his massive army surrounding Jerusalem and asked Hezekiah a profound question, “What confidence is this in which you trust?” (2 Kings 18:19).

Clearly Hezekiah first put his confidence in his own ability to handle the great king of Assyria. It’s seen in the way he emptied out the banks and Temple of their gold and silver. Now, however, with no more money to give and nowhere to turn Hezekiah, places his confidence in the Lord’s strength and not his own, even though there are 185,000 Assyrian soldiers surrounding the little city of Jerusalem.

This amazing biblical story is the setting to Psalm 46 when God tells Hezekiah, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). As Hezekiah looks out over the city walls, a sea of Assyrian soldiers occupy his view and fill his heart with fear, yet the psalmist reminds Hezekiah (the first) of three things:

1. *God is a refuge in times of distress (Psalm 46:1–3)*

Hezekiah felt when he saw the massive army outside the walls. I’m sure images of the city burning, the Temple falling, and his people being carried away into exile plagued him. Hezekiah, the king who did everything right, found his world being shaken to the ground.

The psalmist reminds us, though, that when it feels like all of God’s creation (earth, mountains, and oceans) are shaking, God is our refuge and strength even as everything is falling apart. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1).

Additionally, our God is not just the God of the past and the future, but a source of strength and confidence right now in this moment. So even though the odds were against Hezekiah (Jerusalem vs. Assyria), he had no reason to fear because God is going to help him now, in the present moment.

When the odds are against us and we feel overwhelmed, it’s common for us to take matters into our own hands and to solve problems in our own way, just like Hezekiah. The psalmist challenges us to see things differently. If you first understand God is our all-the-time refuge and strength in both moments of great joy and in moments of indescribable trouble, then you’ll have nothing to fear, even if the whole world is shaking.

The hardest part is to put things in that order. Like Hezekiah, I typically fear something, act on my own, fail miserably, and then recognize God is my refuge and strength. Psalm 46 begs us to put our confidence in God first, and then every fear becomes an opportunity to watch God work.

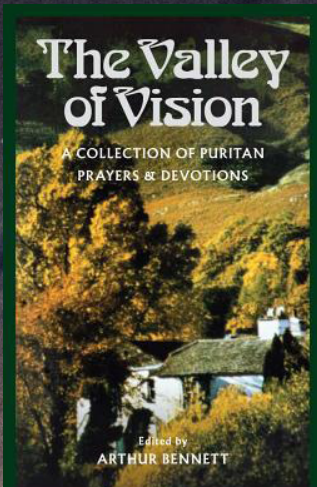


by Chris Katulka

Chris Katulka is the director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, the host of The Friends of Israel Today radio program, a Bible teacher, and writer for Israel My Glory magazine. He is also the author of Israel Always: Experiencing God’s Pursuit of You Through His Chosen People.

WHAT WE'RE READING

by Mary Ellen Black



“Through prayer, we have the amazing opportunity to pour out our hearts, express our deepest desires, see divine guidance, find solace and comfort, and tangibly experience the presence of God in every aspect of our lives.” from “A More Vibrant Prayer Life,” by Pastor David Lemming (see p. 4)

If you are looking for examples of such prayers, you will find pages of them in the book, “Valley of Vision, A collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions,” by Arthur Bennett. The book is a compilation of Puritan prayers written down for reasons ranging from personal growth, like learning how to vocalize payer, or recording how God dealt with them in a particular area of life, or even for using them in family or corporate worship. These words are found on the back cover of the book and have long inspired me and prompted me when my prayer life waned. “The strength of Puritan character and life lay in prayer - and was regarded as of first importance-” What a great aspiration for every believer to have such emphasis on prayer.

Do you ever feel like you can’t pray or don’t know how to pray? This book of Puritan prayers is the perfect prayer companion and inspiration for any quiet time of devotion and/or prayer, whether on your own or with your family. It is not meant to teach us to pray the prayers of others in place of talking to God from our heart, but, like Scripture, it offers a wonderful starting point for our personal prayers and help when we don’t know how to pray or simply can’t find the words.

