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Make 2026 a Year of Prayer

As we enter the new year with all the towering expectations, aspirations, and plethora of things that rush toward us, screaming for our attention, let us resolve to bring our needs, wants, petitions, thanksgiving, and problems to God in prayer. Let us turn to the most famous and well-loved prayer as taught by Jesus Himself and take inspiration from The Lord's Prayer for our own prayer life in 2026:

"You should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, help us to honour Your Name. Come and set up Your kingdom, so that everyone on Earth will obey You, as You are obeyed in heaven. Give us our food for today. Forgive us for doing wrong, as we forgive others. Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil. [The kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours forever. Amen.]" (Matt. 6:9-13 CEV).

Let us meditate on this prayer using some guidelines given by Pete Greig, author, church-planter and one of the founding leaders of 24-7 Prayer.

1. KEEP IT SIMPLE

"When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private and will reward you. When you pray, don't talk on and on as people do who don't know God. They think God likes to hear long prayers. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need even before you ask" (Matt. 6:6-8 CEV).

Jesus warns us against getting overcomplicated in prayer. Instead, we are to keep it simple. To go into our room, close the door, and spend time with our Father. Jesus models this simplicity with The Lord's Prayer, a prayer that was just thirty words long in its original language and takes approximately thirty seconds to read aloud. Jesus

reminds us that prayer is the most natural and simple thing in the Universe.

If you're new to faith, you will probably have all sorts of sensible questions about prayer. I remember a sophisticated-looking lady coming to speak to me one Sunday after a service. "I'm new to Christianity," she said. "Is it all right if I talk to God in the shower?" At another time, I was driving a friend across town. He was a brand new believer and I suggested we pray. "No way!" he screamed, and tried to grab the wheel, terrified that I was about to close my eyes!

There are very few rules for Christians when it comes to prayer. Yes, of course we can pray in the shower, or while driving our cars. We are not required to close our eyes, to adopt a particular posture, to dress in a certain way, to wash ourselves ritually, or to use a fixed form of words simply to be heard by God. Some of these things can on occasions be helpful, as we shall see later, but the writer of Hebrews is clear that **God's Presence is freely available to us all at any time, in any place, through Jesus** (Hebrews 10:19).

God invites you to pray simply, directly and truthfully in the full and wonderful weirdness (uniqueness) of the way He's actually made you. Take a walk in the rain. Write prayers on the soles of your shoes. Write sonnets. Sit in silence in a forest. Go for a run until you sense God's smile.

2. KEEP IT REAL

"Jesus told a story to some people who thought they were better than others and who looked down on everyone else: Two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood over by himself and prayed, 'God, I thank You that I am not greedy,

dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there. I go without eating [fast] for two days a week, and I give You one tenth of all I earn.' The tax collector stood off at a distance and did not think he was good enough even to look up toward heaven. He was so sorry for what he had done that he pounded his chest and prayed, 'God, have pity on me! I am such a sinner.' Then Jesus said, 'When the two men went home, it was the tax collector and not the Pharisee who was pleasing to God. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured'" (Luke 18:9-14 CEV).

Jesus invites us to keep prayer simple and also to keep it real. The Bible is full of honest, gritty prayers that are deep expressions of the heart. Sometimes these honest moments become our most important prayers.

One dark night, when my wife, Sammy, was in hospital awaiting brain surgery and long before we knew for sure that she was going to survive, my friend, Dan, kindly came to pray with me.

"Lord, if this is Your time to take Sammy home," Dan ventured at last, articulating my deepest dread, "would You please give Pete strength to bear the unbearable?" It can't have been an easy thing to pray. It was a faithful and biblical thing to ask, but I was having none of it. "No deal," I said, interrupting without apology. "No way, God. Over my dead body!" I was out of my chair, pacing the room. "If You're planning to take my wife from me, if You're planning to take a mum from her two little boys, well, You're going to have to fight me for her." Dan looked nervous but I didn't care. "And You're going to have to find someone else to do your PR in future too," I continued. "I resign.

I quit. I'm not going around telling people You're good if You don't prove it to me now." Tears were streaming down my cheeks. "God, I just don't care what Your will is. Let me tell You what my will is: I want my wife to live. I want our boys to know their mum. And if her name is up there on some celestial wall-planner, if she's destined to die of this thing, then what I want, what I need, is for You to sort it out."

I was almost howling my pain while poor Dan just sat there, probably wondering whether it was OK to say 'Amen' to this kind of irreverence. It was one of the most honest prayers I'd ever prayed. For a while I was embarrassed about the way I'd tried to pick a fight that night with God, ashamed that I hadn't been trusting enough, or was holy enough to echo the magnificent submission of Jesus in His darkest hour: 'Not My will but Yours be done.'

But then, one day, the Lord showed me very gently that, in fact, He had cherished my willingness to fight for Sammy's life because He loves her, too. That He wouldn't have expected me to do anything less. That He Himself had begged the Father, "Take this cup from Me" before He managed the other bit.

This moving memory reminds us of the importance of being honest and real with God. As we pray today, let's spend some time telling God what is really on our hearts.

3. KEEP IT UP

"Jesus told His disciples a story about how they should keep on praying and never give up: In a town there was once a judge who didn't fear God or care about people. In that same town there was a widow who kept going to the judge and saying, 'Make sure

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Die Drie V's - Op die Berg van die HERE sal dit Voorsien word

Die middag van 10 April 2024 sterf my vrou. Dit was 'n baie sware slag. Maar my lewe gaan egter voort. Soos die liederedigter probeer uitdrukking gee aan sy belewenis toe hy sing oor Abraham: *"It's the hardest hill I've ever climbed."* En hiermee kan ek identifiseer en 'n toepassing op my lewe maak. Dis 'n alleenpad ná 47 jaar van 'n goeie huwelik. Maar ook my bediening waarin ons saam intens betrokke was, word geraak. Wat nou?

1. VERGENOEGDHEID

In Gen. 22:14 lees ons: *"En Abraham het dié plek genoem: Die HERE sal voorsien! Sodat vandag nog gesê word: Op die berg van die HERE sal dit voorsien word."* Abraham het op die top van die berg Moria aangekom. Daar was 'n hele aantog tot hier toe, met geweldige groot geestelike en simboliese betekenis rakende God se openbaring. Vanaf Abraham, regdeur die Nuwe Testament in Jesus Christus, en tot vandag toe.

Hierdie is 'n oorbekende gebeurtenis wat opgeteken is in die Woord wat ek nog in my skooldae en by die bybelonderwyser gehoor het in my hoërskooldae. Ek wil nie die verhaal oorvertel nie, maar het slegs gepeins oor sekere aspekte daarvan: Abraham, nou nege en negentig jaar oud, en sy vrou Sara negentig. Net God kan deur 'n wonderwerk 'n seun vir hulle gee en ook 'n verbond met hom oprig. En verderaan het God vir hom aangewys waar hy die offer moes bring. God sê vir Abraham in Gen. 22:2: *"Neem jou seun, jou enigste, wat jy liefhet, Isak, en gaan na die land Moria en offer hom daar as brandoffer op een van die berge wat Ek jou sal aanwys."*

Ek het nagedink oor Abraham: *"Neem jou seun, jou enigste wat jy liefhet, ...gaan offer hom..."* Aldeur klim hy op met die berg voor hom. En hy klim met 'n sielewroeging, beswaarde hart, maar met geloof, al verstaan hy niks hiervan nie. God toets sy gehoorsaamheid. En sy gewilligheid om Isak te offer. Op die derde dag sien hy in die verte die offerplek wat die Here hom aangewys het. Vir sy dienaars sê hy hulle moet wag by die esels, hy en die seun gaan aanbid en terugkom. Het hy 'n wit leuentjie vertel? Nee! Ons lees in Heb. 11:18 hy het gereken dat God mag het om Isak selfs uit die dode op te wek. Want onthou, hy was die vader van geloof (Rom. 4:3). En verder, nadat hy die drag hout en die vuur op Isak se skouers gesit het, en Isak vra: *"My vader! Hier is die vuur en die hout, maar waar is die lam vir 'n brandoffer?"* En Abraham antwoord: *God sal*

vir Homself die lam vir 'n brandoffer voorsien, my seun. So het hulle twee dan saam geloop" (Gen. 22:7-8). 'n Geloofsuitspraak van Abraham, al verstaan hy nog glad nie! Hy weet net: Hy moet God gehoorsaam, want God maak nie foute nie. God is Soewerein. Nou is Isak al gebore, en reeds 'n jong seun. En nogeens die wroeging. Abraham alleen met God.

Abraham en Isak stap saam na die top van die berg Moria, daar waar Abraham sy seun moes offer. Later was daar 'n altaar, en later 'n tempel gebou deur Salomo. Dit was die plek waar die Psalmis uitroep: *"Ek slaan my oë op na die berge. Waar sal my hulp vandaan kom?"* Dáár sal Hy God ontmoet! 'n Aanbiddingsplek om God te ontmoet. 'n Plek wat God vir Abraham uitgewys het. Dáár wag Hy om met Abraham te ontmoet.

Op die bergtop sal hy God sien en sy offer bring, tot breekpunt toe gehoorsaam, maar sy offer móét hy bring. Dit was glad nie maklik nie! Tree vir tree, voetjie vir voetjie stap hy aan om die uitkoms te sien. Want God die Almagtige maak nie foute nie, en Hy doen nie iets sonder rede nie. En Abraham en sy seun HET die offer gebring. Telkemale kom daar beproewinge en versoekings op die lewenspad van die gelowige wat ernstig is met die Here. Dan bring dit ons "op die die bergtop" - ons plek van afsondering en aanbidding, sodat ons ons offer kan bring, en sodat ons saam met Dawid kan sê: *"Laat die woorde van my mond en die oordenking van my hart welbehaaglik wees voor U aangesig, o HERE, my rots en my verlosser!"* (Ps. 19:15).

En ek? My vrou kom nie weer terug nie. Maar die Woord kom tot my wat Jesus ook vir Martha gesê het: *"Jesus sê vir haar: 'Ek is die opstanding en die lewe; wie in My glo, sal lewe al het hy ook gesterwe; en elkeen wat lewe en in My glo, sal nooit sterwe tot in ewigheid nie. Glo jy dit?'"* (Joh. 11:25-26). Ek moet daaraan vashou in geloof, en my pad verder met geloof en gehoorsaamheid stap. Alleen. Al is daar dierbare kinders van die Here rondom my wat vir my bid en Woord gee. Ook my kosbare kinders. Maar ek moet self by God uitkom! Want Hy bou kosbare boustene in my in en vorm my karakter. Hy is die Pottebakker en ek is die klei. Nie andersom nie! En ek moet saamwerk: *"The clay must yield to the Potter's Hand."*

Vir elkeen wat hier lees, onthou, God werk met elkeen op Sy Eie manier. Hy werk nie met formules nie, maar met die krag van God.

Hou net vas aan Hom! Hy sal uitkoms gee volgens Sy wil en volgens Sy Eie plan vir jou lewe. Wat moet ons doen? Elkeen van ons? Vra vir Jesus vir 'n woord waarop jy kan staan as 'n belofte vir jou persoonlik.

Ons moet by vergenoegdheid uitkom. Sien jy, ons moet bo by die aanbiddingsplek uitkom. Nie-teenstaande al die struikelblokke op ons pad. God omskep alles as 'n werktuig om ons te vorm. Elke struikelblok word 'n stilhouplek waar ons eers so bietjie bestek-opname moet doen onder die leiding van die Heilige Gees, waar Hy 'n kosbare lewensles in ons inbou, wanneer ons ook van ons laste neerlê wat ons verhoed om verder te gaan. Kosbare stene. Boublokke as vastrapplek voordat ons verder gaan. So stap ons weer verder.

Paulus skryf vir Timóthéüs: *"Maar die godsaligheid saam met vergenoegdheid is 'n groot wins"* (1 Tim. 6:6). Een kommentator stel dit so: *"Godliness (Griek: eusebeia) with sufficient material blessings of food and clothing should make one content with life."* Die pad wat ons loop met vergenoegdheid begin dus met godsaligheid. Dit is asof ons die berg van heiligmaking en geestelike groei na boontoe klim, omdat ons geskend is deur die sondeval. En ons moet groei en ontwikkel om gelykvormig te wees aan die Beeld van Jesus Christus. Tree vir tree, trappie vir trappie, want ons heil lê op die top van die berg.

Die woord wat die 1953-vertaling hier met *"vergenoegdheid"* vertaal, het Paulus ook gebruik toe hy uit die gevangenis geskryf het dat hy geleer het om *"vergenoeg te wees met die omstandighede waarin ek is"* (Fil. 4:11). Maar die pad wat ons loop, is die pad van 'n kind van die Here wat in diep verootmoediging kom van-weë die groot beproewing, en ons buig ons neer om vir die Here te vra: *"Wat nou, Here?"* Want God is nog al die pad met elkeen van ons besig om ons te bou en te genees van ons diepe smart en vuurproef waarin ons onself bevind. Ja, tot in ons vuurproef is Hy met ons! Al verstaan ons niks daarvan nie. Ons hunker na antwoorde van God. Ons is altyd soekend na openbaring en ingrype van God.

Op hierdie pad van heiligmaking waar ons opklim tot bo op die berg, sê die Here in Heb. 12:3-4: *"Want julle moet ag gee op Hom wat so 'n teëspraak van die sondaars teen Hom verdra het, sodat julle in jul siele nie vermoeid word en verslap nie. Julle het nog nie ten bloede toe weerstand gebied in julle stryd teen die sonde nie."*

Ons word vermaan, aangemoedig om nie op te gee nie, maar te volhard tot ons bo uitkom. En ons klim op met die berg tot bo, want reeds in Israel het dit 'n spreekwoord geword: *"Op die berg van die HERE sal dit voorsien word."*

2. VERGIFNIS

Nou staan ons vir 'n wyle stil by vergifnis, om ons vastrapplek te vernuwe in ons aantog na die bergtop, waar ons met God wil ontmoet. Die Woord kom tot ons: *"Verdra mekaar en vergewe mekaar as die een teen die ander 'n klag het; soos Christus julle vergeef het, so moet julle ook doen"* (Kol. 3:13). In my tyd van verdrukking wou die vyand insidente te berde bring van my kindederdae af tot vandag toe, en my daarmee beskuldig. Maar God se Woord sê: *"Wie sal 'n beskuldiging inbring teen die uitverkorenes van God? God is dit wat regverdig maak en regverdig verklaar."* En ook: *"Wie sal ons skei van die liefde van Christus?"* (Rom. 8:31-39).

God het die laaste sê oor my lewe. Hy omskep elke situasie van aanklag teen my, en laat alles ten goede meewerk vir hulle wat God liefhet (Rom. 8:28). Só het Jesus Self op die kruis uitgeroep teenoor hulle wat Hom onskuldig gekruisig het: *"Vader, vergewe hulle, want hulle weet nie wat hulle dien nie!"* Ons moet volg in Sy voetspore.

Verder het Jesus gesê: *"Want as julle die mense hulle oortredinge vergewe, sal julle hemelse Vader julle ook vergewe. Maar as julle die mense hulle oortredinge nie vergewe nie, sal julle Vader julle oortredinge ook nie vergewe nie"* (Matt. 6:14-15). My vrou het eenmaal 'n Christelike boek vertaal vir 'n boekklub. Daarin vertel die skrywer wat hy in Afrika as sendeling beleef het. Die swart stamme van daardie land het nog apies gevang en geslag vir voedsel. Die mense neem 'n pampoen, maak 'n kleinerige gaatjie bo in die middel van die pampoen, en los 'n klompie pitte daarin. Die apies kom na die groentelande op soek na kos. Die apie steek sy handjie in die gaatjie van die pampoen en kry sy handjie vol pitte beet, maar o weë! Wanneer hy sy handjie mét die pitte wil uithaal, sit dit vas, want hy wil nie die pitte laat los nie! As hy maar net die pitte wil los, dan sal hy vry wees. Maar nou klou hy vas daaraan. En dan kom die pampoenman en slaan die apie dood. Só is baie mense ook. Hulle klou vas aan die verlede waar mense hulle seergemaak, vervolgt en verwerp het. Hulle was onskuldig. Al wat hulle oorhou, is 'n handvol

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Cling to God's Promises

The thoughts that fill your mind are crucial, because what you cling to influences your worldview. If you choose to dwell on God's promises, you will start to recognise God's blessings during uncertain times. Trusting that God will redeem your present pain, equip you to walk forward in faith, and enable you to keep on fighting.

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord Himself, is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation" (Isaiah 12:2 NIV). This verse reminds us that we belong to a God Who is faithful to keep His promises, Who rescues us and fights for us. So when we belong to God, we have nothing to fear - all we need to do is cling to God and wait on Him to act. Today, reflect on some of God's promises, and let them transform the way you think:

- God will sustain you (Psalm 55:22).
- God's peace will guard your heart (Philippians 4:7).
- God delights over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).
- God will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go (Psalm 32:8).
- God is your refuge and strength, your help in times of need (Psalm 46:1).
- In all things, you are more than a conqueror because God loves you (Romans 8:37).
- God will never leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6).
- God's perfect love casts out all your fear (1 John 4:18).
- Nothing can separate you from God's love (Romans 8:38-39).
- God's not done with you. God's not done with you. God's not done with you (Philippians 1:6).

- Selected

Spirit of God...