The book is divided into ten sections. Including categories like Needs and Devotions, Service and Ministry, and Approach to God. One of my favorite sections is “A Week’s Shared Prayers,” which offers a morning and evening prayer for each new day. I’ve had my copy since the early nineties, and it is well-worn and dearly treasured.

The Valley of Vision

LORD, HIGH AND HOLY, MEEK AND LOWLY,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
Where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
Hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
That the way down is the way up,
That to be low is to be high,
That the broken heart is the healed heart,
That the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
That the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
That to have nothing is to possess all,
That to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
That to give is to receive,
That the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from
deepest wells,
And the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars
shine;
Let me find thy light in my darkness,
Thy life in my death,
Thy joy in my sorrow,
Thy grace in my sin,
Thy riches in my poverty,
Thy glory in my valley.

HOW NOT TO PRAY

learning from Pharisees and Pagans

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . . (Matthew 6:9)

How many lips have formed these words since the Lord Jesus first taught them? How many languages have uttered them? How many different people, in how many different circumstances, have bowed their heads and hearts to pray as Jesus famously instructs?

The dying have prayed it. The uneducated have prayed it. The unbelieving and villainous have even prayed for it. Children have prayed for it. The great and wise have found room for it. Every continent on earth has heard it whispered. Tribes in remote villages and kings in tall palaces have bowed and repeated after the Jewish prophet from Nazareth. Has there been a prayer more prayed; have there been words more often spoken?



For some of our wandering prayer lives, the best thing for us to learn is how not to pray.

And yet, for as many as have repeated our Master's teaching on how to pray, how many can repeat what words come directly before them — namely, the ones teaching us how not to pray? How many realize that our Lord's instruction on prayer is both positive and negative — that it doesn't simply stand alone but is given in contrast? For some of our wandering prayer lives, the best thing for us to learn is how not to pray like a Pharisee or a pagan.

Prayers of Pharisees

Do you love to be noticed and admired by

others when you pray?

Jesus's first how-not-to aims at the hypocrite embodied in the Pharisee. When the Pharisee prayed, he wanted not so much to pray as to be seen praying. As a bird in mating season, he sang forth loud, preening look-at-me prayers.

“And when you pray,” Jesus begins, “you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others” (Matthew 6:5).

Such a man pours his best zeal and focus, and interest into public prayers. He positions himself on street corners or within small groups. What may seem stirring and deeply spiritual to many does not impress the one above who knows their anxious thoughts: Are others looking? Are they impressed?

Jesus shows us an example of such a look-at-me pray-er, who cannot help exalting himself even without an audience.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.” (Luke 18:10–12)

In other words, “God, thank you that when you look at me — and when I look at me — we both behold such a pleasing sight! Unlike this man, loathsome to both Gentile and Jew alike, you have made me quite the spectacle. Twice per week my belly aches from fasting. My spice racks withhold not your due!” “Be merciful to me a sinner” lives miles from his mind in the distant town called Justified.

Do you pray to impress others? To build up a spiritual résumé? How is your life of secret prayer? Do you ever stand so tall or shine with such saintly luster as when you know others are watching? You must not be like them, Jesus teaches, for “they have received their reward.” Instead, “go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:5–6).

Prayers of Pagans

Have you come to the end of your prayers and realized you can't remember anything you just prayed? You spoke Christian-speak — observed the phrases of prayer, drew near to God with your mouth, and honored him with your lips while your heart was far from him. Prayer on autopilot.

“And when you pray,” Jesus teaches next, “do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matthew 6:7).

The pagans prayed empty mantras, stale platitudes, and barren banalities. Prayer for pagans often proved little more than a formula — say these words so many times, and the gods will hear and reply. Just babble invocations in order to awaken your deity from his slumber, and he will eventually bless you. The priests of Baal modeled this in their showdown with Elijah, praying, “O Baal, answer us!” from morning until noon (1 Kings 18:26).