Who dwells within my heart,
wean it from sin, through all its pulses move.
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as You are,
and make me love You as I ought to love.
Teach me to feel that You are always nigh;
teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
to check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
teach me the patience of unceasing prayer.
Teach me to love You as Your angels love,
one holy passion filling all my frame:
the fullness of the heaven-descended Dove;
my heart an altar, and Your love the flame.
- George Croly (1780 - 1860)

DIPESALEME 23 YA 2026

PSALM 23 FOR 2026



Morena, ke kopa ka 2026 gore o nne modisa wa me, gore ke se kitle ke tlhoke sepe. O mpothise mo mafulong a matalana, o nkgogele kwa metsing a tapoloso. Ke kopa O lapolose mowa wa me; o ntsamaise mo ditseleng tsa tshiamo ka ntlha ya leina la Gago. Le fa ke tsamaya mo

mogorogorong wa moriti wa loso, o nthuse go se boife bosula bope; gonne o na le nna. Tsamma ya gago le seikokotlelo sa gago di a nkgomotsa. Ke kopa O baakanye bojelo fa pele ga me go lebagana le baba ba me; o ntlotse tlhogo ka lookwane; ke kopa o tlatse senwelo sa

me gore se penologele ba ba kgabaganyang tsela ya me. Ruri molemo le boitshwarelo di tla ntshala morago ka 2026 le ka malatsi otlhe a bophelo jwa me; ke tla nna mo Ntlong ya Morena go ya bosakhu-tleng. AMEN.

Lord, please be my Shepherd in 2026 so that I will lack nothing. Refresh my soul. Guide me along the right paths for Your Name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are will be with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Anoint my head with oil so that my cup will overflow. Please let Your goodness and love follow me in 2026 and all the days of my life, so I dwell in the house of the Lord forever. AMEN.



Johan Zerwick
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O fudisa letsomane
la gagwe
jaaka modisa;
o phutha dikwana
ka letsogo,
a di tshola
mo sehubeng,
a iketlisa tse
di amusang.
(Jes. 40:11)

Iemand om my arms omhoog te hou

Ons lees in Eksodus 17 die besondere verhaal van Moses se voorbidding of interessie vir die volk Israel wat met Amalek in oorlog gewikkel was. Die Amalekiete was waarskynlik afstammelinge van die kleinseun van Esau, die broer van Jakob (Gen. 36:12). Hulle was 'n nomadiese stam wat in die gebied tussen Egipte en Palestina gewoon het. Ten spyte van die feit dat hulle verlange familie van Israel was, het hulle waarskynlik aggressief opgetree omdat hulle mag, gebied en hulpbronne (weiveld en water) deur Israel se teenwoordigheid bedreig is, en dit sonder aanleiding.

In Deuternomium 25:17-19 (DV) verkry ons verdere perspektief op die onmin tussen hierdie twee nasies, en God se besluit om Amalek se naam uit menseheugenis uit te delg: *"Onthou wat die Amalekiete aan jou gedoen het toe julle op pad was met julle uittoeg uit Egipte, dat hulle jou op die pad oorval het, en almal wat agter jou uitgesak het, neergevel het; en dit terwyl jy moeg en uitgeput was. Hulle het God nie gevrees nie. Wanneer die Here jou God dan vir jou rus gee van al jou vyande rondom jou in die land wat die Here jou God vir jou gaan gee om as erfdeel in besit te neem, moet jy die naam Amalek onder die hemel uitwis. Jy mag dit nie vergeet nie."* Moses het ook in Eksodus gebid, *"Hy het gesê: 'Omdat 'n hand teen die troon van die Here was, is daar oorlog vir die Here teen Amalek van geslag tot geslag'"* (Eks. 17:16 DV).

Dit moes 'n vreesaanjaende saak vir Israel gewees het om so vinnig ná hul uittoeg uit Egipte in oorlog gewikkel te wees. Barnes noem dat hierdie gebeure slegs twee maande na die uittoeg plaasgevind het. Die nuwe droom wat party kon gekoester het van ongebonde vryheid en vrede, was aan skerp. Hoe sou ons opgetree het in hierdie situasie? Ons kan verskeie gedagtes uit hierdie verhaal uitwys en oordink.

1. WANNEER ONS RADELOOS IS, MOET ONS VIR ONSSELF EN VIR ANDER INTREE

Moses het gesien dat Amalek gekom het om teen Israel te veg. Hy was prakties en het vir Josua beveel om weerbare manne gereed te kry vir die oorlog (v. 9). Terselfdertyd het hy aan Josua gesê dat hy op die heuweltop sal gaan staan met God se staf in sy hand. Dit was dieselfde staf waarmee hy voorheen wonderwerke verrig het, en dus 'n teken van God se magtige Teenwoordigheid en seën. Moses het besef dat hierdie 'n geestelike stryd was en dat God aan hulle die oorwin-

ning op bonatuurlike wyse sou gee. Maar hy het ook besef dat daar krag in voorbidding is. Hy het dus sy hande nederig na God opgehef as 'n gebed om hulp en oorwinning oor die vyande van Israel. Een kommentator herinner ons dat hierdie eerste geveg 'n patroon sou wees vir wat sou kom soos wat Israel die Beloofde Land sou inneem. Dit is dus allerbelangrik dat die geestelike aspekte van die stryd raakgesien en aangespreek word. Net so kan ons in ons lewens ons probleme na God bring en met vrymoedigheid na Hom toe gaan: *"Laat ons dan met vrymoedigheid na die troon van die genade gaan, sodat ons barmhartigheid kan verkry en genade vind om op die regte tyd gehelp te word"* (Heb. 4:16 DV). God is genadig, en Jesus het vir ons die weg tot in die allerheiligste oopgemaak deur Sy versoenende sterwe en opstanding. Ons kan ook vir mekaar bid, en trouens moedig Paulus ons aan om vir alle mense te bid (1 Tim. 2:1). Dit is omdat gebed krag dra en sake verander.

Dit is beter om op God se krag en vermoë te steun as ons eie. Die Psalmdigter herinner ons, *"Vertrou nie op prinse, op die mensekind, by wie geen heil is nie. Sy gees gaan uit, hy keer terug na sy aarde toe; op daardie dag is dit met sy planne gedaan. Welgeluksalig is hy wat die God van Jakob het as sy hulp, wie se hoop is op die Here sy God, wat hemel en aarde gemaak het, die see en alles wat daarin is; wat trou bly tot in ewigheid"* (Ps. 146:3-6 DV). Dit verg nederigheid en aflegging van ons eie planne en wil, maar dit is die sekere manier tot oorwinning omdat God Homself nog altyd getrou bewys het. En dit is in die swaar en donker tye wat ons proefondervindelik God se krag, maar ook Sy genade en liefde, beleef as ons onself aan Sy voete werp en Hom om hulp vra.

2. GOD MAAK VAN VOORBIDDERS GEBRUIK WANNEER HY OPTREE

Ons sien in hierdie verhaal hoe belangrik voorbidding vir ander is. Selfs in die Nuwe Testament sien ons die voorbeeld van Jesus wat vir Petrus gebid het: *"En die Here sê: 'Simon, Simon, kyk, die Satan het vurig begeer om julle soos koring te sif. Maar Ek het vir jou gebid, dat jou geloof nie ophou nie; en as jy eendag bekeer is, moet jy jou broeders versterk'"* (Luk. 22:31-32 DV).

Inderdaad het Petrus geval, maar hy is ook in sy amp herstel en was 'n onmisbare leier in die eerste Christelike Kerk. Ons word ook aangemoedig om vir ander te bid. Ons lees in Jes. 62:6-7, *"O*

Jerusalem, Ek het wagte op jou mure uitgesit wat gedurigdeur die hele dag en die hele nag nie sal swyg nie. O julle wat die Here herinner aan sy beloftes - moenie rus nie en laat Hom nie met rus nie, totdat Hy Jerusalem bevestig en maak tot 'n lof op aarde!" Dit is 'n wonderlike misterie dat die Here, wat almagtig is en alles Self kan doen, kies om ons te laat meewerk in Sy doen en late deurdat Hy aan ons 'n bediening van voorbidding gee! Kom ons kyk na nog 'n voorbeeld, dié van Job. In sy moeilikste tyd van toetsing het sy vriende die fout by hom gesoek; maar hulle teologie was verkeerd en so ook hulle begrip van die Here se karakter. *"Nadat Hy met Job gepraat het, het die Here vir Elifas die Temaniet gesê: 'Ek is kwaad vir jou en jou twee vriende, want julle het nie die waarheid oor My gepraat soos my dienaar Job nie. Vat sewe bulle en sewe ramme en gaan na my dienaar Job toe en offer dit as 'n brandoffer vir julleself. My dienaar Job sal vir julle bid, en Ek sal sy gebed verhoor en julle nie straf vir julle dwaasheid nie. Julle het nie die waarheid oor My gepraat soos my dienaar Job nie.'"* Elifas die Temaniet, Bildad die Suagiet en Sofar die Naamatiet het gedoen wat die Here gesê het, en die Here het Job se gebed verhoor. *Nadat Job vir sy vriende gebid het, het die Here die omstandighede van Job verander en hom twee keer soveel gegee as wat hy gehad het"* (Job 42:7-10 NV).