So too with us.

Although we do not pray to stones or wood or the sun, Jesus does not want his disciples praying true words to the true God falsely. Emptily. I don't know about you, but mealtime prayers can be the first ones vampired of their lifeblood (what does it even mean to “bless this food to our bodies”?). Too many times, my mouth has moved, and prayers were spoken — but not really from me. A pious ventriloquism.

Our Lord exposes a hidden insecurity

underneath empty-phrased pagan prayers: “They think that they will be heard for their many words.” The pagans are uncertain about the divine heart toward them — so they appease or impress or update the unknowing and unconcerned gods. They try to get their attention, throwing dust at the heavens, desperately wishing for someone to answer.

Such an insecurity resonates with my say-more prayers. Am I really being heard? Prayer can seem less reliable than, say, a text message, which tells me it was delivered. Not so with prayer. I feel as though I pray carrier pigeons — as each flaps away, I hope some will arrive at the destination.

Praying empty phrases with many words, then, can turn into a probability proposition. The more pigeons, the greater the odds God receives the message. Third-times-a-charm mentality. But Jesus allays our rambling fears: “Do not be like them,” he instructs, “for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8). Before you approach your Father's throne, he knows. He knows your needs — his eye has not turned from you. The pagans pray to the unknown god. We pray to a Father.

Prayer for Christians

Jesus introduces “Our Father who art in heaven” with “Pray then like this” (Matthew 6:9). Then connects the instruction on how not to pray with the how-to Lord's Prayer.

I believe Jesus gives us this prayer, in part, to contrast with the how-not-to errors of the hypocrites and pagans. In his short prayer, Jesus gives us an alternative to the look-at-me prayer of the Pharisees and the say-more prayer of the pagan.

Against hypocritical prayers, he teaches us to pray, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9–10)

Jesus teaches his disciples to pray that God, in all his glory, be seen, not us. Instead of our names being hallowed, our kingdoms coming, our righteousness being seen and praised and admired — or the various ways we ask for these — we want God’s to be imposed and cherished. This prayer, spoken from the heart and not just the mouth, transforms hypocrites into worshipers, deorbiting the heart from revolving around self to God. And when God’s fame is truly our heart’s desire, we will come to love secret prayer.

Against pagan prayers, Jesus adds, Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:11-13)

“ **When God’s fame is truly our heart’s desire, we will come to love secret prayer.**

Instead of waking a snoring deity, anxious to appease the god we do not truly know, we pray to a heavenly Father. And therefore, instead of seeking to impress or play probability games with the divine ear, we can pray simple, childlike, and even concise prayers to our Father (this prayer totals 57 words in Greek, 38 in Luke’s account), knowing that we have his ear through Jesus Christ. We ask him for the needs we already know he knows about. He is a Father, bidding his sons and daughters to come close to tell him all the requests of their hearts.

One of the best ways to pray is to know how not to pray. Instead of praying self-exalting prayers that cry, Look at me! we pray in secret, and we pray for God’s glory to be loved and admired. Instead of praying empty-talk, babbling, and insecure prayers, we pray about daily bread and forgiveness, knowing that he knows our needs and has forgiven us in Christ before we ask him.



by Greg Morse
Greg Morse is a staff writer for desiringGod.org and a graduate of Bethlehem College & Seminary. He and his wife, Abigail, live in St. Paul with their son and daughter.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Our Father in Heaven...



...For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. AMEN

MISSIONARIES OF THE MONTH

IN ASIA & OCEANIA

Robert & Lisa Gunter, Australia (Deaf)

SECURED L. Family, China

SECURED D. Family, India

SECURED J. Family, India

SECURED D. Family, Israel

SECURED K. Family, Kazakhstan

Josh & Sarah Wager, Micronesia

SECURED G. Family, Middle East

John & Mihyon Humphrey, New Zealand

Phil & Jan Smith, Papua New Guinea

Doug & Becky Sisson, Philippines

Joel & Stella Madasus, Saipan

Tim & Charlene Miskimen, Thailand



TOM & MELISSA
KENDALL

Dear Praying Friends,

As 2023 is wrapping up, it is our joy to update you on what the LORD is doing in Togo, not only in the hospital ministry but also outside it.

Florida Conference and A Special Visit

Melissa and I had the privilege of making a quick trip to Florida, where we spoke at a medical missions conference. Of course, you can't come all the way back to the US from Africa and not stop in to see your son! On our way back to Togo, we spent a few days in SC to visit Paton. It did our hearts good to reconnect with him and do fun things together! Needless to say, he got spoiled; we had to fit into 3 days a whole year's worth of care! It was definitely a special and much needed time for all of us, but it was hard to say who needed it more--Paton or his parents!

Friends and Family

A USAF friend and his family returned to Togo again this year, a highlight we had been anticipating for 3 years. Dr. Micah Schmidt, his wife Katherine, and 4 of their 6 children spent three months with us after his recent retirement from the USAF as an Emergency Medicine physician. Micah became a dear friend in 2010 when we were both deployed to Iraq for six months and worked together in the field hospital taking care of casualties. We've remained close friends ever since and they have been faithful supporters of the work here in Togo since the very beginning when we were just starting out. The three months flew

by, but it was a joy to work together, play, pray, and minister while they were here.

Melissa's parents were able to come see their Togo grandchildren and, needless to say, there were some excited grandkids waiting to welcome them! It was a joy to have them here with us over Thanksgiving for a few weeks.

Ministry

In the hospital, we hosted an ophthalmology campaign for two weeks in November. Heaven in Sight Ministries, founded and operated by Dr. Mark Eanes, an ophthalmologist we met at the missions conference in Florida, came with a team and supplies to offer free comprehensive eye care, including surgery, in the name of Christ. They were able to remove cataracts and restore vision to 28 patients and minister to 100s of others. Every patient, just like always, heard the Gospel. Even when nothing (physically) could be done for several blind patients, Dr. Eanes and his team showed endless compassion and pointed people to the hope found in Jesus Christ. ***That's why we do what we do!***

Probably our biggest ministry prayer request as we close out the year is the kids' club ministry, which Melissa and the children lead along with several other families. As you know, the attendance has steadily grown to over 200+ kids, and we were praising the Lord not only for that growth, but also for the approval they received to hold the club on the local school grounds after class. This venue has been a tremendous blessing as

it accommodated the increased number of children and also provided usable spaces for the club's activities, whether they be games or teaching times.

Recently, however, some parents of these kids have raised objections to this and are pressuring the school administrator to rescind his approval, as they don't want the Bible taught to their children. This is heartbreaking on one hand, but on the other hand, it is encouraging that the club is having such an impact that it is being noticed. In fact, the local imams were announcing on their mosque loudspeakers that if parents let their children listen to the missionaries' teaching, they would all become Christians within 5 years, and urging parents to oppose this ministry!

The kids' club team is meeting this week to determine their next steps, whether to hold the line and keep meeting at the school, or to return to the nearby home and street where it was previously held. It's a delicate situation, as we don't want the school administrator, who is not a believer, to get in trouble (which is a possibility since so many are now protesting it) for granting them this approval.

Please pray for wisdom, discernment, unity, clarity and peace for the team as they determine what to do, and pray for the gospel to shine in this benighted and needy community!

PREDICTABILITY

Daniel 6:4-5
by Jeremy Shaffer

My favorite of all the Old Testament books is Daniel. Daniel 6:4-5 says this, "So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, 'We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.'"