3. ONS KAN VIR MENSE INTREE, AL IS HULLE ONS VYANDIGGESIND

Ons lees in dieselfde hoofstuk van die opstandigheid van Israel. Net vantevore het die volk teen Moses gemurmureer, omdat daar nie water vir hulle en hul vee was om te drink nie. Moses het tot die Here geroep en gesê dat hulle op die punt was om hom te stenig. Tog het God in antwoord op Moses se gebed water vir die volk voorsien. Later in dieselfde hoofstuk tref ons 'n volgende konflik aan, en weer sien ons hoe Moses as voorbidder vir die volk optree. Moses het wel ter wille van sy eie veiligheid gebid, maar soos 'n ware leier het hy vir die volk ingetree, ten spyte van hulle slegte hartsgesindheid. Netso leer Jesus ons 'n beter weg as die menslike en die normale: *"Julle het gehoor dat daar gesê is: Jy moet jou naaste liefhê en jou vyand moet jy haat. Maar Ek sê vir julle: Julle moet jul vyande liefhê; seën die wat vir julle vervloek, doen goed aan die wat vir julle haat, en bid vir die wat julle beledig en julle vervol; sodat julle kinders kan word van julle Vader wat in die hemele is; want*

Hy laat Sy son opgaan oor slegtes en goeties, en Hy laat reën op regverdiges en onregverdiges. Want as julle liefhet die wat vir julle liefhet, watter loon het julle? Doen die tollenaars nie ook dieselfde nie? En as julle net jul broeders groet, wat besonders doen julle dan? Doen die tollenaars nie ook so nie? Wees julle dan volmaak soos julle Vader in die hemele volmaak is" (Matt. 5:43-48 OV). Hier sien ons twee redes vir die opdrag van voorbidding: liefde, en om te wees soos ons Vader in die hemele, die God van liefde.

4. DIT NEEM SOMS TYD OM GOD SE WIL 'N WERKLIKHEID TE MAAK

God het beplan om die Beloofde Land vir Israel te gee. Hy sou Sy woord ten alle koste waarmaak, omdat dit Sy karakter is om Sy beloftes na te kom. Tog sien ons dat dit nie sonder 'n moeisame en uitgerekte tyd van konflik en oorlog plaasgevind het nie. Eksodus 23:28-30 maak 'n interessante stelling: *"Ek sal die Hewiete, Kanaäniete en Hetiete die skrik op die lyf jaag en hulle voor jou uit verdryf. Ek sal hulle egter nie dadelik voor jou uitdruif nie, sodat die land nie leeg lê en die wilde diere te veel word nie. Ek sal hulle bietjie vir bietjie voor jou uit verdryf totdat jou mense genoeg is om die land in besit te neem"* (DV). Ons sien dus dat daar belangrike redes was dat God die Beloofde Land oor 'n tyd lank vir Israel gegee het.

Ons lees ook in Josua 13:1 (DV), *"Toe Josua oud en gevorderd in jare was, het die Here vir hom gesê: 'Jy is oud en gevorderd in jare en 'n baie groot deel van die land wat in besit geneem moet word, is nog oor.'"* Tog lees ons in v. 6 dat dit nie 'n onmoontlike saak is nie; trouens, God vra dat Josua die land in geloof onder Israel verdeel, al is dit nog nie eens in hulle besit nie: *"Al die inwoners van die bergland, van die Libanon af tot by Misrefot-Majim, al die Sidoniërs - Ek Self sal hulle voor die Israëliete verdryf. Laat dit in elk geval as erfdeel aan Israel toeval, soos Ek jou beveel het."* Calvyn skryf die volgende: *"Fulfil thy duty in the distribution of the land, not even excepting what is still in the firm grasp of the enemy; for I will take care to perform what I have promised."* From this we may learn to rely so perfectly upon the word of God, when undertaking any duty, as not to be deterred by doubts or fears." Laat ons dus in geloof en gehoorsaamheid voortgaan met voorbidding, maar ook met die taak wat die Here aan ons opgedra het. Hy Self sal Sy woord in vervulling bring (Jer. 1:12), al

Vervolg op p. 5

Iemand om my arms omhoog te hou

Vervolg van p. 4
neem dit lank.

5. SELFS VOORBIDDERS WORD MOEG EN HET ONDERSTEUNING NODIG

Moses het op die berg geklim, maar hy was nie alleen nie. Hy het Aäron en Hur saamgeneem. Hulle was prominente persone: Aäron was die broer van Moses maar ook die hoëpriester. Hur was die kleinseun van Kaleb en oupa van Besaleël wat bygedra het tot die bou van die tabernakel. Sommige dink dat Hur Moses se swaer, die man van Miriam, was. Moses het die waarde van ondersteuning besef, gepaardgaande met dié van gebed. Wat 'n mooi prentjie van twee steunpilare wat Moses se arms opgehou het toe hy moeg geword en uitgesak het. En hoe belangrik was hierdie taak nie: die

oorwinning sou nie kom indien Moses nie aanhou bid en sy hande uitgestrek het nie. 'n Mens kan wonder hoe en hoekom, en waar God se raadsplan dan nou inpas. Maar ons sal dalk nie nou antwoorde op sulke vrae kry nie. Wat van belang is, is deursetting en ondersteuning wat ons in ons eie gebedslewens kan en moet toepas. Ons kan bemoedig word deur die gesegde, "Labour in prayer and watch God work." Ons hoef nie alles te verstaan nie, ons moet net op God vertrou en op die Heilige Gees wag om ons te lei in ons gebede.

6. JESUS IS ONS GROOT VOORBIDDER

Sommige kerkvaders het in Moses 'n prentjie gesien van Christus op die kruis - met uitgestrekte arms het Hy vir ons

voorbidding by die heilige Vader gedoen, sodat ons sondes vergewe kan word! Ons moet altyd terugkeer na die Voorbeeld wat Jesus vir ons gestel het. Hy is ons Groot Hoëpriester wat tussen God en mens kom staan: "Terwyl ons dan 'n groot Hoëpriester het wat deur die hemele deurgegaan het, naamlik Jesus, die Seun van God, laat ons die belydenis vashou. Want ons het nie 'n hoëpriester wat nie met ons swakhede medelye kan hê nie, maar een wat in alle opsigte versoek is net soos ons, maar sonder sonde. Laat ons dan met vrymoedigheid na die troon van die genade gaan, sodat ons barmhartigheid kan verkry en genade vind om op die regte tyd gehelp te word" (Heb. 4:14-16 OV). Paulus herinner ons ook, "Wie sal beskuldiging inbring teen die uitverkorenes van God?

God is dit wat regverdig maak. Wie is dit wat veroordeel? Christus is dit wat gesterf het, ja, meer nog, wat ook opgewek is, wat ook aan die regterhand van God is, wat ook vir ons intree" (Rom. 8:33-34 OV).

SAMEVATTING

Uit bostaande verhaal sien ons die krag van gebed, die krag van deursetting, en die krag van ondersteuning. Ons sien ook die krag van vergifnis en liefde. Uiteindelik sien ons dat Jesus al hierdie deugde beliggaam in Sy rol as ons Groot Hoëpriester. Hy is ons Voorspraak, en Hy tree vir ons by die Vader in! Laat ons dan waardige voorbidders en ondersteuners wees, en deelneem aan die misterieuse proses om God se wil op aarde te laat geskied. © C Venter

Die Drie V's - Op die Berg van die HERE sal dit Voorsien word

Vervolg van p. 2

'pitte' van bitterheid, wrokkigheid smart en pyn wat vergelding soek. Sommige sê: "Ek sal vergewe, maar vergeet? Nooit!" Gestel nou God sou só 'n gesindheid teenoor ons openbaar? Maar luister wat sê Sy Woord nadat ons ons skuld bely het: "...en aan hulle sondes en hulle ongeregthede sal Ek nooit meer dink nie" (Heb. 10:17). Sy vergifnis is volkome. Ons sonde is weggewas deur die bloed van Jesus. Ek het nou by vergifnis gekom. Maar iets kom nog kort. Want ek voel nog die pyn.

3. VERSOENING

Vergifnis en versoening loop hand aan hand. Dit is dán wanneer ek vrede vind in my gemoed. En nou lê daar nog 'n trappie voor. Ek moet gedurig versoen met God en met my naaste.