The information that King Darius had planned to set Daniel over the entire realm must have been leaked out. Because the king wanted to elevate Daniel in his authority, jealousy from the other two administrators began to surface. Like so many politicians of the past, present, and future, Daniel's character flaws were sought out as the means by which they might make him fall. However, the text clearly states that they could not find any issues with Daniel except the issues with his faith. So now the conspirators settle on a plan to get rid of Daniel and take this plan before the king. And, of course, these conspirators start exaggerating; 'everyone in the realm, dear king, wants to pass this law for 30 days of worshipping you only' (but it's really just these conspirators). When the law was passed, Daniel did not change his religious behaviors nor did he attempt to hide them - he did what he always had done.

Predictability is a concept that the marketing world knows well. Think about the stock market and the thousands of publicly traded stocks available for purchase. If you were to begin investing in the stock market, where would you start? You probably wouldn't put all your funds into a new start-up, but instead, you are more likely to invest in a business that has been around for a long time. Why? Well, that business has made the right choices, they have hired the right people, they know what their investors want, they use stable business practices, etc. The fact is that predictability is not measured over the short term; it's measured over the long term. We earlier called the conspirators modern-day politicians, but we might also consider them savvy businessmen. They invested in Daniel's predictability. They were willing to purposely enact legislation to depose him, knowing full well that they could be caught in the act and punished at any moment. Daniel's character was so predictable that these conspirators gambled their lives on it! When life gets hard for Daniel, what does He do? He goes to the One who can fix the problem - He goes to God in prayer. He is predictable.



DIFFERENCE MAKERS

SERVE GOD SERVE OTHERS

Visit lmbc.org/serve
to find specific needs
and see where you
can serve here at
LMBC.



EBENEZER IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACH OUR COMMUNITY

Check here monthly or online for the times and events and upcoming opportunities to volunteer or participate and help us make a difference.

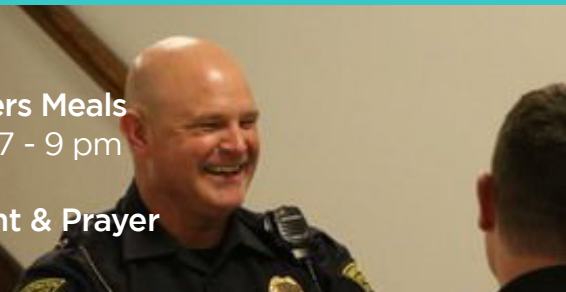
EBENEZER CALENDAR

all at Ebenezer unless otherwise stated

JAN. 9

First Responders Meals
11 am - 2 pm & 7 - 9 pm

Encouragement & Prayer
11 am - 2 pm



JAN. 25

Bible Club
4 - 5:15 pm



Rooted 2024

Don't forget the 2024 Bible reading plan will no longer be in the Connect Magazine. The complete 2024 plan is now available in a booklet format so that you will have it all in one place, and we will make it available throughout the year - in case you get a late start, or need an extra one. We've tried to be creative with the updated plan, developing monthly reading plans that are unique, out of the box, and not the same old topics. The plan is also available online at lmbc.org/rooted.

A quick preview of the first quarter: In January, the reading will focus on prayer. In February, the reading will center around the phrase, "God is Our Refuge," with many beautiful and memorable readings from the Psalms. In March, the daily reading is all about the basic outline of the life and ministry of Christ. (Easter is March 31)

If you want to know what is in store for the rest of the year, you will need to pick up the Bible reading booklet for 2024 found at the merch station.



TAKE A LOOK AT THE LATEST FAMILY NEWS

Bereavements

- Dayna Carter
- Mary Fowler, Tony Fowler's mother
- Ruth Joann Hatfield, David Thompson's sister
- Tina Howell, Kim Bailes' sister
- Linda Kay Hughes, Janet Thompson's sister
- Martha McCollister, Mark Patton's grandmother
- Brenda Sizemore

Pastoral Staff Birthdays

- Tim Yates (22nd)

Ways to Give:



Offering Boxes
in the Auditorium



Imbc.org
or our App



By mail

LOOKING FOR A STARTING POINT?