Eintlik kan daar nie vergifnis kom voor daar nie éérs versoening is nie. Ek moet met God versoen, en so ook met alle ander mense. Versoening met God kom deur die bloed van die Lam van God wat Sy bloed aanbied vir ons versoening. In die tyd van Israel moes hulle vir die viering van die pasga 'n vlekkelose lam offer, wat heenwys na Jesus Christus. Soos Johannes die Doper gesê het toe Jesus aangestap kom om gedoop te word: "Die volgende dag sien Johannes Jesus na hom toe kom, en hy sê: 'Dáár is die Lam van God wat die sonde van die wêreld wegneem!'" (Joh. 1:29). Jesus

word gekruisig in die tyd van die paasfees en Hy stort Sy bloed as 'n soenoffer vir die ganse mensdom!

Dit is soos 'n man en 'n vrou met huweliksprobleme. Die terapie is dat hulle met mekaar moet versoen om die huwelik te red. Dalk het albei skuld wat bygebring moet word. Soos die Woord sê: "Bely mekaar julle misdade en vergewe mekaar as die een teen die ander iets het." Dit wil vir my voorkom asof hierdie twee handelinge gelyktydig plaasvind. Maar wanneer dit by God kom, dan is elkeen van ons die skuldige een wat met God moet versoen. Hy is volmaak, en maak nie foute nie. Ek moet met Hom versoen deur die bloed van Jesus Christus. Kyk wat sê die Woord by monde van Paulus: "...en ons die bediening van die versoening gegee het, naamlik dat God in Christus die wêreld met Homself versoen (katallassō) het deur hulle hul misdade nie toe te reken nie en die woord van die versoening aan ons toe te vertrou" (2 Kor. 5:18-19). En in Rom. 5:10: "Want as ons, terwyl ons nog vyande was, met God versoen (katallassō) is deur die dood van Sy Seun, veel meer sal ons deur Sy lewe gered word nou dat ons versoen is." Dit is soos 'n boekhouer wat die boeke laat klop. En dan vul Johannes in 1 Joh. 2:2 aan: "En Hy is 'n versoening (hilasmos) vir ons sondes, en nie alleen vir ons s'n nie, maar ook vir dié van die hele wêreld." Albei hierdie Griekse begrippe dui op die mens wat

met God versoen moet word deur Jesus se bloed. Maar lg. *hilasmos* bring nog 'n verdere dimensie by, en dit is die plek van versoening. Dink maar aan die berg van versoening. Johannes sê soos die ark van die verbond se versoendeksel, die *hilasterion*, die plek van die versoendeksel was, so word Jesus in die Nuwe Verbond die plek van versoening [hierdie woord dui op lokaliteit, die modus is datief]. Jesus is nou ons *hilasterion* waar ons met God ontmoet. Want in Hom is ons met God versoen, "toe ons nog sondaars was!"

Die vloek van die sondeval wat op die mens gekom het in Adam, word nou deur Jesus omgekeer, deurdat Hy ons met God kom versoen het. Ons lees in Gen. 3:15 dat Hy gekom het om die kop van die slang te vermorsel. En dan gebeur dit deur die kruis, soos Jesaja dit stel: "Dit het die HERE behaag om Hom te verbrysel" (Jes. 53:10). Nou loop ons in die voetspore van Jesus in ons taak om die waarheid van die Woord, die Evangelie van Jesus, uit te dra, ook aan ons vyand. Die Woord verklaar: "En almal wat ook godvrugtig wil lewe in Christus Jesus, sal vervolg word" (2 Tim. 3:12).

Die belangrikste is: Ek moet vrede in my gemoed ervaar. Hiervoor werp ek my op die vergifnis en versoening op die bloed van Jesus Christus wat as ons Hoëpriester met Sy eie bloed in die Allerheiligste ingegaan het en 'n ewige verlossing teweeggebring het (Heb. 9:12). En ek is versoen met God en met my naaste!

SAMEVATTING

Ons as gelowiges gaan soms deur baie swaar tye. Die geheim is om die dri V's in hierdie tye van toetsing te vind: vergenoegdheid, vergifnis en versoening. Dit sal aan ons vrede bring. Maar ons hoef dit nie in ons eie krag te doen nie. Soos vir Abraham op die berg Moria, sal God ook vir ons die onmoontlike doen en voorsien wat ons ook al benodig. As ons maar net in nederigheid na Hom toe kom, in vaste vertroue en geloof, en ons aan Sy wil onderwerp. Ons moet Hom beleef as ons Prins van Vrede, onself aan Hom oorgee, en die pad van heiligmaking stap, sodat ons meer en meer soos Jesus kan word. Dit is nie altyd 'n maklike pad nie, maar dit is altyd 'n geseënde pad!

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Gehoorzaamheid mag dalk baie van jou vra, maar die prys van ongehoorzaamheid is veel hoër.
- Hendri Hofmeyr

Beautiful Scars - Emma's Story

There is a purposeful beauty to our scars. Our scars bear witness to our story.

What most of us don't realise is that scar tissue is stronger than the original skin. A gaping wound is not pretty, but a healed scar means that place is stronger than it ever was before. There is a purposeful beauty in our scars. Our scars bear witness to our story.

I grew up in Ipswich, a country town in Queensland, Australia. My parents were pastors at our local church. My mum was a worship leader, a prophetic songwriter, and a preacher. She released six albums and was also a pioneer in incorporating creative elements like dance and drama into the church in Australia during the 1970s.

My parents had four children, three girls and a boy. Sadly my older sister died just before her second birthday as the result of a brain injury she suffered at birth through medical negligence. My older brother was born shortly after her death, I was next and then two years after my arrival, our younger sister Melanie was born. Melanie was born with severe brain damage. She is now 32 years old but requires constant care, as she is unable to walk, talk or feed herself. Melanie and I shared a room growing up and she holds a very dear place in my heart.

Not long after Melanie was born my mum got cancer. From the time her illness was finally diagnosed to when she passed away was 12 weeks. She was only 37 years old and I was four.

Our family's world was turned upside down. The next ten years were filled with burdens and pain that I was not equipped to handle. My sense of security and identity was further shaken when the son of a family friend sexually abused me. By the time I was 14 I had left the church and by 16 I was staying most days at my boyfriend's house. I was consumed by anger and unprocessed grief.

My father had remarried but my anger and pain prevented me from embracing a relationship with my stepmother and new little

brother.

At 16, I was in love and had developed some very unhealthy coping mechanisms. My relationship with my boyfriend became the focus of my life. What I was too young to realise was that this relationship was only a Band-Aid. At 18 years of age that Band-Aid was painfully ripped off when I met another beautiful, young 18-year-old girl who was pregnant with my boyfriend's baby. My life had become like an episode of Jerry Springer. I was devastated but my self-esteem was so desperately low that I stayed.

The pain remained, however, and no amount of alcohol or drugs was able to numb it. I eventually realised that I had to escape this destructive relationship and lifestyle and so I decided to move. I applied for courses and scholarships to study in other parts of Australia, and by a miracle I was offered a scholarship to study music in Sydney. Off to the Big Smoke I went. I was 20 years old with no money, no real plan, and no self-worth. I was a young woman drowning in pain, grief, and anger.

Life in Sydney offered me plenty of escape options. Because I thought I was worth nothing, I treated my body and myself as though they had no value. I didn't hesitate to take or do anything that would numb my pain, even if it were just for a few hours. Miraculously I still managed to finish my course, in spite of my destructive behaviour, and by the time I was 22, I graduated and was ready to pursue an exciting music career opportunity overseas.

In the meantime I had a few casual jobs to help me save up to go overseas. One of these jobs was at a local radio station helping with promotions. Myself and another team member would drive around in a promotional car and give away free stuff. One day I had to share the car with a new guy. We were driving around the city and quite randomly he turned the radio off and put on a worship album instead. I couldn't believe it and told him, using some very colourful language, where I would put that CD if he played it again.

A conversation began and as he started asking me questions, I could tell he was not expecting to hear that I was a pastor's kid! From that day, it seemed like it became his mission to get me back in church and back into a relationship with Christ. He asked me to church every Sunday for three months straight before I finally went. The Saturday night beforehand I was out all night drinking. I woke up at 11:00 and church was at 12:00. I showed up at church and I'm not really sure why, but I went.

A few weeks later an ex-mafia boss was the guest speaker at church. His story was just what I needed to hear. I needed to see that God could restore a huge mess. I gave my life to Christ that night. Later that week, I heard God's Voice loud and clear telling me not to go overseas but to go to Bible College instead. That marked the beginning of my commitment to make God's Voice the loudest voice in my life. I feel like that is when my life really started. I met



Jesus in April 2004 and started Bible College three months later.

I had a lot of issues to deal with, but I was up for the challenge. The Bible talks about our lives being transformed by the renewing of our mind and I submitted my life to that process. I knew God could heal me and I was desperate to be healed.

Twelve years later, I can honestly say I am 100% healed, restored, and whole - nothing broken, nothing missing. Of course there have still been challenges, but smooth seas never made a skilled sailor.

I am committed to always being led by my Saviour in everything I do, holding His hand tightly and always allowing Him to lead the way a few steps ahead. He is my Healer, my Rescuer, my Deliverer, my Restorer, my Saviour, and my best Friend.

Twelve years ago I could not have imagined that I would be where I am today. Remember that guy that kept asking me to church? Four years after our first meeting, we got married. We are now the parents of two incredible children and together our family is living the most amazing God adventure.

My life is a walking testament to the restoring power of Jesus Christ! My story is not pretty, and there are parts that I am not proud of. But I do know this to be true - if I let Him, God will use what was my pain to help others find purpose and freedom!

Emma Mullings is an accomplished TV Presenter and Radio Announcer and currently hosts the morning show on Sydney's HOPE 103.2FM 9:00 - 13:00 weekdays. The year 2016 has seen Emma return to her songwriting and singing roots. Her Debut single SKINNY ROADS was released on 9 May. This song is "a song about destiny. Taking the skinny road in life. The road less travelled, the road to your purpose". Emma is married to Terence and they have two children Jeremiah Maxwell Joshua and Hosannah Emma Grace.

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Make 2026 a Year of Prayer

Continued from p. 1

that I get fair treatment in court.' For a while the judge refused to do anything. Finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about people, I will help this widow because she keeps on bothering me. If I don't help her, she will wear me out.' The Lord said: 'Think about what that crooked judge said. Won't God protect His chosen ones who pray to Him day and night? Won't He be concerned for them? He will surely hurry and help them. But when the Son of Man comes, will He find on this Earth anyone with faith?' (Luke 18:1-8 CEV).

No matter how simply and honestly we pray it's easy to lose heart and it's tempting to give up. That's why it's not enough just to keep it simple and keep it real, Jesus also says that we must "always pray, and not give up." But how do we do this when our initial enthusiasm fades or God doesn't seem to be answering?

Prayer can be a lot like stacking dominoes. We pray the same thing we've prayed one hundred times before, until suddenly, the whole lot comes down. The breakthrough occurs. The miracle happens. **It's not that we finally found the right formula. It's simply that we didn't give up praying one prayer too soon.**

I've found that one of the most important keys to "keeping it up" in prayer is to develop the discipline of a daily "quiet time". Jesus once invited His friends, "Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31 NIVUK) and millions of His followers, ever since, have allocated a little time each day to retreat with Jesus to a quiet place.

As someone who struggles with all kinds of self-discipline - attending the gym, declining the chocolate cake, going to bed before midnight, bothering to floss my teeth and, yes, even maintaining regular times of prayer - I hesitate to advocate the rigidity of any such routine. I don't want to put anything heavy or unsustainable on you as you seek to grow in prayer. But here is the great and inescapable truth, taught in Scripture, modelled by Christ and advocated, without exception, by all the heroes of our faith: **you cannot grow in prayer without some measure of effort and discomfort, self-discipline and self-denial.** Just as you cannot get physically fit without regular exercise and a healthy diet, so your spiritual growth will be determined, to a very significant extent, by the prayer exercises you choose (or do not choose) to establish and sustain.

Here are two suggestions to help us develop rhythms of prayer that are regular and sustainable:

- Make it easy (set yourself an achievable target), and
- Keep it up.

Take a moment now to reflect on your daily rhythms and make a fresh commitment to prayer.

4. INTERCESSION: HOW TO ASK GOD FOR OTHERS

"I promise you God in heaven will allow whatever you allow on Earth, but God will not allow anything you don't allow. I promise that when any two of you on Earth agree about something you are praying for, My Father in heaven will do it for you. Whenever two or three of you come together in My Name, I am there with you" (Matt. 18:18-20 CEV).

Karl Barth, probably the greatest theologian of modern times, said that when we intercede "we are set at God's side and lifted up to Him and therefore to the place where decisions are made in the affairs of His government". **Isn't that astounding?** Imagine how shocked you would be if the president or the prime minister called to say that your name had been selected at random from a list of the entire electorate to spend a day sharing your insights on a range of issues with his executive, in the interests of greater democracy. I'm pretty sure you'd find the time to go. In fact, you'd probably cancel anything to attend. It might be one of the greatest honours of your life.

As a Christian you have already received an even greater invitation. The King of kings requests your presence at the very seat of government. He offers you a permanent place on His executive so that you can influence His actions on behalf of nations. **It is an unspeakable honour, yet we are often too busy, too disbelieving, or too insecure, to accept the greatest invitation of our lives.**

How then do we accept this great invitation and begin to "stand in the gap" before God?:

- Get informed - the first step is to do a little reconnaissance and find out the facts of the problem you are wanting to address.
- Get inspired - engage with God's Word and His promises and begin to imagine what might happen if God's purposes for a particular person, place or situation started to come true. This helps us to pray with faith and be specific.
- Get indignant - as you begin to see with God's eyes and lay hold of His promises, engage with your heart and begin to move beyond nice prayers into a place of

spiritual contention.

- Get in sync - lay hold of the power of corporate prayer and pray together with friends, in prayer meetings, and prayer rooms.

5. LISTENING: HEARING GOD SPEAK

"My sheep know My voice, and I know them. They follow Me" (John 10:27 CEV).

Billy Graham famously said, 'Prayer is a two-way conversation between you and God.' However, often our prayer lives look more like a voicemail message, rather than a call. **We're so keen to speak to God and share our requests that we can so easily forget that He might want to say something to us.**

Throughout the Bible, there are many famous stories of God speaking to His people. We can read these stories and wish that God was as obvious in speaking to us. **But the reality is that God does speak today, in many different ways,** like in the following amazing story.

I was stranded in Chicago. All airplanes had been grounded by the eruption of an Icelandic volcano and I couldn't get home to England. I asked God how He wanted me to use the interruption. Several American friends had already been kind enough to invite me to stay, but as I prayed, I found myself thinking about a particular friend who lived 150 miles west in Madison, Wisconsin. 'Hey, I'm in Chicago,' I emailed. 'Can I come crash on your couch?'

I didn't know that Joe had just received terrible news, nor that his worried wife had asked, 'Who do you wish you had on your couch right now, Joe?' Those were her exact words. Nor that he had replied, 'I wish Pete was on my couch, but I know that's crazy because he's in England, and he's never even been to our home.'

The prophet Malachi says that 'Those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard.' Sometimes God listens to our casual conversations and receives them as prayers. Within hours of Joe's throw-away line, I had materialised on his couch.

What's encouraging in this story is that I simply asked God to show me where to go, and then found myself thinking of my friend. Hearing God's Voice didn't require a super spiritual process or hours in silence. **We can all listen for God's Voice in our day to day by pausing; by reflecting on**

Scripture; by listening carefully to wise friends. Taking time to listen can enrich our relationship with God and our prayers.

6. FINALLY...

"Then I looked and saw a Lamb standing in the centre of the throne surrounded by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb looked as if it had once been killed. It had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent out to all the earth. The Lamb went over and took the scroll from the right hand of the One who sat on the throne. After He had taken it, the four living creatures and the 24 elders knelt down before Him. Each of them had a harp and a gold bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. Then they sang a new song, 'You are worthy to receive the scroll and open its seals, because You were killed. And with Your Own blood you bought for God people from every tribe, language, nation, and race. You let them become kings and serve God as priests, and they will rule on Earth'" (Rev. 5:6-10 CEV).

The heart and soul of prayer is this: the God Who made you loves you! He longs to walk and talk with you in ever-deepening friendship. All that really matters is that we come before God with our whole hearts, as honestly and consistently as we can.

The word 'Amen' is often used when we finish praying - literally meaning, 'Yes! I agree! So be it!' It is an emphatic way of agreeing, which has power when we come before God. In the book of Revelation, John sees 24 elders "holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people." These bowls once full will be poured out at the end of the Age in a great universal 'Amen'. **I find it so awesome to imagine that every true prayer I ever prayed - all the frustrations, the tears, the dashed hopes, and yearnings - are not wasted, but cherished, remembered by God, stored up in one of those golden bowls, awaiting their fulfilment.** My prayers for Sammy's healing may not have been fully answered, but neither have they been forgotten. They are heard, and they are held, awaiting an ultimate answer on the day when brain tumours and seizures will finally be defeated. Every single time we say 'Amen', we pull the kingdom a little closer.

As you continue in prayer, be encouraged that every single time, God hears you, knows you, and loves you!

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/howtopray>

10 Resolutions every Christian can make

The beginning of a new year offers a sacred invitation, not to strive harder, but to **return to what matters most.**

A spiritual reset isn't about perfect habits or spiritual pressure. It's about slowing down enough to **let God recentre our hearts around His Presence, His Voice, and His love.**

This January, as we reset spiritually, God is inviting us back to the building blocks of faith, daily rhythms of presence, worship, prayer, and Scripture that restore our intimacy with Him and renew our souls from the inside out.