How to join our community of faith

Are you looking for a church home?
Would you prayerfully consider whether God
may be leading you to our family of believers?
If you are ready, follow these simple steps:

1st Baptism



Trust in Christ and
follow Him in believer's
baptism.

2nd Register (pick 1)



In Service: scan the QR
code on the pew in front
of you and let us know
you would like to join.
Online: imbc.org/register
Call: 304-736-7676

3rd Discover



Check out the
information in the
visitor packet you
received when you
registered with us or
visit imbc.org/what-we-believe to learn
about our core beliefs
and more.

4th Experience



Come to the next
Starting Point on
Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024
at 4:30 pm in the HIS
Way Cafe (SMB), where
you'll meet with our
Pastors to begin your
membership experience.
Call: 304-736-7676
Pre-register: imbc.org/starting-point

WANT TO JOIN A LIFEGROUP?

Come grow with us

SUNDAYS @ 10:30 am

NEW LOCATION! Believing, Belonging, & Becoming (L114) Thurman Lowder

@ 10:45 am

Through the Bible (S104) Jared Blankenship
Wall Builders (S100) Steve Bragg
Cornerstone (S102) Tim Koletka
Maranatha (Renaissance Room) Chuck Daniel

TUESDAYS @ 1 pm

Fearless (S100) Estep/Wyrick

@ 6 pm

Life Together (S100) Tim Yates

@ 6:30 pm

Pickle Ball & Jesus (Gym) Chuck Daniel

WEDNESDAYS @ 10 am

Encouraging Friends Ministry (L110) Kate McMullen

@ 6:30 pm

At Home with the Word (Tardy Home) Steve & Vicky Tardy
It's Always Something (S100) Chuck Daniel

@ 6:45 pm

Abundant Life (L108) Chelcie Gibson

@ 7 pm

Selah (L114) Nathan McClay
Friends of God (Renaissance Room) David & Mary Lemming
The House (Northside House) Sargent/Ball
Rooted in Christ (F207) Jonah & MaKayla Howerton
Whosoever (L112) Sargent/Fry

SUNDAYS @ 10:45 am

Journey with Him (L110) Hale/Tritz

MONDAYS @ 6 pm

Daughters of the King (S100) Rebekah Shaffer

TUESDAYS @ 9:30 am

Kingdom Seekers (Tardy Home) Tardy/McMullen

@ 10 am

At His Feet (S100) Beth Jenkins
Sewing for God's Children (S104) Barbara Keaton

WEDNESDAYS @ 7 pm

4Ever His (LKC) Leah Adkins
Women of God (F205) Hager/Bashore
*Embrace Grace (L106) *for single pregnant ladies Angela Cantley

THURSDAYS @ 10 am

Women of Strength (HIS Way Cafe) Mullens/Foreman

WEDNESDAYS @ 10 am

Westridge Wisdom (S100) Jeremy Shaffer

@ 7 pm

Men of Truth (HIS Way Cafe) Steve Bragg
Iron Sharpeners (L110) Matheny/Miller
Sons of Thunder (L109) Dan Thompson

SUNDAYS @ 9 am

Willing Workers (L108) Richard Sexton
Young at Heart (L114) Bill Blankenship

FRIDAYS @ 11 am

Life Group (Victory Place Apartments) Charles Logan

Connect is the monthly news and
informational publication from



Making disciples who
live and love like Jesus

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[Imbc.org](https://imbc.org)

SUNDAY WORSHIP
9 & 10:45 am (watch live
at imbc.tv)

WEDNESDAY BIBLE
STUDY
7 pm

CONNECT STAFF:
Senior Editor,
David Lemming
Executive Editor,
Angie O'Dell
Content Editor,
Mary Ellen Black
Graphic Designer,
Matt Waller

Read previous editions
of Connect at
imbc.org/connect

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A FRESH START IS HERE