Here are ten resolutions, along with practical applications for each that will help you reset your walk with God and start you on the right footing for the new year.

1. RESOLVE TO BEGIN EACH DAY IN GOD'S PRESENCE
Spiritual renewal begins by showing up every day. Before the noise of the day sets in, God invites us to abide in Him.

Life flows from relationship, not effort.

Practice: Each morning, pause for a moment and acknowledge God's nearness. Sit quietly and invite Him to lead your day, no agenda required.

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).

2. RESOLVE TO ANCHOR YOUR FAITH WITH A DAILY DEVOTIONAL
Our hearts need daily reminding of God's goodness. Starting each day grounded in truth keeps us centred, no matter what we face.

Practice: Commit to spending time with God each morning. Even fifteen minutes makes a difference. Let consistency, not perfection, be your goal.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

3. RESOLVE TO MAKE PRAYER A DAILY HABIT
Prayer is a most life-giving part of time with God because it draws us into relationship with Him. God isn't looking for perfect words. He invites us to draw near to Him with honest hearts.

Practice: Set aside time each day

to talk with God about what's really happening in your heart. Share openly, then pause to listen.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

4. RESOLVE TO PRACTICE GOD'S PRESENCE THROUGHOUT THE DAY
God desires more than a moment with us. He desires a personal, intimate relationship with us throughout the day. Scripture reminds us that seeking God isn't limited to a quiet time; it's a posture of the heart.

Practice: Throughout the day, gently turn your thoughts back to God. Whisper a prayer while working, driving, or waiting: "God, I'm aware of You here."

"You have said, 'Seek my Face.' My heart says to You, 'Your Face, Lord, do I seek'" (Psalm 27:8).

5. RESOLVE TO WORSHIP GOD DAILY
Worship reconnects us to what matters most. When we worship, we lift our eyes from our circumstances and fix them on God's faithfulness.

Practice: Play worship music in the morning or sing a simple song of praise. Draw you strength from uplifting sounds and inspired lyrics. Let worship become a daily reset that reorders your heart.

"But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning" (Psalm 59:16).

6. RESOLVE TO LET GRATITUDE SHAPE YOUR PERSPECTIVE
Praise and thanksgiving aren't confined to music. Expressing gratitude positions us to turn our gaze from our problems and focus on Who God is. As we choose to focus on all the Lord has done in our lives, our burdens begin to feel lighter in the Presence of God's love.

Practice: When stress or discouragement rises and want to overwhelm you, intentionally thank God for Who He is. Watch how praise shifts your focus and restores peace.

"Praise the LORD! Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever" (Psalm 106:1).



7. RESOLVE TO FAST AS A WAY OF REFOCUSING YOUR HEART
Fasting is a powerful spiritual discipline that helps us quiet distractions and heighten our awareness of God. By intentionally setting something aside, we create space to depend more fully on Him and listen more closely to His Voice.

Practice: Choose one intentional fast this month, whether from a meal, social media, or another daily habit. Use the time or attention you've freed up to pray, reflect, or simply sit with God.

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

8. RESOLVE TO MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD
Scripture invites us into communion with God. When we slow down and meditate on God's Word, it begins to shape how we think, feel, and live.

Practice: Read a short passage of Scripture and sit with it. Ask God what He wants to show you and let His truth settle into your heart.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

9. RESOLVE TO FORGIVE AND WALK IN FREEDOM
A spiritual reset often requires releasing what we've been holding onto. Unforgiveness quietly weighs down our hearts, affecting our peace, our prayers, and our intimacy with God. But forgiveness is one of the most powerful ways we experience freedom, not because what happened didn't matter, but because God's healing matters more.

Practice: Ask God to bring to mind anyone you need to forgive, including yourself. Offer their

name to God and choose to release the offense into His hands. Forgiveness is often a process, but each act of surrender opens your heart to God's restoring grace.

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

10. RESOLVE TO LIVE OUT YOUR FAITH IN PRACTICAL WAYS
Spiritual renewal is intended to transcend personal growth and should lead to daily action. As God restores our hearts, He invites us to live out our faith in visible, practical ways that reflect His love to others.

Practice: Choose one intentional action this week:

- Invite someone to church.
- Encourage a friend with Scripture or prayer.
- Serve consistently in your local church.
- Share what God is doing in your life with someone who needs hope.

God often works most powerfully through our willingness to obey Him in everyday moments.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

A FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT
A spiritual reset doesn't happen all at once; it happens through daily surrender. As you commit to meeting with God each day, He will gently restore your heart, realign your priorities, and deepen your faith. **This year, don't strive for more. Draw near. God is already waiting!**

- Trace Kennedy
<https://www.denisonforum.org/biblical-living/devotionals/10-resolutions-every-christian-can-make/>

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES!

ON A MISSION

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV).

In the above Scripture, Jesus is talking to His disciples, some of His closest friends, and He sends to go into the world, to all nations, and make more disciples. This means to lead others to faith in Jesus Christ and to help them grow in their relationship with Him. It involves not only sharing the Gospel and inviting others to meet Jesus, but also guiding and mentoring them in their spiritual journey.

You might not feel like you are equipped or experienced enough to mentor others, but we can all share our faith. Jesus doesn't say, 'wait' until you have memorised the Bible or 'hesitate' until your personal problems have been sorted out. He says 'Now go' - in the middle of your mess and regardless of your experience. Go and share your faith with others in words and action.

Telling others about Jesus isn't always easy, but if you are a Christian and know the love of God, it means someone once shared the Good News with you. Let us explore some tools and biblical principles together so that we can share the life-changing love of Jesus with others.

1. PRAYING COMES BEFORE SHARING

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2 NIV).

If we are serious about wanting to share the Gospel with others, whether it be friends or strangers, it is essential that we recognise the importance of prayer in our evangelistic efforts. Prayer is a powerful tool that allows us to connect with God, seek His guidance, and intercede on behalf of those we are trying to reach.

In the Bible, we are encouraged to devote ourselves to prayer. This means setting aside dedicated time to speak with God, to listen for His Voice, and to align our hearts with His will. When we commit to a lifestyle of prayer, we open the door for God to work in and through us as we engage in evangelisation.

Prayer is not simply a one-way

communication where we reel off our shopping list to God. It is a two-way conversation that involves both speaking and listening. Through prayer, we can ask God for wisdom, courage, and opportunities to share the Gospel with those around us.

Prayer plays a vital role in preparing our hearts for evangelisation. It helps us cultivate a spirit of humility, compassion, and love for others. When we spend time in prayer, we are reminded of the importance of seeing people through God's eyes and loving them as He does.

As we engage in sharing our faith, we may encounter challenges, obstacles, and resistance. In those moments, prayer becomes our source of strength and comfort. It reminds us that we are not alone in this mission, but that God is with us, empowering us to boldly proclaim His truth.

What does your daily diary look like this week when it comes to prayer? Is prayer something that is a priority or something that is squeezed in at the last minute? In my experience, evangelisation is much easier when it is rooted in prayer.

2. LOVE MORE, FEAR LESS

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18 NIV).

There have been many times when I wanted to share my faith with others, but fear stopped me. Fear is real. Fear makes you feel scared and intimidated. Fear makes you assume the worst outcome rather than the best. Fear of rejection, fear of ridicule, fear of failure - these fears stop us from telling others the Good News about Jesus.

So, the question is, how do we face our fears and overcome them? The answer is love. Not human love, which can come and go, but God's perfect love. In the Scripture above it says 'perfect love casts out all fear'. God is love. He did not create love or form love; He is love. Yet, by his Holy Spirit, He grows love within us, since love is a fruit of the Spirit. So, when we spend time in His Presence, in worship, prayer, and reading His Word, we grow in courage and boldness. Our hearts also begin to break for the things that break God's heart - especially the people around us. Often, when I spend time with God, I find myself loving people more and wanting to share my faith with them more. When we love people

more than we fear them, we will share our faith with them.

Who can you start a conversation with today, or share your story with? Maybe it starts by sending them a message to encourage them. If the thought of that is causing you fear right now, then take a risk and you'll see how God is with you.

3. LOVE IN ACTION

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18 NIV).

The above Scripture reminds us that sharing your faith isn't just about words; it's about what you do and how you act. You might not always have the opportunity to proclaim God's love verbally, but you are always in a position to show God's love through your actions.

Sharing your faith is ultimately about showing God's love to others. It's not about having all the right words, defining every aspect of Jesus' teaching, or knowing your Bible from front to back. It's about demonstrating God's love through how you live. St Francis of Assisi famously said, 'Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.' Your actions are one of the most powerful tools that you have to share the Gospel.

Every day, we have opportunities to love others, to show kindness and help others in meeting practical needs. This is one of the greatest ways to share God's love. What does love in action look like for you?

Mother Teresa once said, 'Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.' Her words remind us that even small acts of love can make a significant difference to someone's life. By focusing on loving others through our actions, we reflect Jesus' love in a way that words alone cannot.

4. SHARE YOUR STORY AND LISTEN TO OTHERS

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).

Sometimes the most powerful way to share the Gospel is simply by telling your own story of how Jesus has changed your life. Your personal testimony can be a powerful tool in leading others to faith in Jesus. Ask God to give you opportunities to share your story with those who need to hear

it, and be ready to share it when people ask.

When I didn't know Jesus personally, I did know people who were Christians. And I noticed how they were different from the others: They accepted me even when I didn't behave or believe the way they did. Instead of gossiping about me, they encouraged me. They were also content with their lives, even though they didn't have much material wealth or a career path sorted. I was so attracted to the peace they had that I became curious and asked them, 'Why do you live the way you do?' They responded, 'Because of Jesus.' They shared their stories with me, and it was in that moment that I decided I wanted to encounter Jesus for myself. That day changed my life forever.

After they shared their story, I wanted to experience what they had, and they invited me to church. After sharing your story, it is good to be ready to invite people to come and see for themselves. Inviting someone to church or to youth group are great ways for people to experience first-hand the love and life that Jesus brings to you. When you invite others to come and see for themselves, they can get a real sense of what it means to follow Jesus and can feel that same sense of belonging that you have. Plus, it opens the door for meaningful conversations and connection, so maybe think how you can extend that invite.

It's also important that we don't just do all the talking, but that we ask questions and listen too. David W. Augsburger said, 'Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable'. Or in other words, they are almost the same. Love listens!

Because Jesus was a teacher, it's easy to think that He did all the talking, but the truth is, in the Bible Jesus asked a total of 307 questions and He was asked about 183 questions by others. Jesus loved people; He listened to people. Love empathises and our love for others enables us to have compassion for others. Be ready to share your story, but first, be willing to listen to theirs.

5. THE POSTURE OF LOVE

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31 NIV).

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GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES!

Continued from p. 9
The Bible teaches that love is the greatest commandment, and it calls us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

One key aspect of effective evangelisation is being non-judgmental. It is easy to fall into the trap of criticising those who do not share our beliefs or lifestyle but, as followers of Christ, we are called to show grace and acceptance to all. Just as Christ welcomed people from all walks of life, even those rejected by society, we are called to embrace people of different beliefs and lifestyles without judgment.

In our interactions with others, it is important to be comfortable with healthy disagreement. We may not always see eye-to-eye

with those we are trying to reach with God's love, but that does not mean we cannot have respectful and constructive conversations. By listening well and seeking to understand and empathise with others' perspectives, we can foster mutual respect and trust.

Moreover, it is crucial to remember that disagreement does not have to lead to relational conflict. We can hold firm to our beliefs while still maintaining positive and loving relationships with those who may think and believe differently, and an attitude of love towards people will have so much more impact than any judgment you may wish to express.

6. LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and

you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NIV).

Jesus promised His disciples, His closest friends, that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they would be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

When Jesus says in the Great Commission, ‘I will be with you till the end of days,’ that is made possible by the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that filled the disciples on the day of Pentecost dwells within us as believers, empowering us to be bold and courageous witnesses for Christ.

If you are worried or fearful about sharing your faith with others,

know that you can rely on the Holy Spirit to give you everything you need to do the work of evangelisation. By the Spirit, you carry the Presence of Jesus wherever you go. You are like the vessel that carries His power, so that wherever you go and whoever you talk to, the power of the Holy Spirit is with you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and empower you as you seek to share the love of Jesus with others. Ask the Holy Spirit to put someone on your heart to pray for, and then ask for the boldness and courage to share the Gospel with them through words and actions. Remember, we don't share the Gospel in our own strength, but by God's power within us!

<https://www.alpha.org>

Ons het Twee Hemelse Advokate

Dit is die laaste aand wat Jesus met Sy dissipels bymekaar is. Hy weet Sy tyd is kort. Wat weeg die swaarste op Sy hart? “My kinders, Ek is nog net ‘n klein rukkies by julle ... Waar Ek heengaan, kan julle nie kom nie” (Johannes 13:33).

Die dissipels is baie ontsteld oor hierdie stelling. Petrus sê dat hy sy lewe vir Jesus sal aflê. Thomas sê dat hulle Hom nie kan volg nie, want hulle weet nie waarheen Hy gaan nie. Filippus vra: Here, wys vir ons die Vader, en dit is vir ons genoeg (14:8). Dan Jesus se antwoord: “Ek is al so lank by julle, en ken jy My nie? Filippus, Wie My sien, sien die Vader” (v. 9).

Jesus het hierdie dissipels Self uitgesoek; drie jaar bly hulle in Sy Teenwoordigheid; Jesus het hulle uitgekies om Sy boodskap in die wêreld uit te dra. Die volgende dag sou Hy sterf... en Sy dissipels (her)ken en begryp Hom nie!

Jesus weet wat vir hulle voorlê - vervolging en teenstand. Is daar enige hoop? Ja! “Ek sal die Vader vra, en Hy sal vir julle ‘n ander Voorspraak stuur om vir ewig by julle te wees, naamlik die Gees van die waarheid” (14:16-17). Die OAV verwys na ‘n ander Trooster; die NIV verwys na ‘another Advocate’.

Jesus praat van die Heilige Gees op ‘n paar interessante maniere: ■ Hy praat van die Gees nie as ‘n mag nie, maar as ‘n Persoon:

“...maar julle ken Hom.” Jesus sê dus dat, nadat Hy gesterf het, die Vader ‘n ander Persoon na hulle gaan stuur.

■ Jesus wys vir die dissipels uit dat dit tot hulle voordeel is dat Hy weggaan, want anders sal die Heilige Gees nie na hulle toe kom nie (16:7). Hierdie Gees sal hulle in die waarheid lei (16:13). Hierdie Gees kom langs jou staan om jou te ondersteun. Hy is ons Advokaat vir die verdediging; Hy is daar om jou saak te bevorder.

In Joh.14:16 praat Jesus van ‘n ander Advokaat. Wie is dan die eerste Advokaat? In 1 Joh. 2:1-2 lees ons van Jesus as ons Voorspraak by die Vader - Jesus is dus ons eerste Advokaat! Wat sê hierdie woord van Jesus se werk?

Jesus Christus het aan die kruis vir ons sondes gesterf. Korrek, maar onvolledig. Dit is meer radikaal as dit! Lewers is daar ‘n universele, goddelike hofsaal waar almal op een of ander stadium moet verskyn. Daar is ook ‘n standaard neergelê vir ons lewens. Maar watter hoop het ons in so ‘n hofsaal? Ons voldoen tog nie aan God se hoë standaarde nie! Dit is nou reeds ‘n probleem vir ons - ons gewetens kla ons nou reeds aan. Diep binne my weet ek van hierdie hofsaal. Ek weet ook ek is in geen toestand om daar alleen voor God te staan nie.

In hierdie hofsaal is Jesus ons Advokaat. As ek hakkel, is Hy

welsprekend; daarom is ek ook welsprekend. My Advokaat verskyn in my plek. Ons is almal skuldig. Wat het ons nou nodig? ‘n Advokaat om namens ons voor die Vader te kan verskyn - iemand wat daar my saak kan stel. Ons het Jesus Christus, die Regverdige, as ons Voorspraak by die Vader (1 Joh. 2:1-2).

Die taak van ons eerste Advokaat - Jesus - is om voor die Vader te sê: “Aanvaar hulle in My Naam.” Ook tree Jesus nou reeds vir ons in by die Vader (Rom. 8:34).

Wat is dan die taak van die tweede Advokaat - die Heilige Gees? Hy sal ons alles leer en ons herinner aan alles wat Jesus vir die dissi-

pels geleer het (Joh. 14:26). Die Heilige Gees hou ons hand vas, gee vir ons krag en leer ons die lewensveranderende waarheid. Hy leer ons om te leef ooreenkomstig dit wat Christus gesê en gedoen het.

Sonder die werk van die Heilige Gees kan ons nie tot Jesus kom nie en kan ons nie Sy vrede ervaar nie. Maar ons hoef nie bekommerd te wees nie - ons het immers twee Advokate wat ons bystaan! Wat ‘n Goddelike voorreg. Jesus tree vir ons in en die Heilige Gees lei en help ons dag vir dag en gee aan ons duursame vrede!

- Mitch Kalp
www.bybelkennis.co.za

Oase van Hoop

AGS Baillie Park Gemeente

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OASE VAN HOOP

-KOFFIE KAFEE-

HEB. 6:19

est. 2023